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THE EXPLORATION OF THE ALPS

BY

ARNOLD LUNN, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "THE ENGLISHMAN IN THE ALPS"

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PREFACE

For the early chapters of this book I have consulted, amongst other authorities, the books mentioned in the bibliography on pp. 251–254. It would, however, be ungracious if I failed to acknowledge my indebtedness to that most readable of historians, Mr. Gribble, and to his books, *The Early Mountaineers* (Fisher Unwin) and *The Story of Alpine Climbing* (Nelson). Mr. Gribble and his publisher, Mr. Unwin, have kindly allowed me to quote passages translated from the works of the pioneers. Two friends, experts in the practice and history of mountaineering, have read the proofs and helped me with numerous suggestions.

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THE ALPS

CHAPTER I

THE MEDIÆVAL ATTITUDE

Rousseau is usually credited with the discovery that mountains are not intrinsically hideous. Long before his day, isolated men had loved the mountains, but these men were eccentrics. They founded no school; and Rousseau was certainly the first to popularise mountains and to transform the cult of hill worship into a fashionable creed. None the less, we must guard against the error of supposing that mountain love was confined to the few men who have left behind them literary evidence of their good taste. Mountains have changed very little since man became articulate, and the retina of the human eye has changed even less. The beauty of outline that stirs us to-day was implicit in the hills "that shed their burial sheets about the march of Hannibal." It

seems reasonable to suppose that a few men in every age have derived a certain pleasure, if not from Alpine travel at least from the distant view of the snows.

The literature of the Ancient World contains little that bears upon our subject. The literature of the Jews is exceptional in this respect. This is the more to their credit, as the mountains of Judæa, south of the beautiful Lebanon range, are shapeless and uninteresting. Deuteronomy, the Psalms, Job, and Isaiah contain mountain passages of great beauty. The Old Testament is, however, far richer in mountain praise than the New Testament. Christ retired more than once to the mountains; but the authors of the four Gospels content themselves with recording the bare fact that certain spiritual crises took place on mountain-tops. There is not a single indication in all the gospels that Nazareth is set on a hill overlooking one of the fairest mountain prospects in all Judæa, not a single tribute to the beauty of Galilee girdled by the outlying hills of Hermon.

The Greeks lived in a land of mountains far lovelier than Palestine's characterless heights. But the Jews showed genuine if spasmodic appreciation for their native ranges, whereas the Greeks, if their literature does them justice, cared little or nothing for

their mountains. The note of fear and dread, pleasantly rare in Jewish literature, is never long absent from Greek references to the mountains. Of course, the Greeks gave Olympus to their gods, but as Mr. Norman Young remarks in a very able essay on *The Mountains in Greek Poetry*, it was neeessary that the gods should look down on mankind; and, as they could not be strung up in mid-air, the obvious thing was to put them on a mountain-top. Perhaps we may concede that the Greeks paid a delicate compliment to Parnassus, the Home of the Muses; and certainly they chose for their temples the high ground of their cities. As one wanders through the olives and asphodels, one feels that the Greeks chose for their dwellings and temples those rising grounds which afforded the noblest prospect of the neighbouring hills. Only the cynic would contend that they did this in order to escape the atmosphere of the marshes.

The Romans were disgustingly practical. They regarded the Alps as an inconvenient barrier to conquest and commerce. Virgil shows an occasional trace of a deeper feeling, and Horace paused between draughts of Falernian wine to admire the snows on Soracte, which lent contrast to the comfort of a well-ordered life.

Mr. Freshfield has shown that the Chinese had a more genuine feeling for mountains; and Mr. Weston has explained the ancient cult of high places among the Japanese, perhaps the most consistent mountain worshippers in the world. The Japanese pilgrims, clad in white, make the ascent to the shrines which are built on the summits of their sacred mountains, and then withdraw to a secluded spot for further worship. For centuries, they have paid official tribute to the inspiration of high places.

But what of the Alps? Did the men who lived within sight of the Swiss mountains regard them with indifference and contempt? This was, perhaps, the general attitude, but there is some evidence that a love for mountains was not quite so uncommon in the Middle Ages as is usually supposed.

Before attempting to summarise this evidence, let us try to realise the Alps as they presented themselves to the first explorers. The difficulties of Alpine exploration, as that term is now understood, would have proved quite as formidable as those which now confront the Himalayan explorer. In spite of this, glacier passes were crossed in the earliest times, and even the Romans seemed to have ventured across the Théodule, judging by the coins which have been found on the top

of that great glacier highway. In addition to the physical difficulties of Alpine travel, we must recognise the mental handicap of our ancestors. Danger no longer haunts the highways and road-passes of the Alps. Wild beasts and robber bands no longer threaten the visitor to Grindelwald. Of the numerous "inconveniences of travel" cited by an early visitor to the Alps, we need now only fear "the wonderful cunning of Innkeepers." Stilled are the voices that were once supposed to speak in the thunder and the avalanche. The dragons that used to wing their way across the ravines of the central chain have joined the Dodo and "the men that eat the flesh of serpents and hiss as serpents do." Danger, a luxury to the modern, formed part of the routine of mediæval life. Our ancestors had no need to play at peril; and, lest we lightly assume that the modern mountaineer is a braver man than those who shuddered on the St. Bernard, let us remember that our ancestors accepted with grave composure a daily portion of inevitable risks. Modern life is so secure that we are forced to the Alps in search of contrast. When our ancestors needed contrast, they joined a monastery.

Must we assume that danger blinded them to the beauty of the Alps? The mountains themselves have not changed. The modern

mountaineer sees, from the windows of the Berne express, a picture whose colours have not faded in the march of Time. The bar of silver that thrusts itself above the distant foothills, as the train swings out of the wooded fortress of the Jura, casts the same challenge across the long shadows of the uplands. The peaks are a little older, but the vision that lights the world for us shone with the same steadfast radiance across the plains of long ago. Must we believe that our adventurous forefathers could find nothing but fear in the snows of the great divide? Dangers which have not yet vanished menaced their journey, but the white gleam of the distant snows was no less beautiful in the days when it shone as a beacon light to guide the adventurous through the great barrier down the warmth of Italian lowlands. An age which could face the great adventure of the Crusades for an idea, or more often for the sheer lust of romantic wandering, was not an age easily daunted by peril and discomfort. May we not hope that many a mute, inglorious mountain-lover lifted his eyes across the fields and rivers near Basle or Constance, and found some hint of elusive beauty in the vision that still remains a mystery, even for those who have explored the once trackless snows?

Those who have tried to discover the mediæval attitude have too often merely generalised from detached expressions of horror. Passages of praise have been treated as exceptional. The Monk Bremble and the Bishop Berkeley have had their say, unchallenged by equally good evidence for the defence. Let us remember that plenty of modern travellers might show an equally pronounced distaste for mountains. For the defence, we might quote the words of an old traveller borrowed in Coryat's *Crudities*, a book which appeared in 1611: "What, I pray you, is more pleasant, more delectable, and more acceptable unto a man than to behold the height of hilles, as it were the very Atlantes of heauen? to admire Hercules his pillers? to see the mountaines Taurus and Caucasus? to view the hill Olympus, the seat of Jupiter? to pass over the Alpes that were broken by Annibals Vinegar? to climb up the Appenine promontory of Italy? from the hill Ida to behold the rising of the Sunne before the Sunne appears? to visit Pernassus and Helicon, the most celebrated seates of the Muses? Neither indeed is there any hill or hillocke, which doth not containe in it the most sweete memory of worthy matters."

There is the genuine ring about this. It is

the modern spirit without the modern affectations. Nor is this case exceptional. In the following chapter we shall sketch the story of the early Alpine explorers, and we shall quote many passages instinct with the real love for the hills.

Are we not entitled to believe that Gesner, Marti, and Petrarch are characteristic of one phase of mediæval sentiment, just as Bremble is characteristic of another? There is abundant evidence to show that the habit of visiting and admiring mountain scenery had become fashionable before the close of the sixteenth century. Simler tells us that foreigners came from all lands to marvel at the mountains, and excuses a certain lack of interest among his compatriots on the ground that they are surfeited with a too close knowledge of the Alps. Marti, of whom we shall speak at greater length, tells us that he found on the summit of the Stockhorn the Greek inscription cut in a stone which may be rendered: "The love of mountains is best." And then there is the evidence of art. Conventional criticism of mountain art often revolves in a circle: "The mediæval man detested mountains, and when he painted a mountain he did so by way of contrast to set off the beauty of the plains." Or again: "Mediæval man only painted mountains as

types of all that is terrible in Nature. Therefore, mediæval man detested mountains."

Let us try to approach the work of these early craftsmen with no preconceived notions as to their sentiments. The canvases still remain as they were painted. What do they teach us? It is not difficult to discriminate between those who used mountains to point a contrast, and those who lingered with devotion on the beauty of the hills. When we find a man painting mountains loosely and carelessly, we may assume that he was not over fond of his subject. Jan von Scorel's grotesque rocks show nothing but equally grotesque fear. Hans Altdorfer's elaborate and careful work proves that he was at least interested in mountains, and had cleared his mind of conventional terror. Roughly, we may say that, where the foreground shows good and the mountain background shows bad workmanship, the artist cared nothing for hills, and only threw them in by way of gloomy contrast. But such pictures are not the general rule.

Let us take a very early mountain painting that dates from 1444. It is something of a shock to find the Salève and Mont Blanc as the background to a New Testament scene. How is the background used? Konrad Witz, the painter, has chosen for his theme the

miraculous draught of fishes. If he had borrowed a mountain background for the Temptation, the Betrayal, the Agony, or the Crucifixion, we might contend that the mountains were introduced to accentuate the gloom. But there is no suggestion of fear or sorrow in the peaceful calm that followed the storm of Calvary. The mountains in the distance are the hills as we know them. There is no reason to think that they are intended as a contrast to the restful foreground. Rather, they seem to complete and round off the happy serenity of the picture.

Let us consider the mountain work of a greater man than Witz. We may be thankful that Providence created this barrier of hills between the deep earnestness of the North and the tolerance of Italy, for to this we owe some of the best mountain-scapes of the Middle Ages. There is romance in the thought of Albrecht Dürer crossing the Brenner on his way to the Venetian lagoons that he loved so well. Did Dürer regard this journey with loathing? Were the great Alps no more than an obstacle on the road to the coast where the Adriatic breaks " in a warm bay 'mid green Illyrian hills." Did he echo the pious cry of that old Monk who could only pray to be delivered from " this place of torment," or did he rather linger

with loving memory on the wealth of inspiring suggestion gathered in those adventurous journeys? Contrast is the essence of Art, and Dürer was too great a man to miss the rugged appeal of untamed cliffs, because he could fathom so easily the gentler charm of German fields and Italian waters. You will find in these mountain woodcuts the whole essence of the lovable German romance, that peculiar note of "snugness" due to the contrast of frowning rock and some "gemütlich" Black Forest châlet. Hans Andersen, though a Dane, caught this note; and in Dürer's work there is the same appealing romance that makes the "Ice Maiden" the most lovable of Alpine stories. One can almost see Rudy marching gallantly up the long road in Dürer's "Das Grosse Glück," or returning with the eaglets stolen from their perilous nest in the cliffs that shadow the "Heimsuch." Those who pretend that Dürer introduced mountains as a background of gloom have no sense for atmosphere nor for anything else. For Dürer, the mountains were the home of old romance.

Turn from Dürer to Da Vinci, and you will find another note. Da Vinci was, as we shall see, a climber, and this gives the dominant note to his great study of storm and thunder among the peaks, to be seen at Windsor

Castle. His mountain rambles have given him that feeling of worship, tempered by awe, which even the Climbers' Guides have not banished. But this book is not a treatise on mountain Art—a fascinating subject; and we must content ourselves with the statement that painters of all ages have found in the mountains the love which is more powerful than fear. Those who doubt this may examine at leisure the mountain work of Brueghel, Titian, or Mantegna. There are many other witnesses. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Hans Leu had looked upon the hills and found them good, and Altdorfer had shown not only a passionate enthusiasm for mountains, but a knowledge of their anatomy far ahead of his age. Wolf Huber, ten years his junior, carried on the torch, and passed it to Lautensack, who recaptured the peculiar note of German romance of which Dürer is the first and the greatest apostle. It would be easy to trace the apostolic succession to Segantini, and to prove that he is the heir to a tradition nearly six hundred years old. But enough has been said. We have adduced a few instances which bear upon the contention that, just as the mountains of the Middle Ages were much the same as the mountains of to-day, so also among the men of those times, as among the men of to-day,

there were those who hated and those who loved the heights. No doubt the lovers of mountain scenery were in the minority; but they existed in far larger numbers than is sometimes supposed.

CHAPTER II

THE PIONEERS

WITHIN the compass of this book, we cannot narrate the history of Alpine passes, though the subject is intensely interesting, but we must not omit all mention of the great classic traverse of the Alps. We should read of Hannibal's memorable journey not in Livy, nor even in Bohn, but in that vigorous sixteenth-century translation which owes its charm and force even more to Philemon Holland the translator than to Livy.

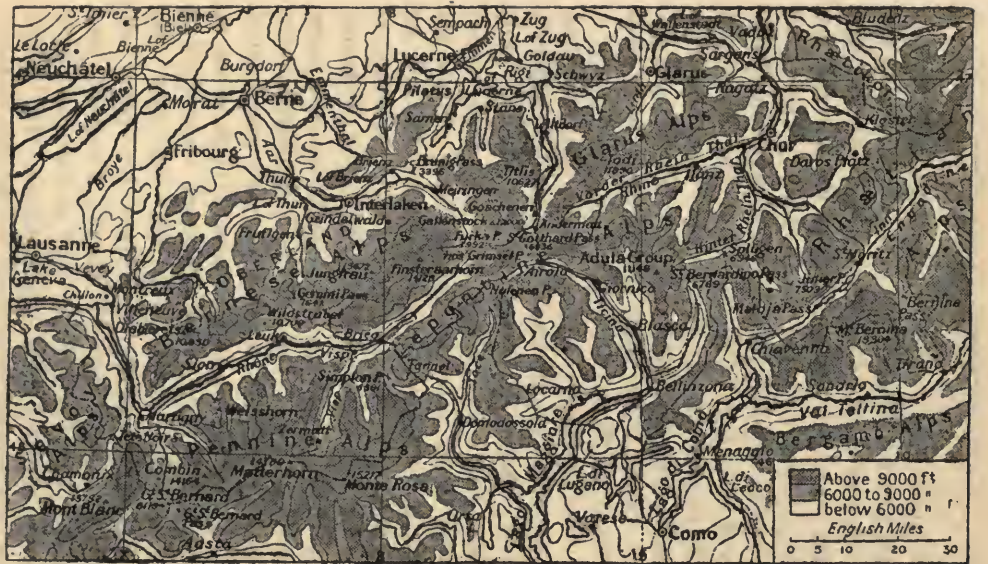
Livy, or rather Holland, begins with Hannibal's sentiments on "seeing near at hand the height of those hills . . . the horses singed with cold . . . the people with long shagd haire." Hannibal and his army were much depressed, but, none the less, they advanced under a fierce guerilla attack from the natives, who "slipt away at night, every one to his owne harbour." Then follows a fine description of the difficulties of the pass. The poor elephants "were ever readie and anone to run upon their noses"—a phrase

which evokes a tremendous picture—" and the snow being once with the gate of so many people and beasts upon it fretted and thawed, they were fain to go upon the bare yce underneeth and in the slabberie snow-broth as it relented and melted about their heeles." A great rock hindered the descent; Hannibal set it on fire and " powred thereon strong vinegar for to calcine and dissolve it," a device unknown to modern mountaineers. The passage ends with a delightful picture of the army's relief on reaching " the dales and lower grounds which have some little banks lying to the sunne, and rivers withall neere unto the woods, yea and places more meet and beseeming for men to inhabit." Experts are divided as to what pass was actually crossed by Hannibal. Even the Col de Géant has been suggested by a romantic critic; it is certainly stimulating to picture Hannibal's elephants in the Géant ice-fall. Probably the Little St. Bernard, or the Mont Genèvre, is the most plausible solution. So much for the great traverse.

Some twenty-five glacier passes had been actually crossed before the close of the sixteenth century, a fact which bears out our contention that in the Middle Ages a good deal more was known about the craft of mountaineering than is generally supposed.

There is, however, this distinctive difference between passes and peaks. A man may cross a pass because it is the most convenient route from one valley to another. He may cross it though he is thoroughly unhappy until he reaches his destination, and it would be just as plausible to argue from his journey a love of mountains as to deduce a passion for the sea in every sea-sick traveller across the Channel. But a man will not climb a mountain unless he derives some interest from the actual ascent. Passes may be crossed in the way of business. Mountains will only be climbed for the joy of the climb.

The Roche Melon, near Susa, was the first Alpine peak of any consequence to be climbed. This mountain rises to a height of 11,600 feet. It was long believed to be the highest mountain in Savoy. On one side there is a small glacier; but the climb can be effected without crossing snow. It was climbed during the Dark Ages by a knight, Rotario of Asti, who deposited a bronze tryptych on the summit where a chapel still remains. Once a year the tryptych is carried to the summit, and Mass is heard in the chapel. There is a description of an attempt on this peak in the Chronicle of Novalessa, which dates back to the first half of the eleventh century. King Romulus is said to have deposited treasure on


Above 9000 ft
6000 to 9000 "
below 6000 "
English Miles
0 5 10 20 30
Bartholomew, Edin.

the mountain. The whole Alpine history of this peak is vague, but it is certain that the peak was climbed at a very early period, and that a chapel was erected on the summit before Villamont's ascent in 1588. The climb presents no difficulties, but it was found discreet to remove the statue of the Virgin, as pilgrims seem to have lost their lives in attempting to reach it. The pilgrimages did not cease even after the statue had been placed in Susa.

Another early ascent must be recorded, though the climb was a very modest achievement. Mont Ventoux, in Provence, is only some 6430 feet above the sea, and to-day there is an hotel on the summit. None the less, it deserves a niche in Alpine history, for its ascent is coupled with the great name of the poet Petrarch. Mr. Gribble calls Petrarch the first of the sentimental mountaineers. Certainly, he was one of the first mountaineers whose recorded sentiments are very much ahead of his age. The ascent took place on April 26, 1335, and Petrarch described it in a letter written to his confessor. He confesses that he cherished for years the ambition to ascend Mont Ventoux, and seized the first chance of a companion to carry through this undertaking. He makes the customary statement as to the extreme

difficulty of the ascent, and introduces a shepherd who warns him from the undertaking. There are some very human touches in the story of the climb. While his brother was seeking short cuts, Petrarch tried to advance on more level ground, an excuse for his laziness which cost him dear, for the others had made considerable progress while he was still wandering in the gullies of the mountain. He began to find, like many modern mountaineers, that "human ingenuity was not a match for the nature of things, and that it was impossible to gain heights by moving downwards." He successfully completed the ascent, and the climb filled him with enthusiasm. The reader should study the fine translation of his letter by Mr. Reeve, quoted in *The Early Mountaineers*. Petrarch caught the romance of heights. The spirit that breathes through every line of his letter is worthy of the poet.

Petrarch is not the only great name that links the Renaissance to the birth of mountaineering. That versatile genius, Leonardo da Vinci, carried his scientific explorations into the mountains. We have already mentioned his great picture of storm and thunder among the hills, one of the few mementos that have survived from his Alpine journeys. His journey took place towards the end of

the fifteenth century. Little is known of it, though the following passage from his works has provoked much comment. The translation is due to Mrs. Bell: "And this may be seen, as I saw it, by any one going up Monboso, a peak of the Alps which divide France from Italy. The base of this mountain gives birth to the four rivers which flow in four different directions through the whole of Europe. And no mountain has its base at so great a height as this, which lifts itself above almost all the clouds; and snow seldom falls there, but only hail in the summer when the clouds are highest. And this hail lies (unmelted) there, so that, if it were not for the absorption of the rising and falling clouds, which does not happen more than twice in an age, an enormous mass of ice would be piled up there by the layers of hail; and in the middle of July I found it very considerable, and I saw the sky above me quite dark; and the sun as it fell on the mountain was far brighter here than in the plains below, because a smaller extent of atmosphere lay between the summit of the mountain and the sun."

We need not summarise the arguments that identify Monbosa either with Monte Rosa or Monte Viso. The weight of evidence inclines to the former alternative, though, of

course, nobody supposes that Da Vinci actually reached the summit of Monte Rosa. There is good ground, however, for believing that he explored the lower slopes; and it is just possible that he may have got as far as the rocks above the Col d'Ollen, where, according to Mr. Freshfield, the inscription "A.T.M., 1615" has been found cut into the crags at a height of 10,000 feet. In this connection it is interesting to note that the name "Monbosa" has been found in place of Monte Rosa in maps, as late as 1740.[1]

We now come to the first undisputed ascent of a mountain, still considered a difficult rock climb. The year that saw the discovery of America is a great date in the history of mountaineering. In 1492, Charles VII of France passed through Dauphiny, and was much impressed by the appearance of Mont Aiguille, a rocky peak near Grenoble that was then called Mont Inaccessible. This mountain is only some seven thousand feet in height; but it is a genuine rock climb, and is still considered difficult, so much so that the French Alpine Club have paid it the doubtful compliment of iron cables in the more sensational passages. Charles VII was struck by the appearance of the mountain,

[1] See Mr. Gribble's *Early Mountaineers*, Chap. V., where the arguments on each side are skilfully summarised.

and ordered his Chamberlain de Beaupré to make the ascent. Beaupré, by the aid of "subtle means and engines," scaled the peak, had Mass said on the top, and caused three crosses to be erected on the summit. It was a remarkable ascent, and was not repeated till 1834.

We are not concerned with exploration beyond the Alps, and we have therefore omitted Peter III's attempt on Pic Canigou in the Pyrenees, and the attempt on the Pic du Midi in 1588; but we cannot on the ground of irrelevance pass over a remarkable ascent in 1521. Cortez is our authority. Under his order, a band of Spaniards ascended Popocatapetl, a Mexican volcano which reaches the respectable height of 17,850 feet. These daring climbers brought back quantities of sulphur which the army needed for its gunpowder.

The Stockhorn is a modest peak some seven thousand feet in height. Simler tells us that its ascent was a commonplace achievement. Marti, as we have seen in the previous chapter, found numberless inscriptions cut into the summit stones by visitors, enthusiastic in their appreciation of mountain scenery, and its ascent by Müller, a Berne professor, in 1536, is only remarkable for the joyous poem in hexameters which records his

delight in all the accompaniments of a mountain expedition. Müller has the true feelings for the simpler pleasures of picnicing on the heights. Everything delights him, from the humble fare washed down with a draught from a mountain stream, to the primitive joy of hurling big rocks down a mountain side. The last confession endears him to all who have practised this simple, if dangerous, amusement.

The early history of Pilatus, another low-lying mountain, is much more eventful than the annals of the Stockhorn. It is closely bound up with the Pilate legend, which was firmly believed till a Lucerne pastor gave it the final quietus in 1585. Pontius Pilate, according to this story, was condemned by the Emperor Tiberius, who decreed that he should be put to death in the most shameful possible manner. Hearing this, Pilate very sensibly committed suicide. Tiberius concealed his chagrin, and philosophically remarked that a man whose own hand had not spared him had most certainly died the most shameful of deaths. Pilate's body was attached to a stone and flung into the Tiber, where it caused a succession of terrible storms. The Romans decided to remove it, and the body was conveyed to Vienne as a mark of contempt for the people of that

place. It was flung into the Rhone, and did its best to maintain its reputation. We need not follow this troublesome corpse through its subsequent wanderings. It was finally hurled into a little marshy lake, near the summit of Pilatus. Here Pilate's behaviour was tolerable enough, though he resented indiscriminate stone-throwing into the lake by evoking terrible storms, and once a year he escaped from the waters, and sat clothed in a scarlet robe on a rock near by. Anybody luckless enough to see him on these occasions died within the twelve-month.

So much for the story, which was firmly believed by the good citizens of Lucerne. Access to the lake was forbidden, unless the visitor was accompanied by a respectable burgher, pledged to veto any practices that Pilate might construe as a slight. In 1307, six clergymen were imprisoned for having attempted an ascent without observing the local regulations. It is even said that climbers were occasionally put to death for breaking these stringent by-laws. None the less, ascents occasionally took place. Duke Ulrich of Würtemburg climbed the mountain in 1518, and a professor of Vienna, by name Joachim von Watt, ascended the mountain in order to investigate the legend, which he seems to have believed after a show of doubt. Finally,

in 1585, Pastor John Müller of Lucerne, accompanied by a few courageous sceptics, visited the lake. In their presence, he threw stones into the haunted lake, and shouted "Pilate wirf aus dein Kath." As his taunts produced no effect, judgment was given by default, and the legend, which had sent earlier sceptics into gaol, was laughed out of existence.

Thirty years before this defiant demonstration, the mountain had been ascended by the most remarkable of the early mountaineers. Conrad Gesner was a professor at the ancient University of Zürich. Though not the first to make climbing a regular practice, he was the pioneer of mountain literature. He never encountered serious difficulties. His mountaineering was confined to those lower heights which provide the modern with a training walk. But he had the authentic outlook of the mountaineer. His love for mountains was more genuine than that of many a modern wielder of the ice-axe and rope. A letter has been preserved, in which he records his resolution "to climb mountains, or at all events to climb one mountain every year."

We have no detailed record of his climbs, but luckily his account of an ascent of Pilatus still survives, a most sincere tribute to the simple pleasures of the heights. It is a

relief to turn to it after wading through more recent Alpine literature. Gesner's writing is subjective. It records the impress of simple emotions on an unsophisticated mind. He finds a naïve joy in all the elemental things that make up a mountain walk, the cool breezes plying on heated limbs, the sun's genial warmth, the contrasts of outline, colour, and height, the unending variety, so that "in one day you wander through the four seasons of the year, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter." He explains that every sense is delighted, the sense of hearing is gratified by the witty conversation of friends, "by the songs of the birds, and even by the stillness of the waste." He adds, in a very modern note, that the mountaineer is freed from the noisy tumult of the city, and that in the "profound abiding silence one catches echoes of the harmony of celestial spheres." There is more in the same key. He anticipates the most enduring reward of the mountaineer, and his words might serve as the motto for a mountain book of to-day: "Jucundum erit postea meminisse laborum atque periculorum, juvabit hæc animo revolvere et narrare amicis." Toil and danger are sweet to recall, every mountaineer loves "to revolve these in his mind and to tell them to his friends." Moreover, contrast is the essence of our enjoy-

ment and "the very delight of rest is intensified when it follows hard labour." And then Gesner turns with a burst of scorn to his imaginary opponent. "But, say you, we lack feather beds and mattresses and pillows. Oh, frail and effeminate man! Hay shall take the place of these luxuries. It is soft, it is fragrant. It is blended from healthy grass and flower, and as you sleep respiration will be sweeter and healthier than ever. Your pillow shall be of hay. Your mattress shall be of hay. A blanket of hay shall be thrown across your body." That is the kind of thing an enthusiastic mountaineer might have written about the club-huts in the old days before the hay gave place to mattresses. Nor does Gesner spoil his rhapsody by the inevitable joke about certain denizens of the hay.

There follows an eloquent description of the ascent and an analysis of the Pilate legend. Thirty years were to pass before Pastor Müller finally disposed of the myth, but Gesner is clearly sceptical, and concludes with the robust assertion that, even if evil spirits exist, they are "impotent to harm the faithful who worship the one heavenly light, and Christ the Sun of Justice." A bold challenge to the superstitions of the age, a challenge worthy of the man. Conrad Gesner

was born out of due season; and, though he does not seem to have crossed the snow line, he was a mountaineer in the best sense of the term. As we read his work, we seem to hear the voice of a friend. Across the years we catch the accents of a true member of our great fraternity. We leave him with regret, with a wish that we could meet him on some mountain path, and gossip for a while on mountains and mountaineers.

But Gesner was not, as is sometimes assumed, alone in this sentiment for the hills. In the first chapter we have spoken of Marti, a professor at Berne, and a close friend of Gesner. The credit for discovering him belongs, I think, to Mr. Freshfield, who quotes some fine passages from Marti's writings. Marti looks out from the terrace at Berne on that prospect which no true mountain lover can behold without emotion, and exclaims: "These are the mountains which form our pleasure and delight when we gaze at them from the highest parts of our city, and admire their mighty peaks and broken crags that threaten to fall at any moment. Who, then, would not admire, love, willingly visit, explore, and climb places of this sort? I should assuredly call those who are not attracted by them dolts, stupid dull fishes, and slow tortoises. . . . I am never happier than on

the mountain crests, and there are no wanderings dearer to one than those on the mountains."

This passage tends to prove that mountain appreciation had already become a commonplace with cultured men. Had Marti's views been exceptional, he would have assumed a certain air of defence. He would explain precisely why he found pleasure in such unexpected places. He would attempt to justify his paradoxical position. Instead, he boldly assumes that every right-minded man loves mountains; and he confounds his opponents by a vigorous choice of unpleasant alternatives.

Josias Simler was a mountaineer of a very different type. To him belongs the credit of compiling the first treatise on the art of Alpine travel. Though he introduces no personal reminiscences, his work is so free from current superstition that he must have been something of a climber; but, though a climber, he did not share Gesner's enthusiasm for the hills. For, though he seems to have crossed glacier passes, whereas Gesner confined himself to the lower mountains, yet the note of enthusiasm is lacking. His horror of narrow paths, bordering on precipices, is typical of the age; and if he ventured across a pass he must have done so in the way of business. There is, as we have already

pointed out, a marked difference between passes and mountains. A merchant with a holy horror of mountains may be forced to cross a pass in the way of business, but a man will only climb a mountain for the fun of the thing. It is clear that Simler could only see in mountains a sense of inconvenient barriers to commerce, but as a practical man he set out to codify the existing knowledge. Gesner's mountain work is subjective; it is the literature of emotion; he is less concerned with the mountain in itself, than with the mountain as it strikes the individual observer. Simler, on the other hand, is the forerunner of the objective school. He must delight those who postulate that all Alpine literature should be the record of positive facts. The personal note is utterly lacking. Like Gesner, he was a professor at Zürich. Unlike Gesner, he was an embodiment of the academic tradition that is more concerned with fact than with emotion. None the less, his work was a very valuable contribution, as it summarised existing knowledge on the art of mountain travel. His information is singularly free from error. He seems to have understood the use of the rope, alpenstocks, crampons, dark spectacles, and the use of paper as a protection against cold. It is strange that crampons, which were used in Simler's days, were only reintro-

duced into general practice within the last decades, whilst the uncanny warmth of paper is still unknown to many mountaineers. His description of glacier perils, due to concealed crevasses, is accurate, and his analysis of avalanches contains much that is true. We are left with the conviction that snow- and ice-craft is an old science, though originally applied by merchants rather than pure explorers.

We quoted Simler, in the first chapter, in support of our contention that foreigners came in great numbers to see and rejoice in the beauty of the Alps. But, though Simler proves that passes were often crossed in the way of business, and that mountains were often visited in search of beauty, he himself was no mountain lover.

It is a relief to turn to Scheuchzer, who is a living personality. Like Gesner and Simler, he was a professor at Zürich, and, like them, he was interested in mountains. There the resemblance ceases. He had none of Gesner's fine sentiment for the hills. He did not share Simler's passion for scientific knowledge. He was a very poor mountaineer, and, though he trudged up a few hills, he heartily disliked the toil of the ascent: "Anhelosæ quidem sunt scansiones montium"—an honest, but scarcely inspiring, comment on mountain

travel. Honesty, bordering on the naïve, is, indeed, the keynote of our good professor's confessions. Since his time, many ascents have failed for the same causes that prevented Scheuchzer reaching the summit of Pilatus, but few mountaineers are candid enough to attribute their failure to "bodily weariness and the distance still to be accomplished." Scheuchzer must be given credit for being, in many ways, ahead of his age. He protested vigorously against the cruel punishments in force against witches. He was the first to formulate a theory of glacier motion which, though erroneous, was by no means absurd. As a scientist, he did good work in popularising Newton's theories. He published the first map of Switzerland with any claims to accuracy. His greatest scientific work on dragons is dedicated to the English Royal Society, and though Scheuchzer's dragons provoke a smile, we should remember that several members of that learned society subscribed to publish his researches on those fabulous creatures:

With his odd mixture of credulity and common sense, Scheuchzer often recalls another genial historian of vulgar errors Like Sir Thomas Browne, he could never dismiss a picturesque legend without a pang. He gives the more blatant absurdities their

quietus with the same gentle and reluctant touch: "That the sea is the sweat of the earth, that the serpent before the fall went erect like man . . . being neither consonant unto reason nor corresponding unto experiment, are unto us no axioms." Thus Browne, and it is with the same tearful and chastened scepticism that Scheuchzer parts with the more outrageous "axioms" in his wonderful collection. But he retained enough to make his work amusing. Like Browne, he made it a rule to believe half that he was told. But on the subject of dragons he has no mental reservations. Their existence is proved by the number of caves that are admirably suited to the needs of the domestic dragon, and by the fact that the Museum, at Lucerne, contains an undoubted dragon stone. Such stones are rare, which is not surprising owing to the extreme difficulty of obtaining a genuine unimpaired specimen. You must first catch your dragon asleep, and then cut the stone out of his head. Should the dragon awake the value of the stone will disappear. Scheuchzer refrains from discouraging collectors by hinting at even more unpleasant possibilities. But then there is no need to awaken the dragon. Scatter soporific herbs around him, and help them out by recognised incantations, and the stone should be removed without arousing

the dragon. In spite of these anæsthetics, Scheuchzer admits that the process demands a courageous and skilled operator, and perhaps it is lucky that this particular stone was casually dropped by a passing dragon. It is obviously genuine, for, if the peasant who had picked it up had been dishonest, he would never have hit on so obvious and unimaginative a tale. He would have told some really striking story, such as that the stone had come from the far Indies. Besides, the stone not only cures hæmorrhages (quite commonplace stones will cure hæmorrhages), but also dysentery and plague. As to dragons, Scheuchzer is even more convincing. He has examined (on oath) scores of witnesses who had observed dragons at first hand. We need not linger to cross-examine these honest folk. Their dragons are highly coloured, and lack nothing but uniformity. Each new dragon that flies into Scheuchzer's net is gravely classified. Some dragons have feet, others have wings. Some have scales. Scheuchzer is a little puzzled whether dragons with a crest constitute a class of their own, or whether the crest distinguished the male from the female. Each dragon is thus neatly ticketed into place and referred to the sworn deposition of some *vir quidam probus*.

But the dragons had had their day.

Scheuchzer ushers in the eighteenth century. Let us take leave of him with a friendly smile. He is no abstraction, but a very human soul. We forget the scientist, though his more serious discoveries were not without value. We remember only the worthy professor, panting up his laborious hills in search of quaint knowledge, discovering with simple joy that Gemmi is derived from " gemitus " a groan, *quod non nisi crebris gemitibus superetur.* No doubt the needy fraternity soon discovered his amiable weakness. An unending procession must have found their way to his door, only too anxious to supply him with dragons of wonderful and fearful construction. Hence, the infinite variety of these creatures. When we think of Scheuchzer, we somehow picture the poor old gentleman, laboriously rearranging his data, on the sworn deposition of some *clarissimus homo*, what time the latter was bartering in the nearest tavern the price of a dragon for that good cheer in which most of Scheuchzer's fauna first saw the light of day.

CHAPTER III

THE OPENING UP OF THE ALPS

The climbs, so far chronicled, have been modest achievements and do not include a genuine snow-peak, for the Roche Melon has permanent snow on one side only. We have seen that many snow passes were in regular use from the earliest times; but genuine Alpine climbing may be said to begin with the ascent of the Titlis. According to Mr. Gribble, this was climbed by a monk of Engleberg, in 1739. Mr. Coolidge, on the other hand, states that it was ascended by four peasants, in 1744. In any case, the ascent was an isolated feat which gave no direct stimulus to Alpine climbing, and Mr. Gribble is correct in dating the continuous history of Alpine climbing from the discovery of Chamounix, in 1741. This famous valley had, of course, a history of its own before that date; but its existence was only made known, to a wider world, by the visit of a group of young Englishmen, towards the middle of the eighteenth century.

In 1741, Geneva was enlivened by a vigorous

colony of young Britons. Of these, William Windham was a famous athlete, known on his return to London as "Boxing Windham." While at Geneva, he seems, despite the presence of his "respectable perceptor," Mr. Benjamin Stillingfleet, the grandson of the theologian, to have amused himself pretty thoroughly. The archives record that he was fined for assault and kindred offences. When these simple joys began to pall he decided to go to Chamounix in search of adventure.

His party consisted of himself, Lord Haddington, Dr. Pococke, the Oriental traveller, and others. They visited Chamounix, and climbed the Montanvert with a large brigade of guides. The ascent to the Montanvert was not quite so simple as it is to-day, a fact which accounts for Windham's highly coloured description. Windham published his account of the journey and his reflections on glaciers, in the *Journal Helvetique* of Neuchâtel, and later in London. It attracted considerable attention and focussed the eyes of the curious on the unknown valley of Chamounix. Among others, Peter Martel, an engineer of Geneva, was inspired to repeat the visit. Like Windham, he climbed the Montanvert and descended on to the Mer de Glace; and, like Windham, he published an account of the

journey and certain reflections on glaciers and glacier motion. His story is well worth reading, and the curious in such matters should turn either to Mr. Gribble's *Early Mountaineers*, or to Mr. Matthews' *The Annals of Mont Blanc*, where they will find Windham's and Martel's letters set forth in full.

Martel's letter and his map of Chamounix were printed together with Windham's narrative, and were largely responsible for popularising Chamounix. Those who wished to earn a reputation for enterprise could hardly do so without a visit to the glaciers of Chamounix. Dr. John Moore, father of Sir John Moore, who accompanied the Duke of Hamilton on the grand tour, tells us that "one could hardly mention anything curious or singular without being told by some of those travellers, with an air of cool contempt: 'Dear Sir, that is pretty well, but take my word for it, it is nothing to the glaciers of Savoy.'" The Duc de la Rochefoucauld considered that the honour of his nation demanded that he should visit the glaciers, to prove that the English were not alone in the possession of courage.

More important, in this connection, than Dr. Moore or the duke is the great name of De Saussure. De Saussure belonged to an old French family that had been driven out

of France during the Huguenot persecutions. They emigrated to Geneva, where De Saussure was born. His mother had Spartan views on education; and from his earlier years the child was taught to suffer the privations due to physical ills and the inclemency of the season. As a result of this adventurous training, De Saussure was irresistibly drawn to the mountains. He visited Chamounix in 1760, and was immediately struck by the possibility of ascending Mont Blanc. He does not seem to have cherished any ambition to make the first ascent in person. He was content to follow when once the way had been found; and he offered a reward to the pioneer, and promised to recompense any peasant who should lose a day's work in trying to find the way to the summit of Mont Blanc. The reward was not claimed for many years, but, meanwhile, De Saussure never missed a chance of climbing a mountain. He climbed Ætna, and made a series of excursions in various parts of the Alps. When his wife complained, he indited a robust letter which every married mountaineer should keep up his sleeve for ready quotation.

"In this valley, which I had not previously visited," he writes, "I have made observations of the greatest importance, surpassing my highest hopes; but that is not what you

care about. You would sooner—God forgive me for saying so—see me growing fat like a friar, and snoring every day in the chimney corner, after a big dinner, than that I should achieve immortal fame by the most sublime discoveries at the cost of reducing my weight by a few ounces and spending a few weeks away from you. If, then, I continue to take these journeys, in spite of the annoyance they cause you, the reason is that I feel myself pledged in honour to go on with them, and that I think it necessary to extend my knowledge on this subject and make my works as nearly perfect as possible. I say to myself: 'Just as an officer goes out to assault a fortress when the order is given, and just as a merchant goes to market on market-day, so must I go to the mountains when there are observations to be made.' "

De Saussure was partly responsible for the great renaissance of mountain travel that began at Geneva in 1760. A group of enthusiastic mountaineers instituted a series of determined assaults on the unconquered snows. Of these, one of the most remarkable was Jean-Andre de Luc.

De Luc was born at Geneva, in 1727. His father was a watchmaker, but De Luc's life was cast on more ambitious lines. He began as a diplomatist, but gravitated insensibly to

science. He invented the hygrometer, and was elected a member of the Royal Societies of London, Dublin, and Göttingen. Charlotte, the wife of George III, appointed him her reader; and he died at Windsor, having attained the ripe age of ninety. He was a scientific, rather than a sentimental, mountaineer; his principal occupation was to discover the temperature at which water would boil at various altitudes. His chief claim to notice is that he made the first ascent of the Buet.

The Buet is familiar to all who know Chamounix. It rises to the height of 10,291 feet. Its summit is a broad plateau, glacier-capped. Those who have travelled to Italy by the Simplon may, perhaps, recall the broad-topped mountain that seems to block up the western end of the Rhone valley, for the Buet is a conspicuous feature on the line, between Sion and Brigue. It is not a difficult mountain, in the modern sense of the term; but, to climbers who knew little of the nature of snow and glacier, it must have presented quite a formidable appearance. De Luc made several attempts before he was finally successful on September 22, 1770. His description of the view from the summit is a fine piece of writing. Familiarity had not staled the glory of such moments; and men might still

write, as they felt, without fear that their readers would be bored by emotions that had lost their novelty.

Before leaving, De Luc observed that the party were standing on a cornice. A cornice is a crest of windblown snow overhanging a precipice. As the crest often appears perfectly continuous with the snow on solid foundation, cornices have been responsible for many fatal accidents. De Luc's party naturally beat a hurried retreat; but " having gathered, by reflection, that the addition of our own weight to this prodigious mass which had supported itself for ages counted for absolutely nothing, and could not possibly break it loose, we laid aside our fears and went back to the terrible terrace." A little science is a dangerous thing; and it was a mere chance that the first ascent of the Buet is not notorious for a terrible accident. It makes one's blood run cold to read of the calm contempt with which De Luc treated the cornice. Each member of the party took it in turn to advance to the edge and look over on to the cliff below supported as to his coat-tails by the rest of the party.

De Luc made a second ascent of the Buet, two years later; but it was not until 1779 that a snow peak was again conquered. In that year Murith, the Prior of the St. Bernard

Hospice, climbed the Velan, the broad-topped peak which is so conspicuous a feature from the St. Bernard. It is a very respectable mountain rising to a height of 12,353 feet. Murith, besides being an ecclesiastic, was something of a scientist, and his botanical handbook to the Valais is not without merit. It is to Bourrit, of whom we shall speak later, that we owe the written account of the climb, based on information which Bourrit had at first hand from M. Murith.

Murith started on August 30, 1779, with "two hardy hunters," two thermometers, a barometer, and a spirit-level. They slept a night on the way, and proceeded to attack the mountain from the Glacier du Proz. The hardy hunters lost their nerve, and tried to dissuade M. Murith from the attempt; but the gallant Prior replied: "Fear nothing; wherever there is danger I will go in front." They encountered numerous difficulties, amongst others a wall of ice which Murith climbed by hacking steps and hand-holds with a pointed hammer. One of the hardy huntsmen then followed; his companion had long since disappeared.

They reached the summit without further difficulty, and their impressions of the view are recorded by Bourrit in an eloquent passage which recalls De Luc on the Buet, and once

more proves that the early mountaineers were fully alive to the glory of mountain tops—

"A spectacle, no less amazing than magnificent, offered itself to their gaze. The sky seemed to be a black cloth enveloping the earth at a distance from it. The sun shining in it made its darkness all the more conspicuous. Down below their outlook extended over an enormous area, bristling with rocky peaks and cut by dark valleys. Mont Blanc rose like a sloping pyramid and its lofty head appeared to dominate all the Alps as one saw it towering above them. An imposing stillness, a majestic silence, produced an indescribable impression upon the mind. The noise of the avalanches, reiterated by the echoes, seemed to be the only thing that marked the march of time. Raised, so to say, above the head of Nature, they saw the mountains split asunder, and send the fragments rolling to their feet, and the rivers rising below them in places where inactive Nature seemed upon the point of death—though in truth it is there that she gathers strength to carry life and fertility throughout the world."

It is curious in this connection to notice the part played by the Church in the early

history of mountaineering. This is not surprising. The local curé lived in the shadow of the great peaks that dominated his valley. He was more cultured than the peasants of his parish; he was more alive to the spiritual appeal of the high places, and he naturally took a leading part in the assaults on his native mountains. The Titlis and Monte Leone were first climbed by local monks. The prior of the St. Bernard made, as we have seen, a remarkable conquest of a great local peak; and five years later M. Clément, the curé of Champery, reached the summit of the Dent du Midi, that great battlement of rock which forms a background to the eastern end of Lake Geneva. Bourrit, as we shall see, was an ecclesiastic with a great love for the snows. Father Placidus à Spescha was the pioneer of the Tödi; and local priests played their part in the early attempts on the Matterhorn from Italy. "One man, one mountain" was the rule of many an early pioneer; but Murith's love of the snows was not exhausted by this ascent of the Velan. He had already explored the Valsorey glacier with Saussure, and the Otemma glacier with Bourrit. A few years after his conquest of the Velan he turned his attention to the fine wall of cliffs that binds in the Orny glacier on the south.

Bourrit, who wrote up Murith's notes on the Velan, was one of the most remarkable of this group of pioneers. He was a whole-hearted enthusiast, and the first man who devoted the most active years of his life to mountaineering. He wins our affection by the readiness with which he gave others due credit for their achievements, a generous characteristic which did not, however, survive the supreme test—Paccard's triumph on Mont Blanc. Mountaineers at the end of the eighteenth century formed a close freemasonry less concerned with individual achievement than with the furthering of common knowledge. We have seen, for instance, that De Saussure cared little who made the first ascent of Mont Blanc provided that the way was opened up for future explorers. Bourrit's actual record of achievement was small. His exploration was attended with little success. His best performance was the discovery, or rediscovery of the Col de Géant. His great ambition, the ascent of Mont Blanc, failed. Fatigue, or mountain sickness, or bad weather, spoiled his more ambitious climbs. But this matters little. He found his niche in Alpine history rather as a writer than as a mountaineer. He popularised the Alps. He was the first systematic writer of Alpine books, a fact which earned him the title, "Historian

of the Alps," a title of which he was inordinately proud. Best of all, in an age when mountain appreciation was somewhat rare, he marked himself out by an unbounded enthusiasm for the hills.

He was born in 1735, and in one of his memoirs he describes the moment when he first heard the call of the Alps : " It was from the summit of the Voirons that the view of the Alps kindled my desire to become acquainted with them. No one could give me any information about them except that they were the accursed mountains, frightful to look upon and uninhabited." Bourrit began life as a miniature painter. A good many of his Alpine water colours have survived. Though they cannot challenge serious comparison with the mountain masterpieces of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they are not without a certain merit. But Bourrit would not have become famous had he not deserted the brush for the pen. When the Alps claimed him, he gave up miniatures, and accepted an appointment as Precentor of Geneva Cathedral, a position which allowed him great leisure for climbing. He used to climb in the summer, and write up his journeys in the winter. He soon compiled a formidable list of books, and was hailed throughout Europe as the Historian of the Alps. There

was no absurd modesty about Bourrit. He accepted the position with serene dignity. His house, he tells us, is "embellished with beautiful acacias, planned for the comfort and convenience of strangers who do not wish to leave Geneva without visiting the Historian of the Alps." He tells us that Prince Henry of Prussia, acting on the advice of Frederick the Great, honoured him with a visit. Bourrit, in fact, received recognition in many distinguished quarters. The Princess Louise of Prussia sent him an engraving to recall "a woman whom you have to some extent taught to share your lofty sentiments." Bourrit was always popular with the ladies, and no climber has shown a more generous appreciation for the sex. "The sex is very beautiful here," became, as Mr. Gribble tells us, "a formula with him as soon as he began writing and continued a formula after he had passed his threescore years and ten."

We have said that Bourrit's actual record as a climber is rather disappointing. We may forget this, and remember only his whole-hearted devotion to the mountains. Even Gesner, Petrarch, and Marti seem balanced and cold when they set their tributes besides Bourrit's large enthusiasm. Bourrit did not carry a barometer with him on his travels. He did not feel the need to justify

his wanderings by collecting a mass of scientific data. Nor did he assume that a mountain tour should be written up as a mere guide-book record of times and route. He is supremely concerned with the ennobling effect of mountain scenery on the human mind.

"At Chamounix," he writes, "I have seen persons of every party in the state, who imagined that they loathed each other, nevertheless treating one another with courtesy, and even walking together. Returning to Geneva, and encountering the reproaches of their various friends, they merely answered in their defence, 'Go, as we have gone, to the Montanvert, and take our share of the pure air that is to be breathed there; look thence at the unfamiliar beauties of Nature; contemplate from that terrace the greatness of natural objects and the littleness of man; and you will no longer be astonished that Nature has enabled us to subdue our passions.' It is, in fact, the mountains that many men have to thank for their reconciliation with their fellows, and with the human race; and it is there that the rulers of the world and the heads of the nations ought to hold their meetings. Raised thus above the arena of passions and petty interests, and placed more immediately under the influence of Divine inspiration, one would see them descend from

these mountains, each like a new Moses bringing with them codes of law based upon equity and justice."

This is fine writing with a vengeance, just as Ruskin's greatest passages are fine writing. Before we take our leave of Bourrit, let us see the precentor of the cathedral exhorting a company of guides with sacerdotal dignity. One is irresistibly reminded of Japan, where mountaineering and sacrificial rites go hand in hand—

"The Historian of the Alps, in rendering them this justice in the presence of a great throng of people, seized the opportunity of exhorting the new guides to observe the virtues proper to their state in life. 'Put yourselves,' he said to them, 'in the place of the strangers, who come from the most distant lands to admire the marvels of Nature under these wild and savage aspects; and justify the confidence which they repose in you. You have learnt the great part which these magnificent objects of our contemplation play in the organisation of the world; and, in pointing out their various phenomena to their astonished eyes, you will rejoice to see people raise their thoughts to the omnipotence of the Great Being who created them.' The speaker was profoundly moved by the ideas with

which the subject inspired him, and it was impossible for his listeners not to share in his emotion."

Let us remember that Bourrit put his doctrine into practice. He has told us that he found men of diverse creeds reconciled beneath the shadow of Mont Blanc. Bourrit himself was a mountaineer first, and an ecclesiastic second. Perhaps he was no worse as a Protestant precentor because the mountains had taught him their eternal lessons of tolerance and serene indifference to the petty issues which loom so large beneath the shadow of the cathedral. Catholic or Protestant it was all the same to our good precentor, provided the man loved the hills. Prior Murith was his friend; and every Catholic mountaineer should be grateful to his memory, for he persuaded one of their archbishops to dispense climbers from the obligation of fasting in Lent.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY OF MONT BLANC

THE history of Mont Blanc has been made the subject of an excellent monograph, and the reader who wishes to supplement the brief sketch which is all that we can attempt should buy *The Annals of Mont Blanc*, by Mr. C. E. Mathews. We have already seen that De Saussure offered a reward in 1760 to any peasant who could find a way to the summit of Mont Blanc. In the quarter-of-a-century that followed, several attempts were made. Amongst others, Bourrit tried on two occasions to prove the accessibility of Mont Blanc. Bourrit himself never reached a greater height than 10,000 feet; but some of his companions attained the very respectable altitude of 14,300 feet. De Saussure attacked the mountain without success in 1785, leaving the stage ready for the entrance of the most theatrical of mountaineers.

Jacques Balmat, the hero of Mont Blanc, impresses himself upon the imagination as no other climber of the day. He owes his

A Summit of Mont Blanc
B " " Dôme du Gouter
C " " Aiguille du Gouter
D " " Aiguille de Bianossay

E Summit of Mont Maudit
E' " " Mont Blanc du Tacul
F " " Aiguille du Midi
G Grand Mulets
H Grand Plateau

L Les Bosses du Dromadaire
M Glacier des Bossons
N Glacier de Taconnaz

fame mainly, of course, to his great triumph, but also, not a little, to the fact that he was interviewed by Alexandre Dumas the Elder, who immortalised him in *Impressions de Voyage*. For the moment, we shall not bother to criticise its accuracy. We know that Balmat reached the summit of Mont Blanc; and that outstanding fact is about the only positive contribution to the story which has not been riddled with destructive criticism. The story should be read in the original, though Dumas' vigorous French loses little in Mr. Gribble's spirited translation from which I shall borrow.

Dumas visited Chamounix in 1883. Balmat was then a veteran, and, of course, the great person of the valley. Dumas lost no time in making his acquaintance. We see them sitting together over a bottle of wine, and we can picture for ourselves the subtle art with which the great interviewer drew out the old guide. But Balmat shall tell his own story—

. . . . . .

"H'm. Let me see. It was in 1786. I was five-and-twenty; that makes me seventy-two to-day. What a fellow I was! With the devil's own calves and hell's own stomach. I could have gone three days without bite or sup. I had to do so once when I got lost on the Buet. I just munched a little snow, and

that was all. And from time to time I looked across at Mont Blanc saying, ' Say what you like, my beauty, and do what you like. Some day I shall climb you.' "

Balmat then tells us how he persuaded his wife that he was on his way to collect crystals. He climbed steadily throughout the day, and night found him on a great snowfield somewhere near the Grand Plateau. The situation was sufficiently serious. To be benighted on Mont Blanc is a fate which would terrify a modern climber, even if he were one of a large party. Balmat was alone, and the mental strain of a night alone on a glacier can only be understood by those who have felt the uncanny terror that often attacks the solitary wanderer even in the daytime. Fortunately, Balmat does not seem to have been bothered with nerves. His fears expressed themselves in tangible shape.

" Presently the moon rose pale and encircled by clouds, which hid it altogether at about eleven o'clock. At the same time a rascally mist came on from the Aiguille du Gouter, which had no sooner reached me than it began to spit snow in my face. Then I wrapped my head in my handkerchief, and said: ' Fire away. You're not hurting me.' At every

instant I heard the falling avalanches making a noise like thunder. The glaciers split, and at every split I felt the mountain move. I was neither hungry nor thirsty; and I had an extraordinary headache which took me at the crown of the skull, and worked its way down to the eyelids. All this time, the mist never lifted. My breath had frozen on my handkerchief; the snow had made my clothes wet; I felt as if I were naked. Then I redoubled the rapidity of my movements, and began to sing, in order to drive away the foolish thoughts that came into my head. My voice was lost in the snow; no echo answered me. I held my tongue, and was afraid. At two o'clock the sky paled towards the east. With the first beams of day, I felt my courage coming back to me. The sun rose, battling with the clouds which covered the mountain top; my hope was that it would scatter them; but at about four o'clock the clouds got denser, and I recognised that it would be impossible for me just then to go any further."

He spent a second night on the mountain, which was, on the whole, more comfortable than the first, as he passed it on the rocks of the Montagne de la Côte. Before he returned home, Balmat planned a way to the summit. And now comes the most amazing part of the

story. He had no sooner returned home than he met three men starting off for the mountain. A modern mountaineer, who had spent two nights, alone, high up on Mont Blanc, would consider himself lucky to reach Chamounix alive; once there, he would go straight to bed for some twenty-four hours. But Balmat was built of iron. He calmly proposed to accompany his friends; and, having changed his stockings, he started out again for the great mountain, on which he had spent the previous two nights. The party consisted of François Paccard, Joseph Carrier, and Jean Michel Tournier. They slept on the mountain; and next morning they were joined by two other guides, Pierre Balmat and Marie Couttet. They did not get very far, and soon turned back—all save Balmat. Balmat, who seems to have positively enjoyed his nights on the glacier, stayed behind.

"I laid my knapsack on the snow, drew my handkerchief over my face like a curtain, and made the best preparations that I could for passing a night like the previous one. However, as I was about two thousand feet higher, the cold was more intense; a fine powdery snow froze me; I felt a heaviness and an irresistible desire to sleep; thoughts, sad as death, came into my mind, and I knew

well that these sad thoughts and this desire to sleep were a bad sign, and that if I had the misfortune to close my eyes I should never open them again. From the place where I was, I saw, ten thousand feet below me, the lights of Chamounix, where my comrades were warm and tranquil by their firesides or in their beds. I said to myself: 'Perhaps there is not a man among them who gives a thought to me. Or, if there is one of them who thinks of Balmat, no doubt he pokes his fire into a blaze, or draws his blanket over his ears, saying, 'That ass of a Jacques is wearing out his shoe leather. Courage, Balmat!' "

Balmat may have been a braggart, but it is sometimes forgotten by his critics that he had something to brag about. Even if he had never climbed Mont Blanc, this achievement would have gone down to history as perhaps the boldest of all Alpine adventures. To sleep one night, alone, above the snow line is a misfortune that has befallen many climbers. Some have died, and others have returned, thankful. One may safely say that no man has started out for the same peak, and willingly spent a third night under even worse conditions than the first. Three nights out of four in all. We are charitably assum-

ing that this part of Balmat's story is true. There is at least no evidence to the contrary.

Naturally enough, Balmat did not prosecute the attempt at once. He returned to Chamounix, and sought out the local doctor, Michel Paccard. Paccard agreed to accompany him. They left Chamounix at five in the evening, and slept on the top of the Montagne de la Côte. They started next morning at two o'clock. According to Balmat's account, the doctor played a sorry part in the day's climb. It was only by some violent encouragement that he was induced to proceed at all.

"After I had exhausted all my eloquence, and saw that I was only losing my time, I told him to keep moving about as best he could. He heard without understanding, and kept answering 'Yes, yes,' in order to get rid of me. I perceived that he must be suffering from cold. So I left him the bottle, and set off alone, telling him that I would come back and look for him. 'Yes, yes,' he answered. I advised him not to sit still, and started off. I had not gone thirty steps before I turned round and saw that, instead of running about and stamping his feet, he had sat down, with his back to the wind—a precaution of a sort. From that minute onwards, the track presented

no great difficulty; but, as I rose higher and higher, the air became more and more unfit to breathe. Every few steps, I had to stop like a man in a consumption. It seemed to me that I had no lungs left, and that my chest was hollow. Then I folded my handkerchief like a scarf, tied it over my mouth and breathed through it; and that gave me a little relief. However, the cold gripped me more and more; it took me an hour to go a quarter of a league. I looked down as I walked; but, finding myself in a spot which I did not recognise, I raised my eyes, and saw that I had at last reached the summit of Mont Blanc.

"Then I looked around me, fearing to find that I was mistaken, and to catch sight of some aiguille or some fresh point above me; if there had been, I should not have had the strength to climb it. For it seems to me that the joints of my legs were only held in their proper place by my breeches. But no—it was not so. I had reached the end of my journey. I had come to a place where no one—where not the eagle or the chamois—had ever been before me. I had got there, alone, without any other help than that of my own strength and my own will. Everything that surrounded me seemed to be my property. I was the King of Mont Blanc—the statue of this tremendous pedestal.

" Then I turned towards Chamounix, waving my hat at the end of my stick, and saw, by the help of my glass, that my signals were being answered."

Balmat returned, found the doctor in a dazed condition, and piloted him to the summit, which they reached shortly after six o'clock.

" It was seven o'clock in the evening; we had only two-and-a-half hours of daylight left; we had to go. I took Paccard by the arm, and once more waved my hat as a last signal to our friends in the valley; and the descent began. There was no track to guide us; the wind was so cold that even the snow on the surface had not thawed; all that we could see on the ice was the little holes made by the iron points of our stick. Paccard was no better than a child, devoid of energy and will-power, whom I had to guide in the easy places and carry in the hard ones. Night was already beginning to fall when we crossed the crevasse; it finally overtook us at the foot of the Grand Plateau. At every instant, Paccard stopped, declaring that he could go no further; at every halt, I obliged him to resume his march, not by persuasion, for he understood nothing but force. At eleven, we

at last escaped from the regions of ice, and set foot upon *terra firma*; the last afterglow of the sunset had disappeared an hour before. Then I allowed Paccard to stop, and prepared to wrap him up again in the blanket, when I perceived that he was making no use whatever of his hands. I drew his attention to the fact. He answered that that was likely enough, as he no longer had any sensation in them. I drew off his gloves, and found that his hands were white and, as it were, dead; for my own part, I felt a numbness in the hand on which I wore his little glove in place of my own thick one. I told him we had three frost-bitten hands between us; but he seemed not to mind in the least, and only wanted to lie down and go to sleep. As for myself, however, he told me to rub the affected part with snow, and the remedy was not far to seek. I commenced operations upon him and concluded them upon myself. Soon the blood resumed its course, and with the blood, the heat returned, but accompanied by acute pain, as though every vein were being pricked with needles. I wrapped my baby up in his blanket, and put him to bed under the shelter of a rock. We ate a little, drank a glass of something, squeezed ourselves as close to each other as we could, and went to sleep.

"At six the next morning Paccard awoke

me. 'It's strange, Balmat,' he said, 'I hear the birds singing, and don't see the daylight. I suppose I can't open my eyes.' Observe that his eyes were as wide open as the Grand Duke's. I told him he must be mistaken, and could see quite well. Then he asked me to give him a little snow, melted it in the hollow of his hand, and rubbed his eyelids with it. When this was done, he could see no better than before; only his eyes hurt him a great deal more. 'Come now, it seems that I am blind, Balmat. How am I to get down?' he continued. 'Take hold of the strap of my knapsack and walk behind me; that's what you must do.' And in this style we came down, and reached the village of La Côte. There, as I feared that my wife would be uneasy about me, I left the doctor, who found his way home by fumbling with his stick, and returned to my own house. Then, for the first time, I saw what I looked like. I was unrecognisable. My eyes were red; my face was black; my lips were blue. Whenever I laughed or yawned, the blood spurted from my lips and cheeks; and I could only see in a dark room."

"'And did Dr. Paccard continue blind?' 'Blind, indeed! He died eleven months ago, at the age of seventy-nine, and could still read without spectacles. Only his eyes were

diabolically red.' 'As the consequence of his ascent?' 'Not a bit of it.' 'Why, then?' 'The old boy was a bit of a tippler.' And so saying Jacques Balmat emptied his third bottle."

The last touch is worthy of Dumas; and the whole story is told in the Ercles vein. As literature it is none the worse for that. It was a magnificent achievement; and we can pardon the vanity of the old guide looking back on the greatest moment of his life. But as history the interview is of little value. The combination of Dumas and Balmat was a trifle too strong for what Clough calls "the mere it was." The dramatic unities tempt one to leave Balmat, emptying his third bottle, and to allow the merry epic to stand unchallenged. But the importance of this first ascent forces one to sacrifice romance for the sober facts.

The truth about that first ascent had to wait more than a hundred years. The final solution is due, in the main, to three men, Dr. Dübi (the famous Swiss mountaineer), Mr. Freshfield, and Mr. Montagnier. Dr. Dübi's book, *Paccard wider Balmat, oder Die Entwicklung einer Legende*, gives the last word on this famous case. For a convenient summary of Dr. Dübi's arguments, the reader

should consult Mr. Freshfield's excellent review of his book that appeared in the *Alpine Journal* for May 1913. The essential facts are as follows. Dr. Dübi has been enabled to produce a diary of an eye-witness of the great ascent. A distinguished German traveller, Baron von Gersdorf, watched Balmat and Paccard through a telescope, made careful notes, illustrated by diagrams of the route, and, at the request of Paccard's father, a notary of Chamounix, signed, with his friend Von Meyer, a certificate of what he had seen. This certificate is still preserved at Chamounix, and Von Gersdorf's diary and correspondence have recently been discovered at Görlitz. Here is the vital sentence in his diary, as translated by Mr. Freshfield: "They started again [from the Petits Rochers Rouges], at 5.45 p.m., halted for a moment about every hundred yards, *changed occasionally the leadership* [the italics are mine], at 6.12 p.m. gained two rocks protruding from the snow, and at 6.23 p.m. were on the actual summit." The words italicised prove that Balmat did not lead throughout. The remainder of the sentence shows that Balmat was not the first to arrive on the summit, and that the whole fabric of the Dumas legend is entirely false.

But Dumas was not alone responsible for the Balmat myth. This famous fiction was,

in the main, due to a well-known Alpine character, whom we have dealt with at length in our third chapter. The reader may remember that Bourrit's enthusiasm for mountaineering was only equalled by his lack of success. We have seen that Bourrit had set his heart on the conquest of Mont Blanc, and that Bourrit failed in this ambition, both before, and after Balmat's ascent. In many ways, Bourrit was a great man. He was fired with an undaunted enthusiasm for the Alps at a time when such enthusiasm was the hall-mark of a select circle. He justly earned his title, the Historian of the Alps; and in his earlier years he was by no means ungenerous to more fortunate climbers. But this great failing, an inordinate vanity, grew with years. He could just manage to forgive Balmat, for Balmat was a guide; but Paccard, the amateur, had committed the unforgivable offence.

It was no use pretending that Paccard had not climbed Mont Blanc, for Paccard had been seen on the summit. Bourrit took the only available course. He was determined to injure Paccard's prospects of finding subscribers for a work which the doctor proposed to publish, dealing with his famous climb. With this in view, Bourrit wrote the notorious letter of September 20, 1786, which first appeared as a pamphlet, and was later pub-

lished in several papers. We need not reproduce the letter. The main points which Bourrit endeavoured to make were that the doctor failed at the critical stage of the ascent, that Balmat left him, reached the top, and returned to insist on Paccard dragging himself somehow to the summit; that Paccard wished to exploit Balmat's achievements, and was posing as the conqueror of Mont Blanc; that, with this in view, he was appealing for subscribers for a book, in which, presumably, Balmat would be ignored, while poor Balmat, a simple peasant, who knew nothing of Press advertisement, would lose the glory that was his just meed. It was a touching picture; and we, who know the real Balmat as a genial *blageur*, may smile gently when we hear him described as *le pauvre Balmat à qui l'on doit cette découverte reste presque ignoré, et ignore qu'il y ait des journalistes, des journaux, et que l'on puisse par le moyen de ces trompettes littéraires obtenir du Public une sorte d'admiration.* De Saussure, who from the first gave Paccard due credit for his share in the climb, seems to have warned Bourrit that he was making a fool of himself. Bourrit appears to have been impressed, for he added a postscript in which he toned down some of his remarks, and conceded grudgingly that Paccard's share in the ascent was, perhaps, larger than he had

at first imagined. But this relapse into decent behaviour did not survive an anonymous reply to his original pamphlet which appeared in the *Journal de Lausanne*, on February 24, 1787. This reply gave Paccard's story, and stung Bourrit into a reply which was nothing better than a malicious falsehood. "Balmat's story," he wrote, "seems very natural . . . and is further confirmed by an eye-witness, M. le Baron de Gersdorf, who watched the climbers through his glasses; and this stranger was so shocked by the indifference (to use no stronger word) shown by M. Paccard to his companion that he reprinted my letter in his own country, in order to start a subscription in favour of poor Balmat."

Fortunately, we now know what Gersdorf saw through his glasses, and we also know that Gersdorf wrote immediately to Paccard, "disclaiming altogether the motive assigned for his action in raising a subscription." Paccard was fortunately able to publish two very effective replies to this spiteful attack. In the *Journal de Lausanne* for May 18 he reproduced two affidavits by Balmat, both properly attested. These ascribe to Paccard the honour of planning the expedition, and his full share of the work, and also state that Balmat had been paid for acting as guide. The first of these documents has disappeared.

The second, which is entirely in Balmat's handwriting, is still in existence. Balmat, later in life, made some ridiculous attempt to suggest that he had signed a blank piece of paper; but the fact that even Bourrit seems to have considered this statement a trifle too absurd to quote is in itself enough to render such a protest negligible. Besides, Balmat was shrewd enough not to swear before witnesses to a document which he had never seen. It is almost pleasant to record that a dispute between the doctor and Balmat, in the high street of Chamounix, resulted in Balmat receiving a well-merited blow on his nose from the doctor's umbrella, which laid him in the dust. It is in some ways a pity that Dumas did not meet Paccard. The incident of the umbrella might then have been worked up to the proper epic proportions.

This much we may now regard as proved. Paccard took at least an equal share in the great expedition. Balmat was engaged as a guide, and was paid as such. The credit for the climb must be divided between these two men; and the discredit of causing strained relations between them must be assigned to Bourrit. Meanwhile, it is worth adding that the traditions of the De Saussure family are all in favour of Balmat. De Saussure's grandson stated that Balmat's sole object in

climbing Mont Blanc was the hope of pecuniary gain. He even added that the main reason for his final attempt with Paccard was that Paccard, being an amateur, would not claim half the reward promised by De Saussure. As to Paccard, "everything we know of him," writes Mr. Freshfield, "is to his credit. His scientific attainments were undoubtedly insignificant compared to a Bonnet or a De Saussure. Yet he was a member of the Academy of Turin, he contributed articles to a scientific periodical published in Paris, he corresponded with De Saussure about his barometrical observations. He is described by a visitor to Chamounix, in 1788, in the following terms: "We also visited Dr. Paccard, who gave us a very plain and modest account of his ascent of Mont Blanc, for which bold undertaking he does not seem to assume to himself any particular merit, but asserts that any one with like physical powers could have performed the task equally well." De Saussure's grandson, who has been quoted against Balmat, is equally emphatic in his approval of Paccard. Finally, both Dr. Dübi and Mr. Freshfield agree that, as regards the discovery of the route: "Paccard came first into the field, and was the more enterprising of the two."

Bourrit, by the way, had not even the

decency to be consistent. He spoiled, as we have seen, poor Paccard's chances of obtaining subscribers for his book, and, later in life, he quarrelled with Balmat. Von Gersdorf had started a collection for Balmat, and part of the money had to pass through Bourrit's hands. A great deal of it remained there. Bourrit seems to have been temporarily inconvenienced. We need not believe that he had any intention of retaining the money permanently, but Balmat was certainly justified in complaining to Von Gersdorf. Bourrit received a sharp letter from Von Gersdorf, and never forgave Balmat. In one of his later books, he reversed his earlier judgment and pronounced in favour of Paccard.

Bourrit discredited himself by the Mont Blanc episode with the more discerning of his contemporaries. De Saussure seems to have written him down, judging by the traditions that have survived in his family. Wyttenbach, a famous Bernese savant, is even more emphatic. "All who know him realise Bourrit to be a conceited toad, a flighty fool, a bombastic swaggerer." Mr. Freshfield, however, quotes a kinder and more discriminating criticism by the celebrated Bonnet, ending with the words: *Il faut, néanmoins, lui tenir compte de son ardeur et de son courage.* "With these words," says Mr. Freshfield,

"let us leave 'notre Bourrit'; for by his passion for the mountains he remains one of us."

Poor Bourrit! It is with real regret that one chronicles the old precentor's lapses. Unfortunately, every age has its Bourrit, but it is only fair to remember that Bourrit often showed a very generous appreciation of other climbers. He could not quite forgive Paccard. Let us remember his passion for the snows. Let us forget the rest.

It is pleasant to record that De Saussure's old ambition was gratified, and that he succeeded in reaching the summit of Mont Blanc in July 1787. Nor is this his only great expedition. He camped out for a fortnight on the Col de Géant, a remarkable performance. He visited Zermatt, then in a very uncivilised condition, and made the first ascent of the Petit Mont Cervin. He died in 1799.

As for Balmat, he became a guide, and in this capacity earned a very fair income. Having accumulated some capital, he cast about for a profitable investment. Two perfect strangers, whom he met on the high road, solved his difficulty in a manner highly satisfactory as far as they were concerned. They assured him that they were bankers, and that they would pay him five per cent. on his capital. The first of these statements may

have been true, the second was false. He did not see the bankers or his capital again. Shortly after this initiation into high finance, he left Chamounix to search for a mythical gold-mine among the glaciers of the valley of Sixt. He disappeared and was never seen again. He left a family of four sons, two of whom were killed in the Napoleonic wars. His great-nephew became the favourite guide of Mr. Justice Wills, with whom he climbed the Wetterhorn.

CHAPTER V

MONTE ROSA AND THE BÜNDNER OBERLAND

THE conquest of Mont Blanc was the most important mountaineering achievement of the period; but good work was also being done in other parts of the Alps. Monte Rosa, as we soon shall see, had already attracted the adventurous, and the Bündner Oberland gave one great name to the story of Alpine adventure. We have already noted the important part played by priests in the conquest of the Alps; and Catholic mountaineers may well honour the memory of Placidus à Spescha as one of the greatest of the climbing priesthood.

Father Placidus was born in 1782 at Truns. As a boy he joined the Friars of Disentis, and after completing his education at Einsiedeln, where he made good use of an excellent library, returned again to Disentis. As a small boy, he had tended his father's flocks and acquired a passionate love for the mountains of his native valley. As a monk, he resumed the hill wanderings, which he continued almost to the close of a long life.

He was an unfortunate man. The French Revolution made itself felt in Graubünden; and with the destruction of the monastery all his notes and manuscripts were burned. When the Austrians ousted the French, he was even more luckless; as a result of a sermon on the text "Put not your trust in princes" he was imprisoned in Innsbruck for eighteen months. He came back only to be persecuted afresh. Throughout his life, his wide learning and tolerant outlook invited the suspicion of the envious and narrow-minded; and on his return to Graubünden he was accused of heresy. His books and his manuscripts were confiscated, and he was forbidden to climb. After a succession of troubled years, he returned to Truns; and though he had passed his seventieth year he still continued to climb. As late as 1824, he made two attempts on the Tödi. On his last attempt, he reached a gap, now known as the Porta da Spescha, less than a thousand feet below the summit; and from this point he watched, with mixed feelings, the two chamois hunters he had sent forward reach the summit. He died at the age of eighty-two. One wishes that he had attained in person his great ambition, the conquest of the Tödi; but, even though he failed on this outstanding peak, he had several good performances to his credit, amongst others the

first ascent of the Stockgron (11,411 feet) in 1788, the Rheinwaldhorn (11,148 feet) in 1789, the Piz Urlaun (11,063 feet) in 1793, and numerous other important climbs.

His list of ascents is long, and proves a constant devotion to the hills amongst which he passed the happiest hours of an unhappy life. "Placidus à Spescha"—there was little placid in his life save the cheerful resignation with which he faced the buffetings of fortune. He was a learned and broad-minded man; and the mountains, with their quiet sanity, seem to have helped him to bear constant vexation caused by small-minded persons. These suspicions of heresy must have proved very wearisome to "the mountaineer who missed his way and strayed into the Priesthood." He must have felt that his opponents were, perhaps, justified, that the mountains had given him an interpretation of his beliefs that was, perhaps, wider than the creed of Rome, and that he himself had found a saner outlook in those temples of a larger faith to which he lifted up his eyes for help. As a relief from a hostile and unsympathetic atmosphere, let us hope that he discovered some restful anodyne among the tranquil broadness of the upper snows. The fatigue and difficulties of long mountain tramps exhaust the mind, to the exclusion of those little cares which seem

so great in the artificial life of the valley. Certainly, the serene indifference of the hills found a response in the quiet philosophy of his life. Very little remains of all that he must have written, very little—only a few words, in which he summed up the convictions which life had given him. "When I carefully consider the fortune and ill-fortune that have befallen me, I have difficulty in determining which of the two has been the more profitable since a man without trials is a man without experience, and such a one is without insight —*vexatio dat intellectum*." A brave confession of a good faith, and in his case no vain utterance, but the sincere summary of a philosophy which coloured his whole outlook on life.

The early history of Monte Rosa has an appeal even stronger than the story of Mont Blanc. It begins with the Renaissance. From the hills around Milan, Leonardo da Vinci had seen the faint flush of dawn on Monte Rosa beyond—

> A thousand shadowy pencilled valleys
> And snowy dells in a golden air.

The elusive vision had provoked his restless, untiring spirit to search out the secrets of Monte Rosa. The results of that expedition have already been noticed.

After Da Vinci there is a long gap. Scheuchzer had heard of Monte Rosa, but contents himself with the illuminating remark that " a stiff accumulation of perpetual ice is attached to it." De Saussure visited Macunagna in 1789, but disliked the inhabitants and complained of their inhospitality. He passed on, after climbing an unimportant snow peak, the Pizzo Bianco (10,552 feet). His story is chiefly interesting for an allusion to one of the finest of the early Alpine expeditions. In recent years, a manuscript containing a detailed account of this climb has come to light, and supplements the vague story which De Saussure had heard.

Long ago, in the Italian valleys of Monte Rosa, there was a legend of a happy valley, hidden away between the glaciers of the great chain. In this secret and magic vale, the flowers bloomed even in winter, and the chamois found grazing when less happy pastures were buried by the snow. So ran the tale, which the mothers of Alagna and Gressoney told to their children. The discovery of the happy valley was due to Jean Joseph Beck. Beck was a domestic servant with the soul of a pioneer, and the organising talent that makes for success. He had heard a rumour that a few men from Alagna had determined to find the valley. Beck was a

Gressoney man; and he determined that Gressoney should have the honour of the discovery. Again and again, in Alpine history, we find this rivalry between adjoining valleys acting as an incentive of great ascents. Beck collected a large party, including "a man of learning," by name Finzens (Vincent). With due secrecy, they set out on a Sunday of August 1788.

They started from their sleeping places at midnight, and roped carefully. They had furnished themselves with climbing irons and alpenstocks. They suffered from mountain sickness and loss of appetite, but pluckily determined to proceed. At the head of the glacier, they "encountered a slope of rock devoid of snow," which they climbed. "It was twelve o'clock. Hardly had we got to the summit of the rock than we saw a grand—an amazing—spectacle. We sat down to contemplate at our leisure the lost valley, which seemed to us to be entirely covered with glaciers. We examined it carefully, but could not satisfy ourselves that it was the unknown valley, seeing that none of us had ever been in the Vallais." The valley, in fact, was none other than the valley of Zermatt, and the pass, which these early explorers had reached, was the Lysjoch, where, to this day, the rock on which they rested bears the appropriate name

that they gave it, "The Rock of Discovery." Beck's party thus reached a height of 14,000 feet, a record till Balmat beat them on Mont Blanc.

The whole story is alive with the undying romance that still haunts the skyline whose secrets we know too well. The Siegfried map has driven the happy valley further afield. In other ranges, still uncharted, we must search for the reward of those that cross the great divides between the known and the unknown, and gaze down from the portals of a virgin pass on to glaciers no man has trodden, and valleys that no stranger has seen. And yet, for the true mountaineer every pass is a discovery, and the happy valley beyond the hills still lives as the embodiment of the child's dream. All exploration, it is said, is due to the two primitive instincts of childhood, the desire to look over the edge, and the desire to look round the corner. And so we can share the thrill that drove that little band up to the Rock of Discovery. We know that, through the long upward toiling, their eyes must ever have been fixed on the curve of the pass, slung between the guarding hills, the skyline which held the great secret they hoped to solve. We can realise the last moments of breathless suspense as their shoulders were thrust above the dividing wall,

and the ground fell away from their feet to the valley of desire. In a sense, we all have known moments such as this; we have felt the " intense desire to see if the Happy Valley may not lie just round the corner."

Twenty-three years after this memorable expedition, Monte Rosa was the scene of one of the most daring first ascents in Alpine history. Dr. Pietro Giordani of Alagna made a solitary ascent of the virgin summit which still bears his name. The Punta Giordani is one of the minor summits of the Monte Rosa chain, and rises to the respectable height of 13,304 feet. Giordani's ascent is another proof, if proof were needed, that the early climbers were, in many ways, as adventurous as the modern mountaineer. We find Balmat making a series of solitary attempts on Mont Blanc, and cheerfully sleeping out, alone, on the higher snowfields. Giordani climbs, without companions, a virgin peak; and another early hero of Monte Rosa, of whom we shall speak in due course, spent a night in a cleft of ice, at a height of 14,000 feet. Giordani, by the way, indited a letter to a friend from the summit of his peak. He begins by remarking that a sloping piece of granite serves him for a table, a block of blue ice for a seat. After an eloquent description of the view, he expresses his annoyance at the lack of scientific

instruments, and the lateness of the hour which alone prevented him—as he believed—from ascending Monte Rosa itself.

Giordani's ascent closes the early history of Monte Rosa; but we cannot leave Monte Rosa without mention of some of the men who played an important part in its conquest. Monte Rosa, it should be explained, is not a single peak, but a cluster of ten summits of which the Dufour Spitze is the highest point (15,217 feet). Of these, the Punta Giordani was the first, and the Dufour Spitze the last, to be climbed. In 1817, Dr. Parrott made the first ascent of the Parrott Spitze (12,643 feet); and two years later the Vincent Pyramid (13,829) was climbed by a son of that Vincent who had been taken on Beck's expedition because he was "a man of learning." Dr. Parrott, it might be remarked in passing, was the first man to reach the summit of Ararat, as Noah cannot be credited with having reached a higher point than the gap between the greater and the lesser Ararat.

But of all the names associated with pioneer work on Monte Rosa that of Zumstein is the greatest. He made five attempts to reach the highest point of the group, and succeeded in climbing the Zumstein Spitze (15,004 feet) which still bears his name. He had numerous adventures on Monte Rosa, and as we have

already seen, spent one night in a crevasse, at a height of 14,000 feet. He became quite a local celebrity, and is mentioned as such by Prof. Forbes and Mr. King in their respective books. His great ascent of the Zumstein Spitze was made in 1820, thirty-five years before the conquest of the highest point of Monte Rosa.

CHAPTER VI

TIROL AND THE OBERLAND

THE story of Monte Rosa has forced us to anticipate the chronological order of events. We must now turn back, and follow the fortunes of the men whose names are linked with the great peaks of Tirol [1] and of the Oberland. Let us recapitulate the most important dates in the history of mountaineering before the opening of the nineteenth century. Such dates are 1760, which saw the beginning of serious mountaineering, with the ascent of the Titlis; 1778, which witnessed Beck's fine expedition to the Lysjoch; 1779, the year in which the Velan, and 1786, the year in which Mont Blanc, were climbed. The last year of the century saw the conquest of the Gross Glockner, one of the giants of Tirol.

The Glockner has the distinction of being the only great mountain first climbed by a Bishop. Its conquest was the work of a jovial

[1] Not "The Tirol," still less "The Austrian Tirol," but "Tirol." We do not speak of "The Scotland" or "The British Scotland."

ecclesiastic, by name and style Franz Altgraf von Salm-Reifferscheid Krantheim, Bishop of Gurk, hereinafter termed—quite simply—Salm. Bishop Salm had no motive but the fun of a climb. He was not a scientist, and he was not interested in the temperature at which water boiled above the snow line, provided only that it boiled sufficiently quickly to provide him with hot drinks and shaving water. He was a most luxurious climber, and before starting for the Glockner he had a magnificent hut built to accommodate the party, and a *chef* conveyed from the episcopal palace to feed them. They were weather-bound for three days in these very comfortable quarters; but the *chef* proved equal to the demands on his talent. An enthusiastic climber compared the dinners to those which he had enjoyed when staying with the Bishop at Gurk. There were eleven amateurs and nineteen guides and porters in the party. Their first attempt was foiled by bad weather. On August 25, 1799, they reached the summit, erected a cross, and disposed of several bottles of wine. They then discovered that their triumph was a trifle premature. The Glockner consists of two summits separated by a narrow ridge. They had climbed the lower; the real summit was still 112 feet above them. Next year the

mistake was rectified; but, though the Bishop was one of the party, he did not himself reach the highest point till a few years later.

Four years after the Glockner had been climbed, the giant of Tirol and the Eastern Alps was overcome. The conquest of the Ortler was due to a romantic fancy of Archduke John. Just as Charles VII of France deputed his chamberlain to climb Mont Aiguille, so the Archduke (who, by the way, was the son of the Emperor Leopold II, and brother of Francis II, last of the Holy Roman emperors) deputed Gebhard, a member of his suite, to climb the Ortler. Gebhard made several attempts without success. Finally, a chamois hunter of the Passeierthal, by name Joseph Pichler, introduced himself to Gebhard, and made the ascent from Trafoi on September 28, 1804. Next year Gebhard himself reached the summit, and took a reading of the height by a barometer. The result showed that the Ortler was higher than the Glockner—a discovery which caused great joy. Its actual height is, as a matter of fact, 12,802 feet. But the ascent of the Ortler was long in achieving the popularity that it deserved. Whereas the Glockner was climbed about seventy times before 1860, the Ortler was only climbed twice between Gebhard's ascent and the ascent by the Brothers Buxton

and Mr. Tuckett, in 1864. Archduke John, who inspired the first ascent, made an unsuccessful attempt (this time in person) on the Gross Venediger, another great Tyrolese peak. He was defeated, and the mountain was not finally vanquished till 1841.

The scene now changes to the Oberland. Nothing much had been accomplished in the Oberland before the opening years of the nineteenth century. A few passes, the Petersgrat, Oberaarjoch, Tschingel, and Gauli, had been crossed; but the only snow peaks whose ascent was undoubtedly accomplished were the Handgendgletscherhorn (10,806 feet) and a peak whose identification is difficult. These were climbed in 1788 by a man called Müller, who was engaged in surveying for Weiss. His map was a very brilliant achievement, considering the date at which it appeared. The expenses had been defrayed by a rich merchant of Aarau, Johann Rudolph Meyer, whose sons were destined to play an important part in Alpine exploration. J. R. Meyer had climbed the Titlis, and one of his sons made one of the first glacier pass expeditions in the Oberland, crossing the Tschingel in 1790.

J. R. Meyer's two sons, Johann Rudolph the second and Hieronymus, were responsible for some of the finest pioneer work in the story of mountaineering. In 1811 they made

the first crossing of the Beich pass, the Lötschenlücke, and the first ascent of the Jungfrau. As was inevitable, their story was disbelieved. To dispel all doubt, another expedition was undertaken in the following year. On this expedition the leaders were Rudolph and Gottlieb Meyer, sons of J. R. Meyer the second (the conqueror of the Jungfrau), and grandsons of J. R. Meyer the first. The two Meyers separated after crossing the Oberaarjoch. Gottlieb crossed the Grünhornlücke, and bivouacked near the site of the present Concordia Inn. Rudolph made his classical attempt on the Finsteraarhorn, and rejoined Gottlieb. Next day Gottlieb made the second ascent of the Jungfrau and Rudolph forced the first indisputable crossing of the Strahlegg pass from the Unteraar glacier to Grindelwald.

To return to Rudolph's famous attempt on the Finsteraarhorn. Rudolph, as we have seen, separated from his brother Gottlieb near the Oberaarjoch. Rudolph, who was only twenty-one at the time, took with him two Valaisian hunters, by name Alois Volker and Joseph Bortis, a Melchthal "porter," Arnold Abbühl, and a Hasle man. Abbühl was not a porter as we understand the word, but a *knect*, or servant, of a small inn. He played the leading part in this climb. The

party bivouacked on the depression known as the Rothhornsattel, and left it next morning when the sun had already struck the higher summits, probably about 5 a.m. They descended to the Studerfirn, and shortly before reaching the Ober Studerjoch started to climb the great eastern face of the Finsteraarhorn. After six hours, they reached the crest of the ridge. Meyer could go no further, and remained where he was; while the guides proceeded and, according to the accounts which have come down to us, reached the summit.

Captain Farrar has summed up all the available evidence in *The Alpine Journal* for August 1913. The first climber who attempted to repeat the ascent was the well-known scientist Hugi. He was led by the same Arnold Abbühl, who, as already stated, took a prominent part in Meyer's expedition. Abbühl, however, not only failed to identify the highest peak from the Rothhornsattel, but, on being pressed, admitted that he had never reached the summit at all. In 1830, Hugi published these facts and Meyer, indignant at the implied challenge to his veracity, promised to produce further testimony. But there the matter dropped. Captain Farrar summarises the situation with convincing thoroughness.

"What was the situation in 1812? We

have an enthusiastic ingenuous youth attempting an ascent the like of which in point of difficulty had at that time never been, nor was for nearly fifty years after, attempted. He reaches a point on the arête without any great difficulty; and there he remains, too tired to proceed. About this portion of the ascent, there is, save as to the precise point gained, no question; and it is of this portion alone Meyer is a first-hand witness. Three of his guides go on, and return to him after many hours with the statement that they had reached the summit, or that is what he understands. I shall examine later this point. But is it not perfectly natural that Meyer should accept their statement, that he should swallow with avidity their claim to have reached the goal of all his labours? He had, as I shall show later, no reason to doubt them; and, doubtless, he remained firm in his belief until Hugi's book appeared many years after. At once, he is up in arms at Hugi's questioning, as he thinks, his own statements and his guides' claims. He pens his reply quoted above, promises to publish his MSS. and hopes to produce testimony in support. Then comes Hugi's reply, and Meyer realises that his own personal share in the expedition is not questioned; but he sees that he may after all have been misled by, or have misunderstood,

his guides, and he is faced with the reported emphatic denial of his leading guide, who was at that time still living, and could have been referred to. It may be said that he wrote to Abbühl for the 'testimony,' and failed to elicit a satisfactory reply. Thrown into hopeless doubt, all the stronger because his belief in his guide's statement had been firmly implanted in his mind all these nineteen years, is it to be wondered at that he lets the matter drop? He finds himself unable to get any testimony, and realises that the publication of his MS. will not supply any more reliable evidence. One can easily picture the disenchanted man putting the whole matter aside in sheer despair of ever arriving at the truth."

We have no space to follow Captain Farrar's arguments. They do not seem to leave a shadow of doubt. At the same time, Captain Farrar acquits the party of any deliberate intention to deceive, and admits that their ascent of the secondary summit of the Finsteraarhorn was a very fine performance. It is noteworthy that many of the great peaks have been attempted, and some actually climbed for the first time, by an unnecessarily difficult route. The Matterhorn was assailed for years by the difficult Italian arête, before the easy Swiss route was discovered. The

south-east route, which Meyer's party attempted, still remains under certain conditions, a difficult rock climb, which may not unfitly be compared in part with the Italian ridge of the Matterhorn. The ordinary west ridge presents no real difficulties.

The first complete ascent of the Finsteraarhorn was made on August 10, 1829, by Hugi's two guides, Jakob Leuthold and Joh. Wahren. Hugi remained behind, 200 feet below the summit. The Hugisattel still commemorates a pioneer of this great peak.

So much for the Meyers. They deserve a high place in the history of exploration. "It has often seemed to me," writes Captain Farrer, "that the craft of mountaineering. and even more the art of mountaineering description, distinctly retrograded for over fifty years after these great expeditions of the Meyers. It is not until the early 'sixties that rocks of equal difficulty are again attacked. Even then—witness Almer's opinion as to the inaccessibility of the Matterhorn—men had not yet learned the axiom, which Alexander Burgener was the first, certainly by practice rather than by explicit enunciation, to lay down, viz. that the practicability of rocks is only decided by actual contact. Meyer's guides had a glimmering of this. It is again not until the 'sixties that Meyer's calm

yet vivid descriptions of actualities are surpassed by those brilliant articles of Stephen, of Moore, of Tuckett, and by Whymper's great 'Scrambles' that are the glory of English mountaineering."

But perhaps the greatest name associated with this period is that of the great scientist, Agassiz. Agassiz is a striking example of the possibilities of courage and a lively faith. He never had any money; and yet he invariably lived as if he possessed a comfortable competence. "I have no time for making money," is one of his sayings that have become famous. He was a native of Orbe, a beautiful town in the Jura. His father was a pastor, and the young Agassiz was intended for the medical profession. He took the medical degree, but remained steadfast in his determination to become, as he told his father, "the first naturalist of his time." Humboldt and Cuvier soon discovered his powers; in due time he became a professor at Neuchâtel. He married on eighty louis a year; but money difficulties never depressed him. As a boy of twenty, earning the princely sum of fifty pounds a year, he maintained a secretary in his employment, a luxury which he never denied himself. Usually he maintained two or three. At Neuchâtel, his income eventually increased to £125 a year. On this, he kept

up an academy of natural history, a museum, a staff of secretaries and assistants, a lithographic and printing plant, and a wife. His wife, by the way, was a German lady; and it is not surprising that her chief quarrel with life was a lack of money for household expenses. The naturalist, who had no time for making money, spent what little he had on the necessities of his existence, such as printing presses and secretaries, and left the luxuries of the larder to take care of themselves. His family helped him with loans, "at first," we are told, "with pleasure, but afterwards with some reluctance." Humboldt also advanced small sums. "I was pleased to remain a debtor to Humboldt," writes Agassiz, a sentiment which probably awakens more sympathy in the heart of the average undergraduate than it did in the bosom of Humboldt.

A holiday which Agassiz spent with another great naturalist, Charpentier, was indirectly responsible for the beginnings of the glacial theory. Throughout Switzerland, you may find huge boulders known as erratic blocks. These blocks have a different geological ancestry from the rocks in the immediate neighbourhood. They did not grow like mushrooms, and they must therefore have been carried to their present position by some outside agency. In the eighteenth century,

naturalists solved all these questions by *a priori* theories, proved by quotations from the book of Genesis. The Flood was a favourite solution, and the Flood was, therefore, invoked to solve the riddle of erratic blocks. By the time that Agassiz had begun his great work, the Flood was, however, becoming discredited, and its reputed operations were being driven further afield.

The discovery of the true solution was due, not to a scientist, but to a simple chamois hunter, named Perrandier. He knew no geology, but he could draw obvious conclusions from straightforward data without invoking the Flood. He had seen these blocks on glaciers, and he had seen them many miles away from glaciers. He made the only possible deduction—that glaciers must, at some time, have covered the whole of Switzerland. Perrandier expounded his views to a civil engineer, by name Venetz. Venetz passed it on to Charpentier, and Charpentier converted Agassiz. Agassiz made prompt use of the information, so prompt that Charpentier accused him of stealing his ideas. He read a paper before the Helvetic Society, in which he announced his conviction that the earth had once been covered with a sheet of ice that extended from the North Pole to Central Asia. The scepticism with which

this was met incited Agassiz to search for more evidence in support of his theory. His best work was done in "The Hôtel des Neuchâtelois." This hôtel at first consisted of an overhanging boulder, the entrance of which was screened by a blanket. The hôtel was built near the Grimsel on the medial moraine of the lower Aar glacier. To satisfy Mrs. Agassiz, her husband eventually moved into even more palatial quarters to wit, a rough cabin covered with canvas. "The outer apartment," complains Mrs. Agassiz, a lady hard to please, "boasted a table and one or two benches; even a couple of chairs were kept as seats of honour for occasional guests. A shelf against the wall accommodated books, instruments, coats, etc.; and a plank floor on which to spread their blankets at night was a good exchange for the frozen surface of the glacier." But the picture of this strange *ménage* would be incomplete without mention of Agassiz's companions. "Agassiz and his companions" is a phrase that meets us at every turn of his history. He needed companions, partly because he was of a friendly and companionable nature, partly, no doubt, to vary the monotony of Mrs. Agassiz's constant complaints, but mainly because his ambitious schemes were impossible without assistance. His work in-

volved great expenditure, which he could only recoup in part from the scanty grants allowed him by scientific societies, and the patronage of occasional wealthy amateurs. The first qualification necessary in a "companion" was a certain indifference as to salary, and the usual arrangement was that Agassiz should provide board and lodging in the hôtel, and that, if his assistant were in need of money, Agassiz should provide some if he had any lying loose at the time. This at least was the substance of the contract between Agassiz, on the one hand, and Edouard Desor of Heidelberg University, on the other hand.

Desor is perhaps the most famous of the little band. He was a political refugee, "without visible means of subsistence." He was a talented young gentleman with a keen interest in scientific disputes, and an eye for what is vulgarly known as personal advertisement. In other words he shared the very human weakness of enjoying the sight of his name in honoured print. Another companion was Karl Vogt. Mrs. Agassiz had two great quarrels with life. The first was a shortage of funds, and the second was the impropriety of the stories exchanged between Vogt and Desors. Another companion was a certain Gressly, a gentleman whose main charm for

Agassiz consisted in the fact that, "though he never had any money, he never wanted any." He lived with Agassiz in the winter as secretary. In summer he tramped the Jura in search of geological data. He never bothered about money, but was always prepared to exchange some good anecdotes for a night's lodging. Eventually, he went mad and ended his days in an asylum. Yet another famous name, associated with Agassiz, is that of Dollfus-Ausset, an Alsatian of Mülhausen, who was born in 1797. His great works were two books, the first entitled *Materials for the Study of Glaciers*, and the second *Materials for the Dyeing of Stuffs*. On the whole, he seems to have been more interested in glaciers than in velvet. He made, with Desor, the first ascent of the Galenstock, and also of the most southern peak of the Wetterhorn, namely the Rosenhorn (12,110 feet). He built many observatories on the Aar glacier and the Theodule, and he was usually known as "Papa Gletscher Dollfus."

Such, then, were Agassiz's companions. Humour and romance are blended in the picture of the strange little company that gathered every evening beneath the rough shelter of the hôtel. We see Mrs. Agassiz bearing with admirable resignation those in-

conveniences that must have proved a very real sorrow to her orderly German mind. We see Desor and Vogt exchanging broad anecdotes to the indignation of the good lady; and we can figure the abstracted naturalist, utterly indifferent to his environment, and only occupied with the deductions that may be drawn from the movement of stakes driven into a glacier. Let me quote in conclusion a few words from a sympathetic appreciation by the late William James (*Memories and Studies*)—

"Agassiz was a splendid example of the temperament that looks forward and not backwards, and never wastes a moment in regrets for the irrevocable. I had the privilege of admission to his society during the Thayer expedition to Brazil. I well remember, at night, as we all swung in our hammocks, in the fairy like moonlight, on the deck of the steamer that throbbed its way up the Amazon between the forests guarding the stream on either side, how he turned and whispered, 'James, are you awake?' and continued, 'I cannot sleep; I am too happy; I keep thinking of these glorious plans.' . . .

"Agassiz's influence on methods of teaching in our community was prompt and decisive—all the more so that it struck people's imagina-

tion by its very excess. The good old way of committing printed abstractions to memory seems never to have received such a shock as it encountered at his hands. There is probably no public school teacher who will not tell you how Agassiz used to lock a student up in a room full of turtle shells or lobster shells or oyster shells, without a book or word to help him, and not let him out till he had discovered all the truths which the objects contained. Some found the truths after weeks and months of lonely sorrow; others never found them. Those who found them were already made into naturalists thereby; the failures were blotted from the book of honour and of life. 'Go to Nature; take the facts into your own hands; look and see for yourself'—these were the maxims which Agassiz preached wherever he went, and their effect on pedagogy was electric. . . .

"The only man he really loved and had use for was the man who could bring him facts. To see facts, not to argue or *raisonniren* was what life meant for him; and I think he often positively loathed the ratiocinating type of mind. 'Mr. Blank, you are totally uneducated,' I heard him say once to a student, who had propounded to him some glittering theoretic generality. And on a similar occasion, he gave an admonition that must have

sunk deep into the heart of him to whom it was addressed. 'Mr. X, some people perhaps now consider you are a bright young man; but when you are fifty years old, if they ever speak of you then, what they will say will be this: "That Mr. X—oh yes, I know him; he used to be a very bright young man."' Happy is the conceited youth who at the proper moment receives such salutary cold-water therapeutics as this, from one who in other respects is a kind friend."

So much for Agassiz. It only remains to add that his companions were responsible for some fine mountaineering. During these years the three peaks of the Wetterhorn were climbed, and Desor was concerned in two of these successful expeditions. A far finer expedition was his ascent of the Lauteraarhorn, by Desor in 1842. This peak is connected with the Schreckhorn by a difficult ridge, and is a worthy rival to that well-known summit. There were a few other virgin climbs in this period, but the great age of Alpine conquest had scarcely begun.

The connecting link between Agassiz and modern mountaineering is supplied by Gottlieb Studer, who was born in 1804, and died in 1890. His serious climbing began in 1823, and continued for sixty years. He made a

number of new ascents, and reopened scores of passes, only known to natives. Most mountaineers know the careful and beautiful panoramas which are the work of his pencil. He drew no less than seven hundred of these. His great work, *Ueber Eis und Schnee*, a history of Swiss climbing, is an invaluable authority to which most of his successors in this field are indebted.

The careful reader will notice the comparative absence of the English in the climbs which we have so far described. The coming of the English deserves a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMING OF THE ENGLISH

MOUNTAINEERING, as a sport, is so often treated as an invention of Englishmen, that the real facts of its origin are unconsciously disguised. A commonplace error of the text-books is to date sporting mountaineering from Mr. Justice Wills's famous ascent of the Wetterhorn in 1854. The Wetterhorn has three peaks, and Mr. Justice Wills made the ascent of the summit which is usually climbed from Grindelwald. This peak, the Hasle Jungfrau, is the most difficult of the group but it is not the highest. In those early days, first ascents were not recorded with the punctuality and thoroughness that prevails to-day; and a large circle of mountaineers gave Mr. Justice Wills the credit of making the first ascent of the Hasle Jungfrau, or at least the first ascent from Grindelwald. Curiously enough, the climb, which is supposed to herald sporting mountaineering, was only the second ascent of the

Grindelwald route to the summit of a peak which had already been climbed four times. The facts are as follows: Desor's guides climbed the Hasle Jungfrau in 1844, and Desor himself followed a few days after. Three months before Wills's ascent, the peak was twice climbed by an early English pioneer, Mr. Blackwell. Blackwell's first ascent was by the Rosenlaui route, which Desor had followed, and his second, by the Grindelwald route, chosen by Mr. Wills. On the last occasion, he was beaten by a storm within about ten feet of the top, ten feet which he had climbed on the previous occasion. He planted a flag just under the final cornice; and we must give him the credit of the pioneer ascent from Grindelwald. Mr. Wills never heard of these four ascents, and believed that the peak was still virgin when he ascended it.

It would appear, then, that the so-called first sporting climb has little claim to that distinction. What, precisely, is meant by "sporting" in this connection? The distinction seems to be drawn between those who climb a mountain for the sheer joy of adventure, and those who were primarily concerned with the increase of scientific knowledge. The distinction is important; but it is often forgotten that scientists, like

De Saussure, Forbes, Agassiz and Desor, were none the less mountaineers because they had an intelligent interest in the geological history of mountains. All these men were inspired by a very genuine mountaineering enthusiasm. Moreover, before Mr. Wills's climb there had been a number of quite genuine sporting climbs. A few Englishmen had been up Mont Blanc; and, though most of them had been content with Mont Blanc, they could scarcely be accused of scientific inspiration. They, however, belonged to the "One man, one mountain, school," and as such can scarcely claim to be considered as anything but mountaineers by accident. Yet Englishmen like Hill, Blackwell, and Forbes, had climbed mountains with some regularity long before Mr. Wills made his great ascent; and foreign mountaineers had already achieved a series of genuine sporting ascents. Bourrit was utterly indifferent to science; and Bourrit was, perhaps, the first man who made a regular practice of climbing a snow mountain every year. The fact that he was not often successful must not be allowed to discount his sincere enthusiasm. Before 1840, no Englishman had entered the ranks of regular mountaineers; and by that date many of the great Alpine monarchs had fallen. Mont Blanc, the outer fortresses of Monte Rosa,

the Finsteraarhorn, King of the Oberland, the Ortler, and the Glockner, the great rivals of the Eastern Alps, had all been conquered. The reigning oligarchies of the Alps had bowed their heads to man.

Let us concede what must be conceded; even so, we need not fear that our share in Alpine history will be unduly diminished. Mr. Wills's ascent was none the less epoch-making because it was the fourth ascent of a second-class peak. The real value of that climb is this: It was one of the first climbs that were directly responsible for the systematic and brilliant campaign which was in the main conducted by Englishmen. Isolated foreign mountaineers had already done brilliant work, but their example did not give the same direct impetus. It was not till the English arrived that mountaineering became a fashionable sport; and the wide group of English pioneers that carried off almost all the great prizes of the Alps between 1854 and the conquest of the Matterhorn in 1865 may fairly date their invasion from Mr. Justice Wills's ascent, a climb which, though not even a virgin ascent and by no means the first great climb by an Englishman, was none the less a landmark. Mr. Justice Wills's vigorous example caught on as no achievement had caught on. His book, which

is full of spirited writing, made many converts to the new sport.

There had, of course, been many enthusiasts who had preached the sport before Mr. Justice Wills climbed the Wetterhorn. The earliest of all Alpine Journals is the *Alpina*, which first expressed the impetus of the great Alpine campaign. It appeared in 1806, and survived for four years, though the name was later attached to a magazine which has still a large circulation in Switzerland. It was edited by Ulysses von Salis; and it contained articles on chamois-hunting, the ascent of the Ortler, etc., besides reviews of the mountain literature of the period, such books, for instance, as those of Bourrit and Ebel. "The Glockner and the Ortler," writes the editor, "may serve as striking instances of our ignorance, until a few years ago, of the highest peaks in the Alpine ranges. Excluding the Gotthard and Mont Blanc, and their surrounding eminences, there still remain more than a few marvellous and colossal peaks which are no less worthy of becoming better known."

From 1840, the number of Englishmen taking part in high ascents increases rapidly; and between 1854 and 1865 the great bulk of virgin ascents stand to their credit, though it must always be remembered that these

ascents were led by Swiss, French and Italian guides, who did not, however, do them till the English arrived. Before 1840 a few Englishmen climbed Mont Blanc; Mrs. and Miss Campbell crossed the Col de Géant, which had previously been reopened by Mr. Hill; and Mr. Malkin crossed a few glacier passes. But J. D. Forbes was really the first English mountaineer to carry out a series of systematic attacks on the upper snows. Incidentally, his book, *Travels through the Alps of Savoy*, published in 1843, was the first book in the English language dealing with the High Alps. A few pamphlets had been published by the adventurers of Mont Blanc, but no really serious work. Forbes is, therefore, the true pioneer not only of British mountaineering, but of the Alpine literature in our tongue. He was a worthy successor to De Saussure, and his interest in the mountains was very largely scientific. He investigated the theories of glacier motion, and visited Agassiz at the "Hôtel des Neuchâtelois." On that occasion, if Agassiz is to be believed, the canny Scotsman managed to extract more than he gave from the genial and expansive Switzer. When Forbes published his theories, Agassiz accused him of stealing his ideas. Desor, whose genius for a row was only excelled by the joy he took

in getting up his case, did not improve matters; and a bitter quarrel was the result. Whatever may have been the rights of the matter, Forbes certainly mastered the theory of glacier motion, and proved his thorough grasp of the matter in a rather remarkable way. In 1820, a large party of guides and amateurs were overwhelmed by an avalanche on the Grand Plateau, and three of the guides disappeared into a crevasse. Their bodies were not recovered. Dr. Hamel, who had organised the party, survived. He knew something of glacier motion, and ventured a guess that the bodies of the guides would reappear at the bottom of the glacier in about a thousand years. He was just nine hundred and thirty-nine years wrong in his calculation. Forbes, having ascertained by experiment the rate at which the glacier moved, predicted that the bodies would reappear in forty years. This forecast proved amazingly accurate. Various remains reappeared near the lower end of the Glacier des Bossons in 1861, a fragment of a human body, and a few relics came to light two years later, and a skull, ropes, hat, etc., in 1865. Strangely enough, this accident was repeated in almost all its details in the famous Arkwright disaster of 1866.

Forbes carried through a number of fine

expeditions. He climbed the Jungfrau with Agassiz and Desor—before the little trouble referred to above. He made the first passage by an amateur of the Col d'Hérens, and the first ascents of the Stockhorn (11,796 feet) and the Wasenhorn (10,661 feet). Besides his Alpine wanderings, he explored some of the glaciers of Savoy. His most famous book, *The Tour of Mont Blanc*, is well worth reading, and contains one fine passage, a simile between the motion of a glacier and the life of man.

Forbes was the first British mountaineer; but John Ball played an even more important part in directing the activity of the English climbers. He was a Colonial Under-Secretary in Lord Palmerston's administration; but he gave up politics for the more exciting field of Alpine adventure. His main interest in the Alps was, perhaps, botanical; and his list of first ascents is not very striking, considering the host of virgin peaks that awaited an enterprising pioneer. His great achievement was the conquest of the first great dolomite peak that yielded its secrets to man, the Pelmo. He also climbed the virgin Cima Tosa in the Brenta dolomites, and made the first traverse of the Schwartztor. He was the first to edit guidebooks for the use of mountaineers, and his knowledge of

the Alps was surprisingly thorough. He played a great part in the formation of the Alpine Club, and in the direction of their literary activity. He edited the classical series of *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers*, and a series of excellent Alpine guides.

But the event which above all others attracted the attention of Englishmen to the Alps was Albert Smith's ascent of Mont Blanc. Albert Smith is the most picturesque of the British mountaineers. He was something of a *blagueur*, but behind all his vulgarity lay a very deep feeling for the Alps. His little book on Mont Blanc makes good reading. The pictures are delightfully inaccurate in their presentation of the terrors of Alpine climbing; and the thoroughly sincere fashion in which the whole business of climbing is written up proves that the great white mountain had not yet lost its prestige. But we can forgive Albert Smith a great deal, for he felt the glamour of the Alps long before he had seen a hill higher than St. Anne's, near Chertsey. As a child, he had been given *The Peasants of Chamouni*, a book which rivalled *Pilgrim's Progress* in his affections. This mountain book fired him to anticipate his subsequent success as a showman. "Finally, I got up a small moving panorama of the horrors pertaining to Mont Blanc . . .

and this I so painted up and exaggerated in my enthusiasm, that my little sister—who was my only audience, but an admirable one, for she cared not how often I exhibited—would become quite pale with fright." Time passed, and Albert Smith became a student in Paris. He discovered that his enthusiasm for Mont Blanc was shared by a medical student; and together they determined to visit the Mecca of their dreams. They collected twelve pounds apiece, and vowed that it should last them for five weeks. They carried it about with them entirely in five-franc pieces, chiefly stuffed into a leathern belt round their waists. Buying "two old soldiers' knapsacks at three francs each, and two pairs of hobnailed shoes at five francs and a half," they started off on their great adventure. Smith wisely adds that, "if there is anything more delightful than travelling with plenty of money, it is certainly making a journey of pleasure with very little."

They made the journey to Geneva in seventy-eight hours by *diligence*. At Melun they bought a brick of bread more than two feet long. "The passengers paid three francs each for their *déjeuner*, ours did not cost ten sous." At night, they slept in the empty *diligence*. They meant to make that twelve pounds apiece carry them some distance.

From Geneva they walked to Chamounix, helped by an occasional friendly lift. Smith was delighted with the realisation of childish dreams. "Every step was like a journey in fairyland." In fact, the only disillusion was the contrast between the Swiss peasant of romance and the reality. "The Alpine maidens we encountered put us more in mind of poor law unions than ballads; indeed, the Swiss villagers may be classed with troubadours, minstrel pages, shepherdesses, and other fabulous pets of small poets and vocalists." After leaving Chamounix, Smith crossed the St. Bernard, visited Milan, and returned with a small margin still left out of the magic twelve pounds.

Albert Smith returned to London, took up practice as a surgeon, wrote for *Punch*, and acquired a big reputation as an entertainer in *The Overland Mail*, written by himself and founded on a journey to Egypt and Constantinople. The songs and sketches made the piece popular, and insured a long run. At the close of the season he went to Chamounix again, fully determined to climb Mont Blanc. He was accompanied by William Beverley, the artist, and was lucky to fall in with some Oxford undergraduates with the same ambition as himself. They joined forces, and a party of twenty, including

guides, prepared for the great expedition. Amongst other provisions, they took ninety-four bottles of wine, four legs of mutton, four shoulders of mutton, and forty-six fowls. Smith was out of training, and suffered terribly from mountain sickness. He was horrified by the Mur de la Côte, which he describes as "an all but perpendicular iceberg," and adds that "every step was gained from the chance of a horrible death." As a matter of fact, the Mur de la Côte is a very simple, if steep, snow slope. A good ski-runner could, under normal conditions, descend it on ski. If Smith had fallen, he would have rolled comfortably to the bottom, and stopped in soft snow. "Should the foot or the baton slip," he assures us, "there is no chance for life. You would glide like lightning from one frozen crag to another, and finally be dashed to pieces hundreds of feet below." It is pleasant to record that Smith reached the summit, though not without considerable difficulty, and that his party drank all the wine and devoured the forty-six fowls, etc., before their successful return to Chamounix.

Smith wrote an account of the ascent which provoked a bitter attack in *The Daily News*. Albert Smith was contrasted with De Saussure, greatly to Smith's disadvantage. The sober,

practical Englishman of the period could only forgive a mountain ascent if the climber brought back with him from the heights, something more substantial than a vision of remembered beauty. A few inaccurate readings of an untrustworthy barometer could, perhaps, excuse a pointless exploit. "Saussure's observations," said a writer in *The Daily News*, "live in his poetical philosophy, those of Mr. Albert Smith will be most appropriately recorded in a tissue of indifferent puns, and stale, fast witticisms with an incessant straining after smartness. The aimless scramble of the four pedestrians to the top of Mont Blanc will not go far to redeem the somewhat equivocal reputation of the herd of English to risks in Switzerland for a mindless, and rather vulgar, redundance of animal spirits." Albert Smith did not allow the subject to drop. He turned Mont Blanc into an entertainment at the Egyptian Hall, an entertainment which became very popular, and was patronised by the Queen.

Narrow-minded critics affect to believe that Albert Smith was nothing more than a showman, and that Mont Blanc was for him nothing more than a peg on which to hang a popular entertainment. This is not true. Mr. Mathews does him full justice when he says: "He was emphatically a showman

from his birth, but it is not true he ascended the mountain for the purpose of making a show of it. His well-known entertainment resulted from a lifelong interest which he had taken in the great summit, of which he never failed to speak or write with reverence and affection." Mr. Mathews was by no means naturally prejudiced in favour of anybody who tended to popularise the Alps, and his tribute is all the more striking in consequence. Albert Smith fell in love with Mont Blanc long before he had seen a mountain. Nobody can read the story of his first journey with twelve pounds in his pocket, without realising that Albert Smith, the showman, loved the mountains with much the same passion as his more cultured successors. Mr. Mathews adds: "It is but just to his memory to record that he, too, was a pioneer. Mountaineering was not then a recognised sport for Englishmen. Hitherto, any information about Mont Blanc had to be sought for in isolated publications. Smith brought a more or less accurate knowledge of it, as it were, to the hearths and homes of educated Englishmen. . . . Smith's entertainment gave an undoubted impetus to mountaineering."

While Smith was lecturing, a group of Englishmen were quietly carrying through a series of attacks on the unconquered citadels

of the Alps. In 1854 Mr. Justice Wills made that ascent of the Wetterhorn which has already been referred to. It is fully described in Mr. Justice Wills's interesting book, *Wanderings among the High Alps*, and, amongst other things, it is famous as the first appearance in Alpine history of the great guide, Christian Almer. Mr. Wills left Grindelwald with Ulrich Lauener, a guide who was to play a great part in Alpine adventure, Balmat and Simond. "The landlord wrung Balmat's hand. 'Try,' said he, 'to return all of you alive.'" Lauener burdened himself with a "flagge" to plant on the summit. This "flagge" resolved itself on inspection into a very solid iron construction in the shape of a banner, which Lauener carried to the summit on the following day. They bivouacked on the Enge, and climbed next day without great difficulty, to the gap between the two summits of the Wetterhorn, now known as the Wettersattel. They made a short halt here; and, while they were resting, they noticed with surprise two men working up the rocks they had just climbed. Lauener at first supposed they were chamois hunters; but a moment's reflection convinced the party that no hunter would seek his prey on such unlikely ground. Moreover, chamois hunters do not usually carry on their

backs "a young fir-tree, branches, leaves, and all." They lost sight of the party and continued their meal. They next saw the two strangers on the snow slopes ahead, making all haste to be the first on the summit. This provoked great wrath on the part of Mr. Wills's guides, who believed that the Wetterhorn was a virgin peak, a view also shared by the two usurpers, who had heard of the intended ascent and resolved to plant their fir-tree side by side with the iron "flagge." They had started very early that same morning, and hunted their quarry down. A vigorous exchange of shouts and threats resulted in a compromise. "Balmat's anger was soon appeased when he found they owned the reasonableness of his desire that they should not steal from us the distinction of being the first to scale that awful peak; and, instead of administering the fisticuffs he had talked about, he declared they were *bons enfants* after all, and presented them with a cake of chocolate. Thus the pipe of peace was smoked, and tranquillity reigned between the rival forces."

From their resting-place they could see the final summit. From this point a steep snow slope, about three to four hundred feet in height, rises to the final crest, which is usually crowned by a cornice. The little party made

their way up the steep slope, till Lauener reached the final cornice. · It should, perhaps, be explained, that a cornice is a projecting cave of wind-blown snow which is usually transformed by sun and frost into ice. Lauener " stood close, not facing the parapet, but turned half round, and struck out as far away from himself as he could. . . . Suddenly, a startling cry of surprise and triumph rang through the air. A great block of ice bounded from the top of the parapet, and before it had well lighted on the glacier, Lauener exclaimed ' Ich schaue den Blauen Himmel ' (' I see blue sky '). A thrill of astonishment and delight ran through our frames. Our enterprise had succeeded. We were almost upon the actual summit. That wave above us, frozen, as it seemed, in the act of falling over, into a strange and motionless magnificence, was the very peak itself. Lauener's blows flew with redoubled energy. In a few minutes a practicable breach was made, through which he disappeared; and in a moment more the sound of his axe was heard behind the battlement under whose cover we stood. In his excitement he had forgotten us, and very soon the whole mass would have come crashing down upon our heads. A loud shout of warning from Sampson, who now occupied the gap,

was echoed by five other eager voices, and he turned his energies in a safer direction. It was not long before Lauener and Sampson together had widened the opening; and then at length we crept slowly on. As I took the last step Balmat disappeared from my sight; my left shoulder grazed against the angle of the icy embrasure, while on the right the glacier fell abruptly away beneath me towards an unknown and awful abyss; a hand from an invisible person grasped mine; I stepped across, and had passed the ridge of the Wetterhorn.

"The instant before I had been face to face with a blank wall of ice. One step, and the eye took in a boundless expanse of crag and glacier, peak and precipice, mountain and valley, lake and plain. The whole world seemed to lie at my feet. The next moment, I was almost appalled by the awfulness of our position. The side we had come up was steep; but it was a gentle slope compared with that which now fell away from where I stood. A few yards of glittering ice at our feet, and then nothing between us and the green slopes of Grindelwald nine thousand feet beneath."

The "iron flagge" and fir-tree were planted side by side, and attracted great attention in Grindelwald. The "flagge"

they could understand, but the fir-tree greatly puzzled them.

Christian Almer, the hero of the fir-tree, was destined to be one of the great Alpine guides. His first ascents form a formidable list, and include the Eiger, Monch, Fiescher-horn in the Oberland (besides the first ascent of the Jungfrau direct from the Wengern Alp), the Ecrins, monarch of the Dauphiny, the Grand Jorasses, Col Dolent, Aiguille Verte in the Mont Blanc range, the Ruinette, and Moming Pass in the Pennines. But Almer's most affectionate recollections always centred round the Wetterhorn. The present writer remembers meeting him on his way to celebrate his golden wedding, on the summit of his first love. Almer also deserves to be remembered as a pioneer of winter mountaineering. He made with Mr. Coolidge the first winter ascents of the Jungfrau and Wetterhorn. It was on a winter ascent of the former peak that he incurred frostbite, that resulted in the amputation of his toes, and the sudden termination of his active career. Some years later he died peaceably in his bed.

A year after Mr. Wills's famous climb, a party of Englishmen, headed by the brothers Smyth, conquered the highest point of Monte Rosa. The Alpine campaign was fairly

opened. Hudson made a new route up Mont Blanc without guides, the first great guideless climb by Englishmen. Hinchcliffe, the Mathews, E. S. Kennedy, and others, had already done valuable work.

The Alpine Club was the natural result of the desire on the part of these climbers to meet together in London and compare notes. The idea was first mooted in a letter from Mr. William Mathews to the Rev. J. A. Hort.[1] The first meeting was held on December 22, 1857. The office of President was left open till it was deservedly filled by John Ball; E. S. Kennedy became Vice-President, and Mr. Hinchcliffe, Honorary Secretary. It is pleasant to record that Albert Smith, the showman, was an original member. The English pioneers prided themselves, not without some show of justification, on the fact that their sport attracted men of great intellectual powers. Forbes, Tyndall, and Leslie Stephen, are great names in the record of Science and Literature. The present Master of Trinity was one of the early members, his qualification being an ascent of Monte Rosa, Sinai, and Parnassus.

There were some remarkable men in this

[1] The origin of the Alpine Club is, to some extent, a matter of dispute, the above is the view usually entertained.

early group of English mountaineers. Of John Ball and Albert Smith, we have already spoken. Perhaps the most distinguished mountaineer from the standpoint of the outside world was John Tyndall. Tyndall was not only a great scientist, and one of the foremost investigators of the theory of glacier motion, he was also a fine mountaineer. His finest achievement was the first ascent of the Weishorn; and he also played a great part in the long struggle for the blue ribbon of the Alps—the Matterhorn. His book, *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*, makes good reading when once one has resigned oneself to the use of somewhat pedantic terms for quite simple operations. Somewhere or other —I quote from memory—a guide's legs are referred to as monstrous levers that projected his body through space with enormous velocity! Tyndall, by the way, chose to take offence at some light-hearted banter which Leslie Stephen aimed at the scientific mountaineers. The passage occurs in Stephen's chapter on the Rothhorn. "'And what philosophic observations did you make?' will be the inquiry of one of those fanatics who by a process of reasoning to me utterly inscrutable have somehow irrevocably associated Alpine travelling with science. To them, I answer, that the temperature was approxi-

mately (I had no thermometer) 212 degrees Fahrenheit below freezing point. As for ozone, if any existed in the atmosphere, it was a greater fool than I take it for." This flippancy caused a temporary breach between Stephen and Tyndall which was, however, eventually healed.

Leslie Stephen is, perhaps, best known as a writer on ethics, though his numerous works of literary criticism contain much that is brilliant and little that is unsound. It has been said that the popularity of the word " Agnostic " is due less to Huxley, who invented it, than to Leslie Stephen who popularised it in his well known *Agnostic's Apology*, an important landmark in the history of English Rationalism. The present writer has read almost every line that Stephen wrote, and yet feels that it is only in *The Playground of Europe* that he really let himself go. Though Stephen had a brilliant record as a mountaineer, it is this book that is his best claim to the gratitude and honour of climbers. Stephen was a fine mountaineer, as well as a distinguished writer. He was the first to climb the Shreckhorn, Zinal Rothhorn, Bietschhorn, Blumlisalp, Rimpischorn, Disgrazia, and Mont Malet. He had the true mountaineering instinct, which is always stirred by the sight of an uncrossed

pass; and that great wall of rock and ice that shadows the Wengern Alp always suggests Stephen, for it falls in two places to depressions which he was the first to cross, passes immortalised in the chapters dealing with "The Jungfraujoch" and "The Eigerjoch."

It is not easy to stop if one begins to catalogue the distinguished men who helped to build up the triumphs of this period. Professor Bonney, an early president, was a widely travelled mountaineer, and a scientist of world-wide reputation. His recent work on the geology of the Alps, is perhaps the best book of the kind in existence. The Rev. Fenton Hort had, as we have seen, a great deal to do with the formation of the Alpine Club. His life has been written by his son, Sir Arthur Hort. Of John Ball and Mr. Justice Wills, we have already spoken. Of Whymper we shall have enough to say when we summarise the great romance of the Matterhorn. He was a remarkable man, with iron determination and great intellectual gifts. His classic *Scrambles in the Alps* did more than any other book to make new mountaineers. He was one of the first draughtsmen who combined a mountaineer's knowledge of rock and ice with the necessary technical ability to reproduce the grandeur of the Alps in

black and white. One should compare the delightful woodcuts from his sketches with the crude, shapeless engravings that decorate *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers.* His great book deserved its success. Whymper himself was a strong personality. He had many good qualities and some that laid him open to criticism. He made enemies without much difficulty. But he did a great work, and no man has a finer monument to keep alive the memory of his most enduring triumphs.

Another name which must be mentioned is that of Mr. C. E. Mathews, a distinguished pioneer whose book on Mont Blanc has been quoted in an earlier chapter. He was a most devoted lover of the great mountain, and climbed it no less than sixteen times. He was a rigid conservative in matters Alpine; and there is something rather engaging in his contempt for the humbler visitors to the Alps. "It is a scandal to the Republic," he writes, "that a line should have been permitted between Grindelwald and Interlaken. Alas for those who hailed with delight the extension of the Rhone Valley line from Sion to Visp!" It would have been interesting to hear his comments on the Jungfrau railway. The modern mountaineer would not easily forego the convenience of the trains to Zermatt that

save him many hours of tiresome, if romantic, driving.

Then there is Thomas Hinchcliffe, whose *Summer Months in the Alps* gave a decided impetus to the new movement. He belongs to a slightly earlier period than A. W. Moore, one of the most distinguished of the early group. Moore attained a high and honourable position in the Home Office. His book *The Alps in 1864*, which has recently been reprinted, is one of the sincerest tributes to the romance of mountaineering in the English language. Moore took part in a long list of first ascents. He was a member of the party that achieved the first ascent of the Ecrins which Whymper has immortalised, and he had numerous other virgin ascents to his credit. His most remarkable feat was the first ascent of Mont Blanc by the Brenva ridge, the finest ice expedition of the period. Mr. Mason has immortalised the Brenva in his popular novel, *Running Water*.

And so the list might be indefinitely extended, if only space permitted. There was Sir George Young, who took part in the first ascent of the Jungfrau from the Wengern Alp and who was one of the first to attempt guideless climbing. There was Hardy, who made the first English ascent of the Finsteraarhorn, and Davies who climbed the

two loftiest Swiss peaks, Dom and Täschhorn.[1] "What I don't understand," he said to a friend of the present writer, "is why you modern mountaineers always climb on a rope. Surely your pace must be that of the slowest member of the party?" One has a picture of Davies striding impatiently ahead, devouring the ground in great hungry strides, while the weaker members dwindled into small black spots on the face of the glacier. And then there is Tuckett, who died in 1913. Of Tuckett, Leslie Stephen wrote: "In the heroic cycle of Alpine adventure the irrepressible Tuckett will occupy a place similar to Ulysses. In one valley the peasant will point to some vast breach in the everlasting rocks hewn, as his fancy will declare, by the sweep of the mighty ice-axe of the hero. . . . The broken masses of a descending glacier will fairly represent the staircase which he built in order to scale a previously inaccessible height. . . . Critics will be disposed to trace in him one more example of the universal solar myth. . . . Tuckett, it will be announced, is no other than the sun which appears at earliest dawn above the tops of the loftiest mountains, gilds the summits of the most inaccessible peaks, penetrates remote

[1] Mount Blanc is divided between France and Italy: and the Italian frontier crosses Monte Rosa.

valleys, and passes in an incredibly short time from one extremity of the Alpine chain to another."

The period which closes with the ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865 has been called the Golden Age of Mountaineering; and the mountaineers whom we have mentioned were responsible for the greater portion of this glorious harvest. By 1865 the Matterhorn was the only remaining Zermat giant that still defied the invaders; and beyond Zermat only one great group of mountains, the Dolomites, still remained almost unconquered. It was the age of the guided climber. The pioneers did excellent work in giving the chamois hunter the opportunity to become a guide. And many of these amateurs were really the moral leaders of their parties. It was sometimes, though not often, the amateur who planned the line of ascent, and decided when the attack should be pressed and when it should be abandoned. It was only when the guide had made repeated ascents of fashionable peaks that the part played by the amateur became less and less important. Mountaineering in the 'fifties and 'sixties was in many ways far more arduous than it is to-day. Club-huts are now scattered through the Alps. It is no longer necessary to carry firewood and sleep-

ing-bags to some lonely bivouac beside the banks of great glaciers. A sudden gust of bad weather at night no longer means that the climber starts at dawn with drenched clothes. The excellent series of *Climbers' Guides* give minute instructions describing every step in the ascent. The maps are reliable. In those days, guide-books had still to be written, the maps were romantic and misleading, and the discoverer of a new pass had not only to get to the top, he had also to get down the other side. What precisely lay beyond the pass, he did not know. It might be an impassable glacier, or a rock face that could not be descended. Almost every new pass involved the possibility of a forced bivouac.

None the less, it must be admitted that the art of mountaineering has advanced more since 1865 than it did in the preceding half century. There is a greater difference between the ascent of the Grepon by the Mer de Glace Face, or the Brouillard Ridge of Mont Blanc, than between the Matterhorn and the Gross Glockner, or between the Weishorn and Mont Blanc.

The art of mountaineering is half physical and half mental. He who can justly claim the name of mountaineer must possess the power to *lead* up rocks and snow, and to cut steps in ice.

This is the physical side of the business. It is important; but the charm of mountaineering is largely intellectual. The mental equipment of the mountaineer involves an exhaustive knowledge of one of the most ruthless aspects of Nature. The mountaineer must know the hills in all their changing moods and tenses. He must possess the power to make instant use of trivial clues, a power which the uninitiated mistake for an instinctive sense of direction. Such a sense is undoubtedly possessed by a small minority, but path-finding is often usually only the subconscious analysis of small clues. The mountaineer must understand the secrets of snow, rock, and ice. He must be able to tell at a glance whether a snow slope is dangerous, or a snow-bridge likely to collapse. He must be able to move with certainty and safety on a rock face, whether it is composed of reliable, or brittle and dangerous rock. All this involves knowledge which is born of experience and the power to apply experience. Every new peak is a problem for the intellect. Mountaineering, however, differs radically in one respect from many other sports. Most men can get up a mountain somehow, and thereby share at least one experience of the expert. Of every hundred boys that are dragooned into compulsory cricket at school,

only ten could ever by any possible chance qualify to play in first-class cricket. Almost all of them could reach the summit of a first class peak if properly guided.

But this is not mountaineering. You cannot pay a professional to take your place at Lords' and then claim the benefit of the century he knocks up. But some men with great Alpine reputations owe everything to the professional they have hired. They have good wind and strong legs. With a stout rope above, they could follow a good leader up any peak in the Alps. The guide was not only paid to lead up the rocks and assist them from above. He was paid to do all the thinking that was necessary. He was the brain as well as the muscle of the expedition. He solved all the problems that Nature sets the climber, and mountaineering for his client was only a very safe form of exercise in agreeable surroundings.

Leslie Stephen admitted this, and he had less cause to admit it than most. "I utterly repudiate the doctrine that Alpine travellers are, or ought to be, the heroes of Alpine adventure. The true way, at least, to describe all my Alpine adventures is to say that Michael Anderegg, or Lauener, succeeded in performing a feat requiring skill, strength, and courage, the difficulty of which was much

increased by the difficulty of taking with him his knapsack and his employer." Now, this does less than justice to Leslie Stephen, and to many of the early mountaineers. Often they supplied the brain of the party, and the directing energy. They were pioneers. Yet mountaineering as a fine art owes almost as much to the men who first dispensed with professional assistance. A man who climbs habitually with guides may be, and often is, a fine mountaineer. He *need* be nothing more than a good walker, with a steady head, to achieve a desperate reputation among laymen.

Many of the early pioneers were by no means great athletes, though their mountaineering achievements deceived the public into crediting them with superhuman nerve and strength. Many of them were middle-aged gentlemen, who could have taken no part in active sports which demand a swift alliance of nerve and muscle; but who were quite capable of plugging up the average mixture of easy rock and snow that one meets on the average first-class Alpine peak. They had average endurance, and more than average pluck, for the prestige of the unvanquished peaks still daunted all but the courageous.

They were lucky in that the great bulk of Alpine peaks were unconquered, and were

only too ready to be conquered by the first climber who could hire two trusty Swiss guides to cut the steps, carry the knapsack, and lead up the rocks. It is usually said of these men: "They could not, perhaps, have tackled the pretty rock problems in which the modern cragsman delights. They were something better than gymnasts. They were all-round mountaineers." This seems rather special pleading. Some one said that mountaineering seemed to be walking up easy snow mountains between guides, and mere cragsmanship consisted in leading up difficult rock-peaks without guides. It does not follow that a man who can lead up the Chamounix aiguilles knows less of the broader principles of mountaineering than the gentleman who is piloted up Mont Blanc by sturdy Swiss peasants. The issue is not between those who confine their energies to gymnastic feats on Welsh crags and the wider school who understand snow and ice as well as rock. The issue is between those who can take their proper share in a rock-climb like the Grepon, or a difficult ice expedition like the Brenva Mont Blanc, and those who would be completely at a loss if their guides broke down on an easy peak like the Wetterhorn. The pioneers did not owe everything to their guides. A few did, but most of them were

good mountaineers whose opinion was often asked by the professionals, and sometimes taken. Yet the guided climber, then and now, missed the real inwardness of the sport. Mountaineering, in the modern sense, is a sport unrivalled in its appeal to mind and body. The man who can lead on a series of really first-class climbs must possess great nerve, and a specialised knowledge of mountains that is almost a sixth sense. Mountaineering between guides need not involve anything more than a good wind and a steady head. Anybody can get up a first-class peak. Only one amateur in ten can complete ascent and descent with safety if called on to lead.

In trying to form a just estimate of our debt to the early English pioneers, we have to avoid two extremes. We must remember the parable of the dwarf standing on the giant's shoulders. It ill becomes those who owe Climbers' Guides, and to some extent good maps, to the labours of the pioneers to discount their achievements. But the other extreme is also a danger. We need not pretend that every man who climbed a virgin peak in the days when nearly every big peak was virgin was necessarily a fine mountaineer. All praise is due to the earliest explorers, men like Balmat, Joseph Beck,

Bourrit, De Saussure, and the Meyers, for in those days the country above the snow-line was not only unknown, it was full of imagined terrors. These men did a magnificent work in robbing the High Alps of their chief defence—superstition. But in the late 'fifties and early 'sixties this atmosphere had largely vanished. Mr. X came to the A valley, and discovered that the B, C, or D horn had not been climbed. The B, C, and D horn were average peaks with a certain amount of straightforward snow and ice work, and a certain amount of straightforward rock work. Mr. X enjoys a fortnight of good weather, and the services of two good guides. He does what any man with like opportunities would accomplish, what an undergraduate fresh to the Alps could accomplish to-day if these peaks had been obligingly left virgin for his disposal. Many of the pioneers with a long list of virgin peaks to their credit would have made a poor show if they had been asked to lead one of the easy buttresses of Tryfan.

Rock-climbing as a fine art was really undreamt of till long after the Matterhorn had been conquered. The layman is apt to conceive all Alpine climbs as a succession of dizzy precipices. To a man brought up on Alpine classics, there are few things more disappointing than the ease of his first big

peak. The rock work on the average Oberland or Zermat peaks by the ordinary route is simple, straightforward scrambling up slopes whose average inclination is nearer thirty than sixty degrees. It is the sort of thing that the ordinary man can do by the light of Nature. Rock-climbing, in the sense in which the Dolomite or lake climber uses the term, is an art which calls for high qualities of nerve and physique. Such rock climbing was almost unknown till some time after the close of this period. No modern cragsman would consider the Matterhorn, even if robbed of its fixed ropes, as anything but a straightforward piece of interesting rock work, unless he was unlucky enough to find it in bad condition. All this we may frankly admit. Mountaineering as an art was only in its infancy when the Matterhorn was climbed. And yet the Englishmen whom we have mentioned in this chapter did more for mountaineering than any of their successors or predecessors. Bourrit, De Saussure, Beck, Placidus à Spescha, and the other pioneers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, deserve the greatest credit. But their spirited example gave no general impetus to the sport. They were single-handed mountaineers; and somehow they never managed to fire the world with their own enthusiasm.

The Englishmen arrived late on the scene. The great giants of more than one district had been climbed. And yet mountaineering was still the pursuit of a few isolated men who knew little or nothing of their brother climbers, who came and struggled and passed away uncheered by the inspiring freemasonry of a band of workers aiming at the same end. It was left to the English to transform mountaineering into a popular sport. Judged even by modern standards some of these men were fine mountaineers, none the less independent because the fashion of the day decreed that guides should be taken on difficult expeditions. But even those who owed the greater part of their success to their guides were inspired by the same enthusiasm which, unlike the lonely watchfires of the earlier pioneers, kindled a general conflagration.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORY OF THE MATTERHORN

THE history of mountaineering contains nothing more dramatic than the epic of the Matterhorn. There is no mountain which appeals so readily to the imagination. Its unique form has drawn poetic rhapsodies from the most prosaic. "Men," says Mr. Whymper, "who ordinarily spoke or wrote like rational beings when they came under its power seemed to quit their senses, and ranted, and rhapsodied, losing for a time all common forms of speech. Even the sober De Saussure was moved to enthusiasm."

If the Matterhorn could thus inspire men before the most famous siege in Alpine history had clothed its cliffs in romance, how much more must it move those for whom the final tragedy has become historical? The first view of the Matterhorn, and the moment when the last step is taken on to the final crest, are two moments which the mountaineer never forgets. Those who knew the old Zermat are unpleasantly fond of

reminding us that the railway train and the monster hôtels have robbed Zermat of its charm; while the fixed ropes and sardine tins —— [Those dear old sardine tins! Our Alpine writers would run short of satire if they could not invoke their aid]—have finally humiliated the unvanquished Titan. It may be so; but it is easy enough to recover the old atmosphere. You have only to visit Zermat in winter when the train is not running. A long trudge up twenty miles of shadowed, frosty valley, a little bluff near Randa, and the Matterhorn soars once more into a stainless sky. There are no clouds, and probably not another stranger in the valley. The hôtels are closed the sardine tins are buried, and the Matterhorn renews like the immortals an undying youth.

The great mountain remained unconquered mainly because it inspired in the hearts of the bravest guides a despairing belief in its inaccessibility. "There seemed," writes Mr. Whymper, "to be a cordon drawn round it up to which one might go, but no further. Within that line gins and efreets were supposed to exist—the wandering Jew and the spirits of the damned. The superstitious natives in the surrounding valleys (many of whom firmly believed it to be not only the highest mountain in the Alps, but in the world) spoke of a ruined city on the summit wherein

the spirits dwelt; and if you laughed they gravely shook their heads, told you to look yourself to see the castle and walls, and

I.—THE MATTERHORN FROM THE NORTH-EAST (ZERMAT).

The left-hand ridge in the Furgg Grat and the shoulder (F.S.) is the Furgg shoulder from which Mummery traversed across to the Swiss face on his attempt on the Furgg Grat.

The central ridge is the North-east ridge. N.E. is the point where the climb begine. S is the Swiss shoulder, A the Swiss summit, B the Italian summit. The route of the first ascent is marked. Nowadays it is usual to keep closer to the ridge in the early part of the climb and to climb from the shoulder S to the summit A. Fixed ropes hang throughout this section. T is the group of rocky teeth on the Zmutt ridge.

warned one against a rash approach, lest the infuriated demons from their impregnable heights might hurl down vengeance for one's derision."

Those who have a sense for the dramatic

unities will feel that, for once in a way, Life lived up to the conventions of Art, and that even a great dramatist could scarcely have bettered the materials afforded by the history of the Matterhorn. As the story unfolds itself one can scarcely help attributing some fatal personality to the inanimate cliffs. In the Italian valley of Breuil, the Becca, as the Matterhorn used to be called, was for centuries the embodiment of supernatural terror. Mothers would frighten their children by threats that the wild man of the Becca would carry them away. And if the children asked how the Matterhorn was born, they would reply that in bygone years there dwelt a giant in Aosta named Gargantua, who was once seized with a longing for the country beyond the range of peaks that divide Italy from Switzerland. Now, in those far off times, the mountains of the great barrier formed one uniform ridge instead of (as now) a series of peaks. The giant strode over this range with one step. As he stood with one foot in Switzerland and the other in Italy, the surrounding rocks fell away, and the pyramid of cliffs caught between his legs alone remained. And thus was the Matterhorn formed. There were many such legends; the reader may find them in Whymper and Guido Rey. They were enough to daunt all but the boldest.

II.—MATTERHORN FROM THE NORTH.

The left-hand ridge is the North-east ridge. The points N.E., S, A, B, and T are the same as the corresponding points in I. The North-east ridge, which appears extremely steep in I., is here seen in profile.

The drama of the Matterhorn opens appropriately enough with the three men who first showed a contempt for the superstitions that surrounded the Becca. The story of that first attempt is told in Guido Rey's excellent monograph on the Matterhorn, a monograph which has been translated by Mr. Eaton into English as spirited as the original Italian. This opening bout with the Becca took place in 1858. Three natives of Breuil, the little Italian valley at the foot of the Matterhorn, met before dawn at the châlet of Avouil. Of these, Jean Jacques Carrel was in command. He was a mighty hunter, and a fine mountaineer. The second, Jean Antoine Carrel, "il Bersaglier," was destined to play a leading part in the conflict that was to close seven years later. Jean Antoine was something more than a great guide. He was a ragged, independent mountaineer, difficult to control, a great leader, but a poor follower. He was an old soldier, and had fought at Novara. The third of these young climbers was Aimé Gorret, a young boy of twenty destined for the Church. His solitary rambles among the hills had filled him with a passionate worship of the Matterhorn.

Without proper provisions or gear, these three light-hearted knights set forth gaily

on their quest. They mistook the way; and, reaching a spot that pleased them, they wasted hours in hurling rocks down a cliff—a fascinating pursuit. When they reached the point now known as the Tête du Lion (12,215 feet) they contemplated the Matterhorn which rose definitely beyond an intervening gap. They looked at their great foe with quiet assurance. The Becca would not run away. Nobody else was likely to try a throw with the local giant. One day they would come back and settle the issue. There was no immediate hurry.

In 1860 a daring attempt was made by Messrs. Alfred, Charles, and Sanbach Parker of Liverpool. These bold climbers dispensed with guides, and had the wisdom to attack the east face that rises above Zermat. All the other early explorers attacked the Italian ridge; and, as will be seen, the first serious assault on the eastern face succeeded. Lack of time prevented the Parkers from reaching a greater height than 12,000 feet; nor were they more successful in the following year, but they had made a gallant attempt, for which they deserve credit. In 1860 another party had assailed the mountain from Italy, and reached a height of about 13,000 feet. The party consisted of Vaughan Hawkins and Prof. Tyndall, whom he had invited to

join the party, with the guides J. J. Carrel and Bennen.

In 1861 Edward Whymper, who had opened his Alpine career in the previous year, returned to the Alps determined to conquer two virgin summits of the Alps, the Matterhorn and the Weishorn. On arriving at Chatillon, he learned that the Weishorn had been climbed by Tyndall, and that Tyndall was at Breuil intending to add the Matterhorn to his conquests. Whymper determined to anticipate him. He arrived at Breuil on August 28, with an Oberland guide, and inquired for the best man in the valley. The knowing ones with a voice recommended Jean Antoine Carrel, a member of the first party to set foot on the Matterhorn. "We sought, of course, for Carrel, and found him a well-made, resolute looking fellow, with a certain defiant air which was rather taking. Yes, he would go. Twenty francs a day, whatever the result, was his price. I assented. But I must take his comrade. As he said this, an evil countenance came forth out of the darkness, and proclaimed itself the comrade. I demurred, and negotiations were broken off."

At Breuil, they tried to get another man to accompany them but without success. The men they approached either would not

go or asked a prohibitive price. "This, it may be said once and for all, was the reason why so many futile attempts were made on the Matterhorn. One guide after another was brought up to the mountain and patted on the back, but all declined the business. The men who went had no heart in the matter, and took the first opportunity to turn back. For they were, with the exception of the man to whom reference will be made [J. A. Carrel] universally impressed with the belief that the summit was entirely inaccessible."

Whymper and his guide bivouacked in a cowshed; and as night approached they saw J. A. Carrel and his companion stealing up the hillside. Whymper asked them if they had repented, and would join his party. They replied that they had contemplated an independent assault. "Oh, then, it is not necessary to have more than three." "Not for us." "I admired their pluck and had a strong inclination to engage the pair, but finally decided against it. The companion turned out to be J. J. Carrel. Both were bold mountaineers; but Jean Antoine was incomparably the better of the two, and was the finest rock climber I have ever seen. He was the only man who persistently refused to accept defeat, and who continued to believe, in spite of all discouragements, that the great

mountain was not inaccessible, and that it could be ascended from the side of his native valley."

Carrel was something more than a great guide. He remained a soldier long after he had laid down his sword. He was, above all, an Italian, determined to climb the Matterhorn by the great Italian ridge, to climb it for the honour of Italy, and for the honour of his native valley. The two great moments of his life were those in which he heard the shouts of victory at Colle di Santiarno, and the cries of triumph on the summit of the Italian ridge. Whymper, and later Tyndall, found him an awkward man to deal with. He had the rough, undisciplined nature of the mountain he loved. He looked on the Matterhorn as a kind of preserve, and was determined that he and no other should lead on the final and successful ascent. Whymper's first attempt failed owing to the poor qualities of his guide; and the Carrels were not more successful.

During the three years that followed, Whymper made no less than six attempts to climb the Matterhorn. On one occasion he climbed alone and unaided higher than any of his predecessors. Without guides or companions, he reached a height of 13,500 feet. There is little to be said for solitary

climbing, but this feat stands out as one of the boldest achievements of the period. The critics of solitary scrambling need, however, look no further than its sequel for their moral. In attempting to negotiate a corner on the Tête du Lion, Whymper slipped and fell. He shot down an ice slope, slid and bounded through a vertical height of about 200 feet, and was eventually thrown against the side of a gully where it narrowed. Another ten feet would have taken him in one terrific bound of 800 feet on to the glacier below. The blood was pulsing out of numerous cuts. He plastered up the wounds in his head with a lump of snow before scrambling up into a place of safety, where he promptly fainted away. He managed, however, to reach Breuil without further adventure. Within a week he had returned to the attack.

He made two further attempts that year which failed for various reasons; but he had the satisfaction of seeing Tyndall fail when success seemed assured. Tyndall had brought with him the great Swiss guide Bennen, and a Valaisian guide named Walter Anton. He engaged Jean Antoine and Cæsar Carrel. They proposed to attack the mountain by the Italian ridge. Next morning, somebody ran in to tell Whymper that a flag had been seen on the summit. This proved a false

alarm. Whymper waited through the long day to greet the party on their return. "I could not bring myself to leave, but lingered about as a foolish lover hovers round the object of his affections even after he has been rejected. The sun had set before the men were discerned coming over the pastures. There was no spring in their steps—they, too, were defeated."

Prof. Tyndall told Whymper that he had arrived "within a stone's-throw of the summit"—the mountain is 14,800 feet high, 14,600 feet had been climbed. "He greatly deceived himself," said Whymper, "for the point which he reached is no less than 800 feet below the summit. The failure was due to the fact that the Carrels had been engaged in a subordinate capacity. When they were appealed to for their opinion, they replied: "We are porters, ask your guides." Carrel always determined that the Matterhorn should be climbed from Italy, and that the leader of the climb should be an Italian. Bennen was a Swiss and Carrel had been engaged as a second guide. Tyndall and Whymper found it necessary to champion their respective guides, Carrel and Bennen; and a more or less heated controversy was carried on in the pages of *The Alpine Journal.*

The Matterhorn was left in peace till the

next year, but, meanwhile, a conspiracy for its downfall was hatched in Italy. The story is told in Guido Rey's classic book on the Matterhorn, a book which should be read side by side with Whymper's *Scrambles*, as it gives the Italian version of the final stages in which Italy and England fought for the great prize. In 1863, some leading Italian mountaineers gathered together at Turin to found an Italian Alpine Club. Amongst these were two well-known scientists, Felice Giordano and Quintino Sella. They vowed that, as English climbers had robbed them of Monte Viso, prince of Piedmontese peaks, Italy should have the honour of conquering the Matterhorn, and that Italians should climb it from Italy by the Italian ridge. The task was offered to Giordano, who accepted it.

In 1863 Whymper and Carrel made another attempt on the Matterhorn, which was foiled by bad weather. In the next year, the mountain was left alone; but the plot for its downfall began to mature. Giordano and Sella had met Carrel, and had extracted from him promises of support. Carrel was, above all, an Italian, and, other things being equal, he would naturally prefer to lead an Italian, rather than an English, party to the summit.

And now we come to the closing scenes. In 1865 Whymper returned to the attack,

heartily tired of the Italian ridge. With the great guides Michel Croz and Christian Almer, Whymper attempted to reach the summit by a rock couloir that starts from near the Breuiljoch, and terminates high up on the Furggen arête. This was a mad scheme; and the route they chose was the most impracticable of all the routes that had ever been attempted on the Matterhorn. Even to-day, the great couloir has not been climbed, and the top half of the Furggen ridge has only been once ascended (or rather outflanked on the Italian side), an expedition of great danger and difficulty. Foiled in this attempt, Whymper turned his attention to the Swiss face. The eastern face is a fraud. From the Riffel and from Zermat, it appears almost perpendicular; but when seen in profile from the Zmutt glacier it presents a very different appearance. The average angle of the slope as far as "the shoulder," about 13,925 feet, is about thirty degrees. From here to the summit the angle steepens considerably but is never more than fifty degrees. The wonder is that Whymper, who had studied the mountain more than once from the Zmutt glacier, still continued his attempts on the difficult Italian ridge.

On the 8th of June 1865, Whymper arrived in Breuil, and explained to Carrel his change

of plan. He engaged Carrel, and made plans for his attack on the Swiss face, promising Carrel that, if that failed, they should return to the Italian ridge. Jean Antoine told Whymper that he would not be able to serve him after the 11th, as he was engaged to travel "with a family of distinction in the valley of Aosta." Whymper asked him why he had not told him this before; and he replied that the engagement had been a long-standing one, but that the actual day had not been fixed. Whymper was annoyed; but he could find no fault with the answer, and parted on friendly terms with Carrel. But the family of distinction was no other than Giordano. "You are going to leave me," Whymper had said to Carrel, "to travel with a party of ladies. The work is not fit for you." Carrel had smiled; and Whymper had taken the smile as a recognition of the implied compliment. Carrel smiled because he knew that the work he had in hand was more fitted for him than for any other man.

On the 7th, Giordano had written to Sella:

"Let us, then, set out to attack this Devil's mountain; and let us see that we succeed, if only Whymper has not been beforehand with us." On the 11th, he wrote again: "Dear Quintino, It is high time for me to send you

news from here. I reached Valtournanche on Saturday at midday. There I found Carrel, who had just returned from a reconnoitring expedition on the Matterhorn, which had proved a failure owing to bad weather. Whymper had arrived two or three days before; as usual, he wished to make the ascent, and had engaged Carrel, who, not having had my letters, had agreed, but for a few days only. Fortunately, the weather turned bad, Whymper was unable to make his fresh attempt; and Carrel left him, and came with me together with five other picked men who are the best guides in the valley. We immediately sent off our advance guard with Carrel at its head. In order not to excite remark, we took the rope and other materials to Avouil, a hamlet which is very remote and close to the Matterhorn; and this is to be our lower base. . . . I have tried to keep everything secret; but that fellow, whose life seems to depend on the Matterhorn, is here suspiciously prying into everything. I have taken all the competent men away from him; and yet he is so enamoured of the mountain that he may go with others and make a scene. He is here in this hôtel, and I try to avoid speaking to him."

Whymper discovered on the 10th the iden-

tity of the " family of distinction." He was furious. He considered, with some show of justification, that he had been " bamboozled and humbugged."

The Italian party had already started for the Matterhorn, with a large store of provisions. They were an advance party designed to find and facilitate the way. They would take their time. Whymper took courage. On the 11th, a party arrived from Zermat across the Théodule. One of these proved to be Lord Francis Douglas, who, a few days previously, had made the second ascent of the Gabelhorn, and the first from Zinal. Lord Francis was a young and ambitious climber; and he was only too glad to join Whymper in an attack on the Swiss face of the Matterhorn. They crossed to Zermat together on the 12th, and there discovered Mr. Hudson, a great mountaineer, accompanied by the famous guide Michel Croz, who had arrived at Zermat with the Matterhorn in view. They agreed to join forces; and Hudson's friend Hadow was admitted to the party. Hadow was a young man of nineteen who had just left Harrow. Whymper seemed doubtful of his ability; but Hudson reassured him by remarking that Mr. Hadow had done Mont Blanc in less time than most men. Peter Taugwalder,

Lord Francis's guide, and Peter's two sons completed the party. On the 13th of July they left Zermat.

On the 14th of July Giordano wrote a short letter every line of which is alive with grave triumph. "At 2 p.m. to day I saw Carrel & Co., on the top of the Matterhorn." Poor Giordano! The morrow was to bring a sad disappointment; and his letter dated the 15th of July contains a pregnant sentence: "Although every man did his duty, it is a lost battle, and I am in great grief."

This is what had happened. Whymper and his companions had left Zermat on the 13th at half-past five. The day was cloudless. They mounted leisurely, and arrived at the base of the actual peak about half-past eleven. Once fairly on the great eastern face, they were astonished to find that places which looked entirely impracticable from the Riffel "were so easy that they could run about." By mid-day they had found a suitable place for the tent at a height of about 11,000 feet. Croz and young Peter Taugwalder went on to explore. They returned at about 3 p.m. in a great state of excitement. There was no difficulty. They could have gone to the top that day and returned. . . . "Long after dusk, the cliffs above echoed with our laughter, and with the songs of the guides.

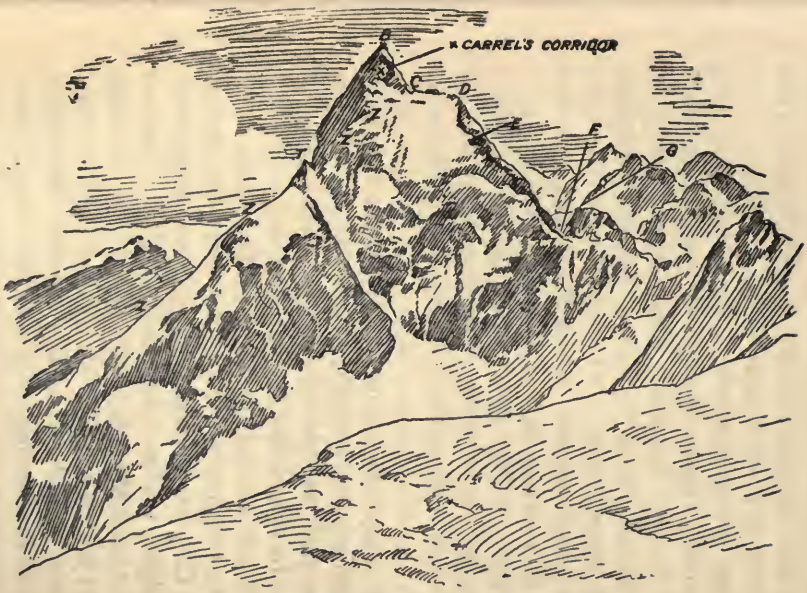
for we were happy that night in camp, and feared no evil."

Whymper's story is told with simplicity and restraint. He was too good a craftsman to spoil a great subject by unnecessary strokes. They started next day before dawn. They had left Zermat on the 13th, and they left their camp on a Friday (the superstitious noted these facts when the whole disastrous story was known). The whole of the great eastern slope " was now revealed, rising for 3000 feet like a huge natural staircase. Some parts were more and others were less easy; but we were not once brought to a halt by any serious impediment. . . . For the greater part of the way there was no need for the rope, and sometimes Hudson led, and sometimes myself." When they arrived at the snow ridge now known as " The Shoulder," which is some 500 feet below the summit, they turned over on to the northern face. This proved more difficult; but the general angle of the slope was nowhere more than forty degrees. Hadow's want of experience began to tell, and he required a certain amount of assistance. " The solitary difficult part was of no great extent. . . . A long stride round a rather awkward corner brought us to snow once more. The last doubt had vanished. The Matterhorn was

ours. Nothing but 200 feet of easy snow remained to be surmounted."

But they were not yet certain that they had not been beaten. The Italians had left Breuil four days before. All through the climb, false alarms had been raised of men on the top. The excitement became intense. "The slope eased off; at length we could be detached; and Croz and I, dashing away, ran a neck-and-neck race which ended in a dead heat. At 1.40 p.m. the world was at our feet, and the Matterhorn was conquered."

No footsteps could be seen; but the summit of the Matterhorn consists of a rudely level ridge about 350 feet in length, and the Italians might have been at the further end. Whymper hastened to the Italian summit, and again found the snow untrodden. They peered over the ridge, and far below on the right caught sight of the Italian party. "Up went my arms and hat. 'Croz, Croz, come here!' 'Where are they, monsieur?' 'There, don't you see them, down there.' 'Ah, the coquins, they are low down.' 'Croz, we must make those fellows hear us.' They yelled until they were hoarse. 'Croz, we must make them hear us, they shall hear us.'" Whymper seized a block of rock and hurled it down, and called on his companion to do the same. They drove their sticks in, and soon a



III.—THE MATTERHORN FROM THE NORTH-WEST.

T and B are the points marked T and B in I. and II. Z Z Z Z is the Zmutt ridge. B C D E F is the great Italian South-west ridge. B is the Italian summit. C the point where Tyndall turned back on his last attempt. D the Italian shoulder now known as "Pic Tyndall." E the "cravette." F the Col du Lion, and G the Tête du Lion. The Italian route ascends to the Col du Lion on the further side and then follows the Italian ridge.

whole torrent was pouring down. "There was no mistake about it this time. The Italians turned and fled."

Croz planted a tent-pole which they had taken with them, though Whymper protested that it was tempting Providence, and fixed his blouse to it. A poor flag—but it was seen everywhere. At Breuil—as we have seen—they cheered the Italian victory. But on the morrow the explorers returned downhearted. "The old legends are true—there are spirits on the top of the Matterhorn. We saw them ourselves—they hurled stones at us."

We may allow this dramatic touch to pass unchallenged, though, whatever Carrel may have said to his friends, he made it quite clear to Giordano that he had identified the turbulent spirits, for, in the letter from which we have quoted, Giordano tells his friends that Carrel had seen Whymper on the summit. It might, perhaps, be worth while to add that the stones Whymper hurled down the ridge could by no possible chance have hit Carrel's party. "Still, I would," writes Whymper, "that the leader of that party could have stood with us at that moment, for our victorious shouts conveyed to him the disappointment of a lifetime. He was *the* man of all those who attempted the ascent of the Matter-

horn who most deserved to be first upon its summit. He was the first to doubt its inaccessibility; and he was the only man who persisted in believing that its ascent would be accomplished. It was the aim of his life to make the ascent from the side of Italy, for the honour of his native valley. For a time, he had the game in his hands; he played it as he thought best; but he made a false move, and he lost it."

After an hour on the summit, they prepared to descend. The order of descent was curious. Croz, as the best man in the party, should have been placed last. As a matter of history, he led, followed, in this order, by Hadow, Hudson, Douglas, and Peter Taugwalder. Whymper was sketching while the party was being arranged. They were waiting for him to tie on when somebody suggested that the names had not been left in a bottle. While Whymper put this right, the rest of the party moved on. A few minutes later Whymper tied on to young Peter, and followed detached from the others. Later, Douglas asked Whymper to attach himself to old Taugwalder, as he feared that Taugwalder would not be able to hold his ground in the event of a slip. About three o'clock in the afternoon, Michel Croz, who had laid aside his axe, faced the rock, and, in order to give Hadow greater security,

was putting his feet one by one into their proper position. Croz then turned round to advance another step when Hadow slipped, fell against Croz, and knocked him over. "I heard one startled exclamation from Croz, and then saw him and Mr. Hadow flying downwards; in another moment Hudson was dragged from his steps, and Lord Francis Douglas immediately after him. All this was the work of a moment. Immediately we heard Croz's exclamation, old Peter and I planted ourselves as firmly as the rocks would permit: the rope was taut between us, and the jerk came on us both as on one man. We held: but the rope broke midway between Taugwalder and Lord Francis Douglas. For a few seconds, we saw our unfortunate companions sliding downwards on their backs, and spreading out their hands endeavouring to save themselves. They passed from our sight uninjured, disappeared one by one, and then fell from precipice to precipice on to the Matterhorngletscher below, a distance of nearly 4000 feet in height. From the moment the rope broke, it was impossible to help them."

For half-an-hour, Whymper and the two Taugwalders remained on the spot without moving. The two guides cried like children. Whymper was fixed between the older and

younger Taugwalder, and must have heartily regretted that he left young Peter the responsibility of last man down, for the young man was paralysed with terror, and refused to move. At last, he descended, and they stood together. Whymper asked immediately for the end of the rope that had given way, and noticed with horror that it was the weakest of the three ropes. It had never been intended to use it save as a reserve in case much rope had to be left behind to attach to the rocks.

For more than two hours after the fall, Whymper expected that the Taugwalders would fall. They were utterly unnerved. At 6 p.m. they arrived again on the snow shoulder. "We frequently looked, but in vain, for traces of our unfortunate companions; we bent over the ridge and cried to them, but no sound returned. Convinced at last that they were neither within sight nor hearing, we ceased from our useless efforts; and, too cast down for speech, silently gathered up our things, and the little effects of those who were lost, preparatory to continuing the descent."

As they started down, the Taugwalders raised the problem as to their payment, Lord Francis being dead. "They filled," remarks Whymper, "the cup of bitterness to overflowing, and I tore down the cliff

madly and recklessly in a way that caused them more than once to inquire if I wished to kill them." The whole party spent the night on a miserable ledge. Next day, they descended in safety to Zermat. Seiler met them at the door of his hôtel. "What is the matter?" "The Taugwalders and I have returned." He did not need more, and burst into tears, but lost no time in needless lamentations, and set to work to rouse the village.

On Sunday morning, Whymper set out with the Rev. Canon M'Cormick to recover the bodies of his friends. The local curé threatened with excommunication any guide who neglected Mass in order to attend the search party. "To several, at least, this was a severe trial. Peter Perrn declared, with tears in his eyes, that nothing else would have prevented him joining in the search." Guides from other valleys joined the party. At 8.30 they got to the plateau at the top of the glacier. They found Hudson, Croz and Hadow, but "of Lord Francis Douglas nothing was seen."

This accident sent a thrill of horror through the civilised world. The old file of *The Times*, which is well worth consulting, bears tribute to the profound sensation which the news of this great tragedy aroused. Idle rumours of every kind were afloat—with these we shall

deal later. For more than five weeks, not a day passed without some letter or comment in the columns of the leading English paper. These letters, for the most part, embodied the profound distrust with which the new sport was regarded by the bulk of Englishmen. If Lord Francis Douglas had been killed while galloping after a fox, he would have been considered to have fallen in action. That he should have fallen on the day that the Matterhorn fell, that he should have paid the supreme forfeit for a triumphant hour in Alpine history—such a death was obviously wholly without its redeeming features. "It was the blue ribbon of the Alps," wrote *The Times*, "that poor Lord Francis Douglas was trying for the other day. If it must be so, at all events the Alpine Club that has proclaimed this crusade must manage the thing rather better, or it will soon be voted a nuisance. If the work is to be done, it must be done well. They must advise youngsters to practise, and make sure of their strength and endurance."

For three weeks, Whymper gave no sign. At last, in response to a dignified appeal from Mr. Justice Wills, then President of the Alpine Club, he broke silence, and gave to the public a restrained account of the tragedy. As we have said, malicious rumour had been busy, and in ignorant quarters there had been

rumours of foul play. The Matterhorn accident first popularised the theory that Alpine ropes existed to be cut. Till then, the public had supposed that the rope was used to prevent cowardly climbers deserting their party in an emergency. But from 1865 onwards, popular authors discovered a new use for the rope. They divided all Alpine travellers into two classes, those who cut the rope from below ("Greater love hath no man—a romance of the mountains") and those who cut the rope from above ("The Coward—a tale of the snows"). A casual reader might be pardoned for supposing that the Swiss did a brisk business in sheath knives. We should be the last to discourage this enterprising school—their works have afforded much joy to the climbing fraternity; but we offer them in all humility a few remarks on the art of rope-cutting by a member of Class II (those who cut the rope from above).

A knife could only be used with advantage when a snowbridge gives way. It is easy enough to hold a man who has fallen into a crevasse; but it is often impossible to pull him out. The whole situation is altered on a rock face. If a man falls, a sudden jerk may pull the rest of the party off the face of the mountain. This will almost

certainly happen if the leader or, on a descent, the last man down, falls, unless the rope is anchored round a knob of rock, in which case—provided the rope does not break—the leader may escape with a severe shaking, though a clear fall of more than fifteen feet will usually break the rope if anchored; and, if not anchored, the party will be dragged off their holds one by one. Therefore, the leader must not fall. If any other member of the party falls, he should be held by the man above. On difficult ground, only one man moves at a time. No man moves until the man above has secured himself in a position where he can draw in the rope as the man below advances. If he keeps it reasonably taut, and is well placed, he should be able to check any slip. A climber who slips and is held by the rope can immediately get new foothold and handhold. He is not in a crevasse from which exit is impossible save at the rope's end. His slip is checked, and he is swung up against a rock face. There is no need to drag him up. The rest of the party have passed over this face, and therefore handholds and footholds can be found. The man who has slipped will find fresh purchase, and begin again. In the case of the Matterhorn accident, the angle of the slope was about forty degrees. There was an abundance of

hold, and if the rope had not parted Croz and Hadow would have been abruptly checked, and would have immediately secured themselves. Now, if Taugwalder had cut the rope, as suggested, he must have been little short of an expert acrobat, and have cut it in about the space of a second and a half *before the jerk*. If he had waited for the jerk, either he would have been dragged off, in which case his knife would have come in handy, or he would have held, in which case it would have been unnecessary.

To mountaineers, all this, of course, is a truism; and we should not have laboured the point if we wrote exclusively for mountaineers. Even so, Peter's comrades at Zermat (who should have known better) persisted in believing that he cut the rope. "In regard to this infamous charge," writes Whymper, "I say that he could not do so at the moment of the slip, and that the end of the rope in my possession shows that he did not do so before." Whymper, however, adds: "There remains the suspicious fact that the rope which broke was the thinnest and weakest one we had. It is suspicious because it is unlikely that the men in front would have selected an old and weak rope when there was an abundance of new, and much stronger, rope to spare; and, on the other hand, because

if Taugwalder thought that an accident was likely to happen, it was to his interest to have the weaker rope placed where it was."

One cannot help regretting that Whymper lent weight to an unworthy suspicion. Taugwalder was examined by a secret Court of Inquiry; and Whymper prepared a set of questions with a view to helping him to clear himself. The answers, though promised, were never sent; and Taugwalder ultimately left the valley for America, returning only to die. Whymper, in his classic book, suggested the possibility of criminal dealings by publishing photographs of the three ropes showing that the rope broken was far the weakest.

Let us review the whole story as Whymper himself tells it. We know that Whymper crossed the Théodule on the eleventh in a state of anger and despair. The prize for which he had striven so long seemed to be sliding from his grasp. Carrel had deserted him just as the true line of attack had been discovered. Like all mountaineers, he was human. He gets together the best party he can, and sets out with all haste determined to win by a head. Hadow, a young man with very little experience, is taken, and Hadow, the weak link, is destined to turn triumph into disaster. Let the mountaineer who has never invited a man unfit for a big climb throw

the first stone. And, before he has thrown it, let him remember the peculiar provocation in Whymper's case.

All goes well. The Matterhorn is conquered with surprising ease. These six men achieve the greatest triumph in Alpine history without serious check. To Whymper, this hour on the summit must have marked the supreme climax of life, an hour that set its seal on the dogged labours of past years. Do men in such moments anticipate disaster? Taugwalder might possibly have failed in a sudden crisis; but is it likely that he should deliberately prepare for an accident by carefully planned treachery?

Now read the story as Whymper tells it. The party are just about to commence the descent. The first five hundred feet would still be considered as demanding the greatest care. The top five hundred feet of the Matterhorn, but for the ropes with which the whole mountain is now festooned, would always be a difficult, if not a dangerous, section. Croz was the best guide in the party. He should have remained behind as sheet anchor. Instead of this, he goes first. Whymper falls out of line, to inscribe the names of the party, ties himself casually on to young Peter, and then "runs down after the others." In the final arrangements, young Peter, who was

a young and inexperienced guide, was given the vital position of last man down. Flushed with triumph, their minds could find no room for a doubt. Everything had gone through with miraculous ease. Such luck simply could not turn. It is in precisely such moments as these that the mountains settle their score. Mountaineering is a ruthless sport that demands unremitting attention. In games, a moment's carelessness may lose a match, or a championship; but in climbing a mistake may mean death.

As for Taugwalder, one is tempted to acquit him without hesitation; but there is one curious story about Taugwalder which gives one pause. The story was told to the present writer by an old member of the Alpine Club, and the following is an extract from a letter: "I had rather you said 'a friend of yours' without mentioning my name. I had a good many expeditions with old Peter Taugwalder, including Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa; and I had rather a tender spot for the somewhat coarse, dirty old beggar. I should not like my name to appear to help the balance to incline in the direction of his guilt in that Matterhorn affair. It was not on the Dent Blanche that he took the rope off; it was coming down a long steep slope of bare rock from the top of the Tête Blanche

towards Prayagé. I had a couple of men with me who were inexperienced; and I fancy he must have thought that, if one of them let go, which was not unlikely, he would be able to choose whether to hold on or let go. I happened to look up and see what was going on, and I made him tie up at once. I don't quite remember whether Whymper tells us how far from Peter's fingers the break in the rope occurred. That seems to me one of the most critical points."

There we may leave Taugwalder, and the minor issues of this great tragedy. The broader lessons are summed up by Mr. Whymper in a memorable passage: "So the traditional inaccessibility of the Matterhorn was vanquished, and was replaced by legends of a more real character. Others will essay to scale its proud cliffs, but to none will it be the mountain that it was to the early explorers. Others may tread its summit snows, but none will ever know the feelings of those who first gazed upon its marvellous panorama; and none, I trust, will ever be compelled to tell of joy turned into grief, and of laughter into mourning. It proved to be a stubborn foe; it resisted long and gave many a hard blow; it was defeated at last with an ease that none could have anticipated, but like a relentless enemy—

conquered, but not crushed—it took a terrible vengeance."

The last sentence has a peculiar significance. A strange fatality seems to dog the steps of those who seek untrodden paths to the crest of the Matterhorn. Disaster does not always follow with the dramatic swiftness of that which marked the conquest of the eastern face, yet, slowly but surely, the avenging spirit of the Matterhorn fulfils itself.

On July 16, two days after the catastrophe, J. A. Carrel set out to crown Whymper's victory by proving that the Italian ridge was not unconquerable. He was accompanied by Abbé Gorret, a plucky priest who had shared with him that first careless attack on the mountain. Bich and Meynet completed the party. The Abbé and Meynet remained behind not very far from the top, in order to help Carrel and Bich on the return at a place where a short descent onto a ledge was liable to cause difficulty on the descent. This ledge, known as Carrel's corridor, is about forty minutes from the summit. It needed a man of Carrel's determined courage to follow its winding course. It is now avoided.

The rest of the climb presented no difficulty. Carrel had conquered the Italian ridge. The ambition of years was half fulfilled, only half, for the Matterhorn itself had been climbed.

One cannot but regret that he had turned back on the 14th. Whymper's cries of triumph had spelt for him the disappointment of a lifetime. Yet a fine rôle was open to him. Had he gone forward and crowned Whymper's victory by a triumph unmarred by disaster; had the Matterhorn defied all assaults for years, and then yielded on the same day to a party from the Swiss side and Carrel's men from Italy, the most dramatic page in Alpine history would have been complete. Thirty-five years later, the Matterhorn settled the long outstanding debt, and the man who had first attacked the citadel died in a snowstorm on the Italian ridge of the mountain which he had been the first to assail, and the first to conquer.

Carrel was in his sixty-second year when he started out for his last climb. Bad weather detained the party in the Italian hut, and Signor Sinigaglia noticed that Carrel was far from well. After two nights in the hut, the provisions began to run out; and it was decided to attempt the descent. The rocks were in a terrible condition, and the storm added to the difficulty. Carrel insisted on leading, though he was far from well. He knew every yard of his own beloved ridge. If a man could pilot them through the storm that man was Carrel. Quietly and methodi-

cally, he fought his way downward, yard by yard, undaunted by the hurricane, husbanding the last ounces of his strength. He would not allow the other guides to relieve him till the danger was past, and his responsibilities were over. Then suddenly he collapsed, and in a few minutes the gallant old warrior fell backwards and died. A cross now marks the spot where the old soldier died in action.

In life the leading guides of Breuil had often resented Carrel's unchallenged supremacy. But death had obliterated the old jealousies. Years afterwards, a casual climber stopped before Carrel's cross, and remarked to the son of Carrel's great rival, " So that is where Carrel fell." " Carrel did not fall," came the indignant answer, " Carrel died."

Let us turn from Carrel to the conquerors of another great ridge of the Matterhorn.

Of others concerned with attacks on the Italian ridge, Tyndall, Bennen, and J. J. Macquignaz, all came to premature ends. Bennen was killed in an historic accident on the Haut de Cry, and Macquignaz disappeared on Mont Blanc. In 1879, two independent parties on the same day made the first ascent of the great northern ridge of the Matterhorn known as the Zmutt arête. Mummery and Penhall were the amateurs responsible for these two independent assaults. " The

memory," writes Mummery," of two rollicking parties, comprised of seven men, who on one day in 1879 were climbing on the west face of the Matterhorn passes with ghost-like admonition before my mind, and bids me remember that, of these seven, Mr. Penhall was killed on the Wetterhorn, Ferdinand Imseng on the Macugnaga side of Monte Rosa, and Johan Petrus on the Frersnay Mont Blanc." Of the remaining four, Mummery disappeared in the Himalayas in 1895, Louis Zurbrucken was killed, Alexander Burgener perished in an avalanche near the Bergli hut in 1911. Mr. Baumann and Emil Rey, who with Petrus followed in Mummery's footsteps three days later, both came to untimely ends: Baumann disappeared in South Africa, and Emil Rey was killed on the Dent de Géant. The sole survivor of these two parties is the well-known Augustin Gentinetta, one of the ablest of the Zermat guides. Burgener and Gentinetta guided Mummery on the above-mentioned climb, while Penhall was accompanied by Louis Zurbrucken. In recent times, three great mountaineers who climbed this ridge together died violent deaths within the year. The superstitious should leave the Zmutt arête alone.

CHAPTER IX

MODERN MOUNTAINEERING

ALPINE History is not easy to divide into arbitrary periods; and yet the conquest of the Matterhorn does in a certain sense define a period. It closes what has been called "the golden age of mountaineering." Only a few great peaks still remained unconquered. In this chapter we shall try to sketch some of the tendencies which differentiate modern mountaineering from mountaineering in the so-called "golden age."

The most radical change has been the growth of guideless climbing, which was, of course, to be expected as men grew familiar with the infinite variety of conditions that are the essence of mountaineering. In a previous chapter we have discussed the main differences between guided and guideless climbing. It does not follow that a man of considerable mountaineering experience, who habitually climbs with guides need entirely relinquish the control of the expedition. Such a man—there are not many—may, indeed,

take a guide as a reserve of strength, or as a weight carrier. He may enjoy training up a young and inexperienced guide, who has a native talent for rock and ice, while lacking experience and mountain craft. One occasionally finds a guide who is a first-class cragsman, but whose general knowledge of mountain strategy is inferior to that of a great amateur. In such a combination, the latter will be the real general of the expedition, even if the guide habitually leads on difficult rock and does the step-cutting. On the other hand a member of a guideless party may be as dependent on the rest of the party as another man on his guides. Moreover, tracks, climbers, guides and modern maps render the mental work of the leader, whether amateur or professional, much less arduous than in more primitive days.

But when we have made all possible allowance for the above considerations, there still remains a real and radical distinction between those who rely on their own efforts and those who follow a guide. The man who leads even on one easy expedition obtains a greater insight into the secrets of his craft than many a guided climber with a long list of first-class expeditions.

One of the earliest of the great guideless climbs was the ascent of Mont Blanc by

E. S. Kennedy, Charles Hudson (afterwards killed on the first ascent of the Matterhorn), Grenville and Christopher Smyth, E. J. Stevenson and Charles Ainslie. Their climb was made in 1855, and was the first complete ascent of Mont Blanc from St. Gervais, though the route was not new except in combination, as every portion of it had been previously done on different occasions. One of the first systematic guideless climbers to attract attention was the Rev. A. G. Girdlestone, whose book, *The High Alps without Guides*, appeared in 1870. This book was the subject of a discussion at a meeting of the Alpine Club. Mr. Grove, a well-known mountaineer, read a paper on the comparative skill of travellers and guides, and used Girdlestone's book as a text. Mr. Grove said: "The net result of mountaineering without guides appears to be this, that, in twenty-one expeditions selected out of seventy for the purposes of description, the traveller failed absolutely four times; was in great danger three times; was aided in finding the way back by the tracks of other men's guides four times; succeeded absolutely without aid of any kind ten times on expeditions, four of which were very easy, three of moderate difficulty, and one very difficult." The "very difficult" expedition is the Wetterhorn, which

is nowadays considered a very modest achievement.

Mr. Girdlestone was a pioneer, with the limitations of a pioneer. His achievements judged by modern standards are modest enough, but he was the first to insist that mountaineering without guides is an art, and that mountaineering with guides is often only another form of conducted travel. The discussion that followed, as might be expected, at that time was not favourable either to Girdlestone or to guideless climbing. Probably each succeeding year will see his contribution to modern mountaineering more properly appreciated. The " settled opinion of the Alpine Club " was declared " without a single dissentient to be that " the neglect to take guides on difficult expeditions is totally unjustifiable."

But guideless climbing had come to stay. A year after this memorable meeting of the Alpine Club, two of its members carried out without guides some expeditions more severe than anything Girdlestone had attempted. In 1871 Mr. John Stogdon, a well-known Harrow master, and the Rev. Arthur Fairbanks ascended the Nesthorn and Aletschhorn, and in the following year climbed the Jungfrau and Aletschhorn unguided. No record of these expeditions found its way into print. In

1876, a party of amateurs, Messrs. Cust, Cawood, and Colgrove climbed the Matterhorn without guides. This expedition attracted great attention, and was severely commented on in the columns of the *Press*. Mr. Cust, in an eloquent paper read before the Alpine Club, went to the root of the whole matter when he remarked: "Cricket is a sport which is admitted by all to need acquired skill. A man can buy his mountaineering as he can buy his yachting. None the less, there are yachtsmen and yachtsmen."

Systematic climbing on a modern scale without guides was perhaps first practised by Purtscheller and Zsigmondys in 1880. Among our own people, it found brilliant exponents in Morse, Mummery, Wicks, and Wilson some twenty years ago; and it has since been adopted by many of our own leading mountaineers. Abroad, guideless climbing finds more adherents than with us. Naturally enough, the man who lives near the mountains will find it easier to make up a guideless party among his friends; and, if he is in the habit of spending all his holidays and most of his week-ends among the mountains that can be reached in a few hours from his home, he will soon acquire the necessary skill to dispense with guides.

So much for guideless climbing. Let us

now consider some of the other important developments in the practice of mountaineering. In the Alps the tendency has been towards specialisation. Before 1865 the ambitious mountaineer had scores of unconquered peaks to attack. After the defeat of the Matterhorn, the number of the unclimbed greater mountains gradually thinned out. The Meije, which fell in 1877, was one of the last great Alpine peaks to remain unclimbed. With the development of rock-climbing, even the last and apparently most hopelessly inaccessible rock pinnacles of the Dolomites and Chamonix were defeated. There is no rock-climbing as understood in Wales or Lakeland or Skye on giants of the Oberland or Valais, such as the Schreckhorn or Matterhorn. These tax the leader's power of choosing a route, his endurance and his knowledge of snow and ice, and weather; but their demands on the pure cragsman are less. The difficulty of a big mountain often depends very much on its condition and length. Up to 1865 hardly any expeditions had been carried through—with a few exceptions, such as the Brenva route up Mont Blanc—that a modern expert would consider exceptionally severe. Modern rock-climbing begins in the late seventies. The expeditions in the Dolomites by men like Zsigmondy, Schmitt, and Winkler,

among foreign mountaineers, belong to much the same period as Burgener and Mummery classic climbs in the Chamounix district.

Mummery is, perhaps, best known in connection with the first ascent of the Grepon by the sensational "Mummery crack," when his leader was the famous Alexander Burgener aided by a young cragsman, B. Venetz. Venetz, as a matter of fact, led up the "Mummery" crack. Mummery's vigorous book, which has become a classic, contains accounts of many new expeditions, such as the Grepon, the Requin, the Matterhorn by the Zmutt arête, and the Caucasian giant Dych Tau, to name the more important. His book, *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus*, is thoroughly typical of the modern view of mountaineering. It contains some doctrines that are still considered heretical, such as the safety of a party of two on a snow-covered glacier, and many doctrines that are now accepted, such as the justification of guideless climbing and of difficult variation routes. Shortly after the book appeared, Mummery was killed on Nanga Parbat, as was Emil Zsigmondy on the Meije soon after the issue of his book on the dangers of the Alps.

But even Dolomites and Chamounix aiguilles are not inexhaustible, and the number of unconquered summits gradually diminished.

The rapid opening up of the Alps has naturally turned the attention of men with the exploring instinct and ample means to the exploration of the great mountain ranges beyond Europe. This does not fall within the scope of the present volume, and we need only remark in passing that British climbers have played an important part in the campaigns against the fortresses of the Himalaya, Caucasus, Andes, and Rockies.

Meanwhile the ambitious mountaineer was forced to look for new routes on old peaks. Now, a man in search of the easiest way up a difficult peak could usually discover a route which was climbable without severe technical difficulty. On a big mountain, it is often possible to evade any small and very difficult section. But most mountains, even our British hills, have at least one route which borders on the impossible, and a diligent search will soon reveal it. Consider the two extremes of rock-climbing. Let us take the Matterhorn as a good example of a big mountain which consists almost entirely of rock. It is impossible to find a route up the Matterhorn which one could climb with one's hands in one's pockets, but the ordinary Swiss route is an easy scramble as far as the shoulder, and, with the fixed ropes, a straightforward climb thence to the top. Its Furggen

Ridge has been once climbed under fair conditions and then only with a partial deviation. It is extremely severe and dangerous. The task of the mountaineers who first assailed the Matterhorn was to pick out the easiest line of approach. The Zmutt, and in a greater degree the Furggen routes, were obviously ruled out of consideration. The Italian route was tried many times without success before the Swiss route was discovered. Of course, the Matterhorn, like all big mountains, varies in difficulty from day to day. It is a very long climb; and, if the conditions are unfavourable, it may prove a very difficult and a very dangerous peak.

Turning to the nursery of Welsh climbers, Lliwedd can be climbed on a mule, and Lliwedd can also be climbed by about thirty or more distinct routes up its southern rock face. If a man begins to look for new routes up a wall of a cliff a thousand feet in height and a mile or so in breath, he will sooner or later reach the line which divided reasonable from unreasonable risk. Modern pioneer work in the Alps is nearer the old ideal. It is not simply the search for the hardest of all climbable routes up a given rock face. In England, the danger of a rock fall is practically absent, and a rock face is not considered climbed out as long as one can work up from

base to summit by a series of ledges not touched on a previous climb. Two such routes will sometimes be separated by a few feet. In the Alps, the pioneer is compelled by objective difficulties to look for distinct ridges and faces unswept by stones and avalanches. There is a natural challenge in the sweep of a great ridge falling through some thousand unconquered feet to the pastures below. There is only an artificial challenge in a " new " route some thousand feet in height separated only by a few yards of cliff from an " old " route. We do not wish to depreciate British climbing, which has its own fascination and its own value; but, if it calls for greater cragsmanship, it demands infinitely less mountain craft than the conquest of a difficult Alpine route.

And what is true of British rock-climbing is even more true of Tirol. Ranges, such as the Kaisergebirge, have been explored with the same thoroughness that has characterised British rock-climbing. Almost every conceivable variation of the " just possible " has been explored. Unfortunately, the death-roll in these districts is painfully high, as the keenness of the young Austrian and Bavarian has not infrequently exceeded their experience and powers.

Abroad, mountaineering has developed very

rapidly since the 'sixties. We have seen that English climbers, first in the field, secured a large share of unconquered peaks; but once continental climbers had taken up the new sport, our earlier start was seriously challenged. The Swiss, Austrian, and German have one great advantage. They are much nearer the Alps; and mountaineering in these countries is, as a result, a thoroughly democratic sport. The foreign Alpine Clubs number thousands of members. The German-Austrian Alpine Club has alone nearly ninety thousand members. There is no qualification, social or mountaineering. These great national clubs have a small subscription; and with the large funds at their disposal they are able to build club-huts in the mountains, and excellent meeting places in the great towns, where members can find an Alpine library, maps, and other sources of information. They secure many useful concessions, such as reduced fares for their members on Alpine railways. Mountaineering naturally becomes a democratic sport in mountainous countries, because the mountains are accessible. The very fact that a return ticket to the Alps is a serious item must prevent Alpine climbing from becoming the sport of more than a few of our countrymen. At the same time, we have an excellent native play-

ground in Wales and Cumberland, which has made it possible for young men to learn the craft before they could afford a regular climbing holiday in the Alps. Beside the great national clubs of the Continent, there are a number of vigorous university clubs scattered through these countries. Of these, the Akademischer Alpine clubs at Zürich and Munich are, perhaps, the most famous. These clubs consist of young men reading at the Polytechnic or University. They have as high a mountaineering qualification as any existing Alpine clubs. They attach importance to the capacity to lead a guideless party rather than to the bare fact that a man has climbed so many peaks. Each candidate is taken on a series of climbs by members of the club, who report to the committee on his general knowledge of snow and rock conditions, and his fitness, whether in respect of courage or endurance for arduous work.

It is young men of this stamp that play such a great part in raising the standard of continental mountaineering. Their cragsmanship often verges on the impossible. A book published in Munich, entitled *Empor*, affords stimulating reading. This book was produced in honour and in memory of Georg Winkler by some of his friends. Winkler was a young Munich climber who carried through

some of the most daring rock climbs ever recorded. *Empor* contains his diary, and several articles contributed by various members of one of the most remarkable climbing groups in Alpine history. Winkler's amazing performances give to the book a note which is lacking in most Alpine literature. Winkler was born in 1869. As a boy of eighteen he made, quite alone, the first ascent of the Winklerturn, one of the most sensational—both in appearance and reality—of all Dolomite pinnacles. On the 14th of August 1888 he traversed alone the Zinal Rothhorn, and on the 18th he lost his life in a solitary attempt on the great Zinal face of the Weisshorn. No definite traces of him have ever been found. His brother, born in the year of his death, has also carried through some sensational solitary climbs.

We may, perhaps, be excused a certain satisfaction in the thought that the British crags can occasionally produce climbers whose achievements are quite as sensational as those of the Winklers. Without native mountains, we could not hope to produce cragsmen equal to those of Tirol and the Alps. One must begin young. It is, as a rule, only a comparatively small minority that can afford a regular summer holiday in the Alps; but Scawfell and Lliwedd are accessible enough,

and the comparatively high standard of the British rock-climber owes more to British than to Alpine mountains. It was only in the last two decades that the possibilities of these crags were systematically worked out, though isolated climbs have been recorded for many years. The patient and often brilliant explorations of a group of distinguished mountaineers have helped to popularise a fine field for native talent, and an arena for those who cannot afford a regular Alpine campaign. Guides are unknown in Great Britain, and the man who learns to climb there is often more independent and more self-reliant than the mountaineer who is piloted about by guides. There is, of course, much that can be learned only in the Alps. The home climber can learn to use an axe in the wintry gullies round Scawfell. He learns something of snow; but both snow and ice can only be properly studied in the regions of perpetual snow. The home-trained cragsman, as a rule, learns to lead up rocks far more difficult than anything met with on the average Swiss peaks, but the wider lessons of route-finding over a long and complicated expedition are naturally not acquired on a face of cliff a thousand feet in height. Nor, for that matter, is the art of rapid descent over easy rocks; for the British climber usually ascends by rocks, and runs

home over grass and scree. None the less, these cliffs have produced some wonderfully fine mountaineers. We have our Winklers, and we have also young rock-climbers who confine their energies to the permissible limit of the justifiable climbing and who, within those limits, carry their craft to its most refined possibilities. Hugh Pope, one of the most brilliant of the younger school of rock-climbers, learned his craft on the British hills, and showed in his first Alpine season the value of that training. To the great loss of British mountaineering he was killed in 1912 on the Pic du Midi d'Ossau.

Another comparatively recent development is the growth of winter mountaineering. The first winter expedition of any importance after the beginnings of serious mountaineering was Mr. T. S. Kennedy's attempt on the Matterhorn in 1863. He conceived the curious idea that the Matterhorn might prove easier in winter than in summer. Here, he was very much mistaken. He was attacked by a storm, and retreated after reaching a point where the real climb begins. It was a plucky expedition. But the real pioneer of winter mountaineering was W. A. Moore. In 1866, with Mr. Horace Walker, Melchior Anderegg, Christian Almer, and "Peterli" Bohren, he left Grindelwald at midnight; they crossed the Fin-

steraarjoch, and returned within the twenty-four hours to Grindelwald over the Strahlegg. Even in summer this would prove a strenous day. In winter, it is almost incredible that this double traverse should have been carried through without sleeping out.

Most of the great peaks have now been ascended in winter; and amongst others Mr. Coolidge must be mentioned as a prominent pioneer. His ascents of the Jungfrau, Wetterhorn, and Schreckhorn—the first in winter—with Christian Almer, did much to set the fashion. Mrs. Le Blond, the famous lady climber, has an even longer list of winter first ascents to her credit. But the real revolution in winter mountaineering has been caused by the introduction of ski-ing. In winter, the main difficulty is getting to the high mountain huts. Above the huts, the temperature is often mild and equable for weeks together. A low temperature on the ground co-exists with a high temperature in the air. Rock-ridges facing south or south-west are often denuded of snow, and as easy to climb as in summer. Signor Sella also made some brilliant winter ascents, such as the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa.

The real obstacle to winter mountaineering is the appalling weariness of wading up to the club-huts on foot. The snow in the

sheltered lower valleys is often deep and powdery; and the climber on foot will have to force his way through pine forests where the snow lies in great drifts between the trees, and over moraines where treacherous drifts conceal pitfalls between the loose stones. All this is changed by the introduction of ski. The ski distributes the weight of the climber over a long, even surface; and in the softest snow he will not sink in more than a few inches. Better still, they revolutionise the descent, converting a weary plug through snow-drifts into a succession of swift and glorious runs. The ski-runner takes his ski to the foot of the last rock ridges, and then proceeds on foot, rejoining his ski, and covering on the descent five thousand feet in far less time than the foot-climber would take over five hundred. Skis, as everybody knows, were invented as a means of crossing snowy country inaccessible on foot. They are sometimes alluded to as snowshoes, but differ radically from snowshoes in one important respect. Both ski and the Canadian snowshoe distribute their wearer's weight, and enable him to cross drifts where he would sink in hopelessly if he were on foot, but there the resemblance ends. For, whereas snowshoes cannot slide on snow, and whereas a man on snowshoes cannot descend a hill as

fast as a man on foot could run down hill, skis glide rapidly and easily on snow, and a ski-runner can descend at a rate which may be anything up to sixty miles an hour.

Ski-ing is of Scandinavian origin, and the greatest exponents of the art are the Norwegians. Norwegians have used ski from time immemorial in certain districts, such as Telemarken, as a means of communication between snow-bound villages. It should, perhaps, be added that ski-jumping does not consist, as some people imagine, in casual leaps across chasms or over intervening hillocks. The ski-runner does not glide along the level at the speed of an express train, lightly skimming any obstacles in his path. On the level, the best performer does not go more than six or seven miles an hour, and the great jumps one hears of are made downhill. The ski-runner swoops down on to a specially prepared platform, leaps into the air, and alights on a very steep slope below. The longest jump on record is some hundred and fifty feet, measured from the edge of the take-off to the alighting point. In this case, the ski-runner must have fallen through nearly seventy vertical feet.

To the mountaineer, the real appeal of ski-ing is due to the fact that it halves the labour of his ascent to the upper snowfields,

and converts a tedious descent into a succession of swift and fascinating runs. The ski-runner climbs on ski to the foot of the final rock and ice ridges, and then finishes the climb in the ordinary way. After rejoining his ski, his work is over, and his reward is all before him. If he were on foot, he would have to wade laboriously down to the valley. On ski, he can swoop down with ten times the speed, and a thousand times the enjoyment.

Ski were introduced into Central Europe in the early 'nineties. Dr. Paulcke's classic traverse of the Oberland in 1895, which included the ascent of the Jungfrau, proved to mountaineers the possibilities of the new craft. Abroad, the lesson was soon learned. To-day, there are hundreds of ski-runners who make a regular practice of mountaineering in winter. The Alps have taken out a new lease of life. In summer, the huts are crowded, the fashionable peaks are festooned with parties of incompetent novices who are dragged and pushed upwards by their guides, but in winter the true mountain lover has the upper world to himself. The mere summit hunter naturally chooses the line of least resistance, and accumulates his list of first class expeditions in the summer months, when such a programme is easiest to compile.

The winter mountaineer must be more or less independent of the professional element, for, though he will probably employ a guide to find the way and to act as a reserve of strength, he himself must at least be able to ski steadily, and at a fair speed.

Moreover, mountain craft as the winter mountaineer understands the term is a more subtle and more embracing science as far, at least, as snow conditions are concerned. It begins at the hôtel door. In summer, there is a mule path leading to the glacier line, a mule path which a man can climb with his mind asleep. But in winter the snow with its manifold problems sweeps down to the village. A man has been killed by an avalanche within a few yards of a great hôtel. From the moment a man buckles on his ski, he must exercise his knowledge of snow conditions. There are no paths save a few woodcutter's tracks. From the valley upwards, he must learn to pick a good line, and to avoid the innocent-looking slopes that may at any moment resolve themselves into an irresistible avalanche. Many a man is piloted up a succession of great peaks without acquiring anything like the same intimate knowledge of snow that is possessed even by a ski-runner who has never crossed the summer snow-line. Even the humblest ski-

runner must learn to diagnose the snow. He may follow his leader unthinkingly on the ascent; but once he starts down he must judge for himself. If he makes a mistake, he will be thrown violently on to his face when the snow suddenly sticks, and on to his back when it quickens. Even the most unobservant man will learn something of the effects of sun and wind on his running surface when the result of a faulty deduction may mean violent contact with Mother Earth.

Those who worship the Alps in their loveliest and loneliest moods, those who dislike the weary anti-climax of the descent through burning snowfields, and down dusty mule paths, will climb in the winter months, when to the joy of renewing old memories of the mountains in an unspoiled setting is added the rapture of the finest motion known to man.

In England mountaineering on ski has yet to find many adherents. We have little opportunity for learning to ski in these isles, and the ten thousand Englishmen that visit the Alps in winter prefer to ski on the lower hills. For every Englishman with a respectable list of glacier tours on ski to his credit, there are at least a hundred continental runners with a record many times more brilliant. The Alpine Ski Club, now in its sixth year,

has done much to encourage this "new mountaineering," and its journal contains a record of the finest expeditions by English and continental runners. But even in the pages of the Alpine Ski Club Annual, the proportion of foreign articles describing really fine tours is depressingly large. Of course, the continental runner lives nearer the Alps. So did the continental mountaineer of the early 'sixties; but that did not prevent us taking our fair share of virgin peaks.

The few Englishmen who are making a more or less regular habit of serious mountaineering on ski are not among the veterans of summer mountaineering, and the leaders of summer mountaineering have not yet learned to ski. Abroad, the leaders of summer mountaineering have welcomed ski-ing as a key to their mountains in winter; but the many leaders of English mountaineering still argue that skis should not be used in the High Alps, on the ground that they afford facility for venturing on slopes and into places where the risk of avalanches is extreme. On the Continent thousands of runners demonstrate in the most effective manner that mountaineering on ski has come to stay. It is consoling to reflect that English ski-runners are prepared to work out the peculiar problems of their craft with or

without the help of summer mountaineers. Of course, both ski-ing and summer mountaineering would be strengthened by an alliance, and ski-runners can best learn the rules of the glacier world in winter from those mountaineers who combine a knowledge of the summer Alps with some experience of winter conditions and a mastery of ski-ing. For the moment, such teachers must be looked for in the ranks of continental mountaineers.

CHAPTER X

THE ALPS IN LITERATURE

THE last chapter has brought the story of mountaineering up to modern times, but, before we close, there is another side of Alpine exploration on which we must touch. For Alpine exploration means something more than the discovery of new passes and the conquest of virgin peaks. That is the physical aspect of the sport, perhaps the side which the average climber best understands. But Alpine exploration is mental as well as physical, and concerns itself with the adventures of the mind in touch with the mountains as well as with the adventures of the body in contact with an unclimbed cliff. The story of the gradual discovery of high places as sources of inspiration has its place in the history of Alpine exploration, as well as the record of variation routes too often expressed in language of unvarying monotony.

The present writer once undertook to compile an anthology whose scope was defined by the title—*The Englishman in the Alps.*

The limitations imposed by the series of which this anthology formed a part prevented him from including the Alpine literature of foreign authors, a fact which tended to obscure the real development of the Alpine literature. In the introduction he expressed the orthodox views which all good mountaineers accept without demur, explaining that mountaineers were the first to write fitly of the mountains, that English mountaineers had a peculiar talent in this direction, and that all the best mountain literature was written in the last half of the nineteenth century. These pious conclusions were shattered by some very radical criticism which appeared in leading articles of *The Times* and *The Field.* The former paper, in the course of some criticisms of Mr. Spender's Alpine Anthology, remarked: "In the matter of prose, on the other hand, he has a striking predilection for the modern 'Alpine books' of commerce, though hardly a book among them except Whymper's *Scrambles in the Alps* has any real literary vitality, or any interest apart from the story of adventure which it tells. Mummery, perhaps, has individuality enough to be made welcome in any gallery, and, of course, one is glad to meet Leslie Stephen. But what is C. E. Mathews doing there? Or Norman Neruda? Or Mr. Frederic Harrison? In an

anthology which professed to be nothing more than a collection of stories of adventure, accidents, and narrow escapes, they would have their place along with Owen Glynne Jones, and Mr. Douglas Freshfield, and innumerable contributors to *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers* and *The Alpine Journal*."

We rubbed our eyes when we read these heterodox sentiments in such a quarter. Mr. Mathews was, perhaps, an Alpine historian rather than a writer of descriptive prose, and he does not lend himself to the elegant extract, though he is the author of some very quotable Alpine sketches. To Mr. Freshfield we owe, amongst other good things, one short passage as dramatic as anything in Alpine literature, the passage in which he describes the discovery of Donkin's last bivouac on Koshtantau. *The Field* was even more emphatic :

" What is not true is that the pioneer sportsmen who founded the Alpine Club had exceptional insight into the moods of the snow. One or two of them, no doubt, struck out a little literature as the result of the impact of novel experiences upon naïve minds. . . . On the whole, in spite of their defects, their machine-made perorations and their ponderous jests, they brought an acceptable addition to the existing stock of the

literature of adventure. . . . But they had their limitations, and these were rather narrow. They dealt almost exclusively with the externals of mountaineering experience; and when they ventured further their writing was apt to be of the quality of fustian. Their spiritual adventures among the mountains were apt to be melodramatic or insignificant. Perhaps their Anglo-Saxon reticence prevented themselves from ' letting themselves go.' . . . At all events there does remain this notable distinction—that, while the most eloquent writings of the most eloquent Alpine Club-man are as a rule deliberately and ostentatiously objective, the subjective literature of mountains—the literature in which we see the writer yielding to the influence of scenery, instead of lecturing about its beauties, existed long before that famous dinner party at the house of William Mathews, senior, at which the Alpine Club was founded. England, as we have said, contributed practically nothing to that literature."

We have quoted this passage at some length because it expresses a novel attitude in direct contradiction to the accepted views sanctified by tradition. We do not entirely endorse it. The article contains proof that its writer has an intimate knowledge of early Alpine litera-

ture, but one is tempted to fancy that his research did not survive the heavy period of the 'eighties, and that he is unacquainted with those modern writers whose work is distinctly subjective. None the less, his contention suggests an interesting line of study; and in this chapter we shall try briefly to sketch the main tendencies, though we cannot review in detail the whole history, of Alpine literature, a subject which requires a book in itself.

The mediæval attitude towards mountains has already been discussed, and though we ventured to protest that love of the mountains was not quite so uncommon as is usually supposed, it must be freely admitted that the literature of the Middle Ages is comparatively barren in appreciation of mountain scenery. There were Protestants before Luther, and there were men such as Gesner and Petrarch before Rousseau; but the Middle Ages can scarcely rob Rousseau of the credit for transforming mountain worship from the cult of a minority into a comparatively fashionable creed. Rousseau's own feeling for the mountains was none the less genuine because it was sometimes coloured by the desire to make the mountains echo his own philosophy of life. Rousseau, in this respect, set a fashion which his disciples were not slow to follow. The

mountains as the home of the rugged Switzer could be made to preach edifying lay sermons on the value of liberty. Such sentiments were in tune with the spirit of revolt that culminated in the French Revolution. A certain Haller had sounded this note long before Rousseau began to write, in a poem on the Alps which, appearing in 1728, enjoyed considerable popularity. The author is not without a genuine appreciation for Alpine scenery, but he is far more occupied with his moral, the contrast between the unsophisticated life of the mountain peasant and the hyper-civilisation of the town. Throughout the writings of this school which Haller anticipated and Rousseau founded, we can trace an obvious connection between a love for the untutored freedom of the mountains and a hatred of existing social conditions.

It is, therefore, not surprising to find that this new school of mountain worship involved certain views which found most complete expression in the French Revolution. "Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains." This, the famous opening to *The Social Contract*, might have heralded with equal fitness any mountain passage in the works of Rousseau or his disciples. Perhaps these two sentiments are nowhere fused with such completeness as in the life of Ramond de

Carbonnière, the great Pyrenean climber. We have not mentioned him before as he took no part in purely Alpine explorations. But as a mountaineer he ranks with De Saussure and Paccard. His ascent of Mont Perdu, after many attempts, in 1802, was one of the most remarkable climbing exploits of the age. He invented a new kind of crampon. He rejoiced in fatigue, cold, and the thousand trials that confronted the mountaineer in the days before club-huts. His own personality was singularly arresting; and the reader should consult *The Early Mountaineers* for a more complete sketch of the man than we have space to attempt. Ramond had every instinct of the modern mountaineer. He delighted in hardship. He could appreciate the grandeur of a mountain storm while sitting on an exposed ledge. He lingers with a delight that recalls Gesner on the joy of simple fare and rough quarters. He is the boon companion of hunters and smugglers; and through all his mountain journeys his mind is alert in reacting to chance impressions.

But his narrative is remarkable for something else besides love for the mountains. It is full of those sentiments which came to a head in the French Revolution. Mountain description and fierce denunciations of tyranny are mingled in the oddest fashion. It is not

surprising that Ramond, who finds room in a book devoted to mountaineering for a prophecy of the Revolution, should have played an active part in the Revolution when it came. Ramond entered the Revolutionary Parliament as a moderate reformer, and when the leaders of the Revolution had no further use for moderate reformers he found himself in the gaol at Tarbres. Here he was fortunately forgotten, and survived to become Maître des Requêtes under Louis XVIII. Ramond is, perhaps, the most striking example of the mountaineer whose love for mountains was only equalled by his passion for freedom. In some ways, he is worthier of our admiration than Rousseau, for he not only admired mountains, he climbed them. He not only praised the simple life of hardship, he endured it.

Turning to English literature, we find much the same processes at work. The two great poets whose revolt against existing society was most marked yielded the Alps a generous measure of praise. It is interesting to compare the mountain songs of Byron and Shelley. Byron's verse is often marred by his obvious sense of the theatre. His misanthropy had, no doubt, its genuine as well as its purely theatrical element, but it becomes tiresome as the *motif* of the mountain message. No doubt he was sincere when he wrote—

> "I live not in myself, but I become
> Portion of that around me, and to me
> High mountains are a feeling, but the sum
> Of human cities torture."

But as a matter of actual practice no man lived more in himself, and instead of becoming a portion of his surroundings, too often he makes his surroundings take colouring from his mood. His mountains sometimes seem to have degenerated into an echo of Byron. They are too anxious to advertise the whole gospel of misanthropy. The avalanche roars a little too lustily. The Alpine glow is laid on with a heavy brush, and his mountains cannot wholly escape the suspicion of bluster that tends to degenerate into bombast. This is undeniable, yet Byron at his best is difficult to approach. Freed from his affectations, his verse often rises to the highest levels of simple, unaffected eloquence. There are lines in *The Prisoner of Chillon* with an authentic appeal to the mountain lover. The prisoner has been freed from the chain that has bound him for years to a pillar, and he is graciously allowed the freedom of his dungeon—a concession that may not have appeared unduly liberal to his gaolers, but which at least enabled the prisoner to reach a window looking out on to the hills—

" I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape.
But I was curious to ascend
To my barr'd windows, and to bend
Once more upon the mountain high
The quiet of a loving eye.

I saw them and they were the same
They were not changed like me in frame;
I saw their thousand years of snow
On high—their wide long lake below.
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow; . . .
I saw the white walled distant town;
And whiter sails go skimming down;
And then there was a little isle
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view."

As the train swings round the elbow above the lake, the mountaineer released from the chain of city life can echo this wish to bend the quiet of a loving eye on unchanging mountains.

Coleridge has some good lines on Mont Blanc, but one feels that they would have applied equally well to any other mountain. Their sincerity is somewhat discounted by the fact that Coleridge manufactured an enthusiasm for Mont Blanc at a distance from which it is invisible.

With Shelley, we move in a different atmosphere. Like Byron, he rebelled against society, and some comfortable admirers of the poetry which time has made respectable are apt to ignore those poems which, for passionate protest against social conditions, remained unique till William Morris transformed Socialism into song. Shelley was more sincere in his revolt than Byron. He did not always keep an eye on the gallery while declaiming his rebellion, and his mountains have no politics; they sing their own spontaneous melodies. Shelley combined the mystic's vision with the accuracy of a trained observer. His descriptions of an Alpine dawn, or a storm among the mountains, might have been written by a man who had studied these phenomena with a note-book in his hand. Nobody has ever observed with such sympathy "the dim enchanted shapes of wandering mist," or brought more beauty to their praise. Shelley's cloud poems have the same fugitive magic that haunts the fickle countries of the sky when June is stirring in those windy hills where—

> "Dense fleecy clouds
> Are wandering in thick flocks among the mountains
> Shepherded by the slow unwilling wind."

Shelley did not start with the poem, but with the mountain. His mountains are something more than a convenient instrument for the manufacture of rhyme. He did not write a poem about mountains as a pleasant variation on more conventional themes. With Shelley, you know that poetry was the handmaid of the hills, the one medium in which he could fitly express his own passionate worship of every accent in the mountain melody. And for these reasons Shelley seems to us a truer mountain poet than Byron, truer than Coleridge, truer even than Wordsworth, for Wordsworth, though some of his Alpine poetry is very good indeed, seems more at home in the Cumberland fells, whose quiet music no other poet has ever rendered so surely.

The early literature of the mountains has an atmosphere which has largely disappeared in modern Alpine writing. For, to the pioneers of Alpine travel, a mountain was not primarily a thing to climb. Even men like Bourrit and Ramond de Carbonnière, genuine mountaineers in every sense of the term, regarded the great heights as something more than fields for exploration, as the shrines of an unseen power that compelled spontaneous worship. These men saw a mountain, and not a problem in gymnastics. They wrote of mountains with a certain naïve eloquence,

often highly coloured, sometimes a trifle bombastic. But, because the best of them had French blood in their veins, their outpourings were at least free from Saxon self-consciousness. They were not writing for an academic audience lenient to dullness, but convulsed with agonies of shame at any suspicion of fine writing. One shudders to think of Bourrit delivering his sonorous address on the guides of Chamounix as the high priests of humanity before the average audience that assembles to hear an Alpine paper. We have seen two old gentlemen incapacitated for the evening by a paper pitched on a far more subdued note. Yet, somehow, the older writings have the genuine ring. They have something lacking in the genial rhapsodies of their successors. "We can never over-estimate what we owe to the Alps": thus opens a characteristic peroration to an Alpine book of the 'eighties. "We are indebted to them and all their charming associations for the greatest of all blessings, friendship and health. It has been conclusively proved that, of all sports, it is the one which can be protracted to the greatest age. It is in the mountains that our youth is renewed. Young, middle-aged, or old, we go out, too often jaded and worn in mind and body; and we return invigorated, renewed,

restored, fitted for the fresh labours and duties of life. To know the great mountains wholly is impossible for any of us; but reverently to learn the lessons they can teach, and heartily to enjoy the happiness they can bring is possible to us all."

If a man who has climbed for thirty years cannot pump up something more lively as his final summary of Alpine joys, what reply can we make to Ruskin's contention that " the real beauties of the Alps are to be seen and to be seen only where all may see it, the cripple, the child, and the man of grey hairs "? There are a few Alpine writers who have produced an apology worthy of the craft, and have shown that they had found above the snow-line an outlet for romance unknown to Ruskin's cripple, and reserves of beauty which Ruskin himself had never drawn, and there are, on the other hand, quite enough to explain, if not to justify, the unlovely conception of Alpine climbers embodied in Ruskin's amiable remarks : " The Alps themselves, which your own poets used to love so reverently, you look upon as soaped poles in a beer garden which you set yourselves to climb and slide down again with shrieks of delight. When you are past shrieking, having no articulate voice to say you are glad with, you rush home red with cutaneous eruptions of conceit. and

voluble with convulsive hiccoughs of self-satisfaction."

With a few great exceptions, the literature of mountaineers is not as fine as the literature of mountain lovers. Let us see what the men who have not climbed have given to the praise of the snows. What mountaineer has written as Ruskin wrote? Certainly Ruskin at his best reaches heights which no mountaineer has ever scaled. When Ruskin read his Inaugural Address in the early 'fifties to an audience in the main composed of Cambridge undergraduates, he paused for a moment and glanced up at his audience. When he saw that the fleeting attention of the undergraduates had been arrested by this sudden pause, he declaimed a passage which he did not intend any of them to miss, a passage describing the Alps from the southern plains: "Out from between the cloudy pillars as they pass, emerge for ever the great battlements of the memorable and perpetual hills." . . . When he paused again, after the sonorous fall of a majestic peroration, even the most prosaic of undergraduates joined in the turbulent applause.

"Language which to a severe taste is perhaps a trifle too fine," is Leslie Stephen's characteristic comment. "It is not every one," he adds, with trenchant common sense,

" who can with impunity compare Alps to archangels." Perhaps not, and let us therefore be thankful to the occasional writer, who, like Ruskin and Leslie Stephen himself at his best, is not shamed into dullness by the fear of soaring too high. But Ruskin was something more than a fine writer. No man, and no mountaineer, ever loved the Alps with a more absorbing passion; and, in the whole realm of Alpine literature, there is no passage more pregnant with the unreasoning love for the hills than that which opens: " For to myself mountains are the beginning and the end of all Alpine scenery," and ends: " There is not a wave of the Seine but is associated in my mind with the first rise of the sandstones and forest pines of Fontainebleau; and with the hope of the Alps, as one leaves Paris with the horses' heads to the south-west, the morning sun flashing on the bright waves at Charenton. If there be no hope or association of this kind, and if I cannot deceive myself into fancying that, perhaps at the next rise of the road, there may be seen the film of a blue hill in the gleam of sky at the horizon, the landscape, however beautiful, produces in me even a kind of sickness and pain; and the whole view from Richmond Hill or Windsor Terrace—nay, the gardens of Alcinous, with their perpetual summer—or of the Hesperides

(if they were flat, and not close to Atlas), golden apples and all—I would give away in an instant, for one mossy granite stone a foot broad, and two leaves of lady-fern."

George Meredith was no mountaineer; but his mountain passages will not easily be beaten. His description of the Alps seen from the Adriatic contains, perhaps, the subtlest phrase in literature for the colouring of distant ranges: "Colour was steadfast on the massive front ranks; it wavered in its remoteness and was quick and dim *as though it fell on beating wings*." And no climber has analysed the climber's conflicting emotions with such sympathetic acuteness. "Would you know what it is to hope again, and have all your hopes at hand? Hang upon the crags at a gradient that makes your next step a debate between the thing you are and the thing you may become. There the merry little hopes grow for the climber like flowers and food, immediate, prompt to prove their uses, sufficient if just within grasp, as mortal hopes should be."

We have quoted Ruskin's great tribute to the romance which still haunts the journey to the Alps even for those who are brought up on steam. Addington Symonds was no mountaineer; but he writes of this journey with an enthusiasm which rings truer than

much in Alpine adventure: "Of all the joys in life, none is greater than the joy of arriving on the outskirts of Switzerland at the end of a long dusty day's journey from Paris. The true epicure in refined pleasures will never travel to Basle by night. He courts the heat of the sun and the monotony of French plains—their sluggish streams, and never-ending poplar trees—for the sake of the evening coolness and the gradual approach to the great Alps, which await him at the close of the day. It is about Mulhausen that he begins to feel a change in the landscape. The fields broaden into rolling downs, watered by clear and running streams; the great Swiss thistle grows by riverside and cowshed; pines begin to tuft the slopes of gently rising hills; and now the sun has set, the stars come out, first Hesper, then the troop of lesser lights; and he feels—yes, indeed, there is now no mistake—the well-known, well-loved, magical fresh air, that never fails to blow from snowy mountains, and meadows watered by perennial streams. The last hour is one of exquisite enjoyment, and when he reaches Basle he scarcely sleeps all night for hearing the swift Rhine beneath the balconies, and knowing that the moon is shining on its waters, through the town, beneath the bridges, between pasture-lands and copses, up the still mountain-

girdled valleys to the ice-caves where the water springs. There is nothing in all experience of travelling like this. We may greet the Mediterranean at Marseilles with enthusiasm; on entering Rome by the Porta del Popolo we may reflect with pride that we have reached the goal of our pilgrimage, and are at last among world-shaking memories. But neither Rome nor the Riviera wins our hearts like Switzerland. We do not lie awake in London thinking of them; we do not long so intensely, as the year comes round, to revisit them. Our affection is less a passion than that which we cherish for Switzerland."

Among modern writers there is Mr. Belloc, who stands self-confessed as a man who refuses to climb for fear of "slipping down." Mr. Belloc has French blood in his veins, and he is not cursed with British reserve. In his memorable journey along the path to Rome, he had, perforce, to cross the Jura, and this is how the first saw the Alps—

"I saw, between the branches of the trees in front of me, a sight in the sky that made me stop breathing, just as a great danger at sea, or great surprise in love, or a great deliverance will make a man stop breathing. I saw something I had known in the West as a boy, something I had never seen so grandly

discovered as was this. In between the branches of the trees was a great promise of unexpected lights beyond. . . .

"Here were these magnificent creatures of God, I mean the Alps, which now for the first time I saw from the height of the Jura; and, because they were fifty or sixty miles away, and because they were a mile or two high, they were become something different from us others, and could strike one motionless with the awe of supernatural things. Up there in the sky, to which only clouds belong, and birds, and the last trembling colours of pure light, they stood fast and hard; not moving as do the things of the sky. . . .

"These, the great Alps, seen thus, link one in some way to one's immortality. Nor is it possible to convey, or even to suggest, those few fifty miles, and those few thousand feet; there is something more. Let me put it thus: that from the height of Weissenstein I saw, as it were, my religion. I mean humility, the fear of death, the terror of height and of distance, the glory of God, the infinite potentiality of reception whence springs that divine thirst of the soul; my aspiration also towards completion, and my confidence in the dual destiny. For I know that we laughers have a gross cousinship with the most high, and it is this contrast and perpetual quarrel which

feeds a spring of merriment in the soul of a sane man. . . . That it is also which leads some men to climb mountain tops, but not me, for I am afraid of slipping down."

That is subjective enough, with a vengeance; for those few lines one would gladly sacrifice a whole shelf full of climbing literature dealing with the objective facts that do not vary with the individual observer.

Mr. Kipling again, though no mountaineer, has struck out one message which most mountaineers would sacrifice a season's climbing to have written. A brief quotation gives only a faint impression of its beauty—

"At last, they entered a world within a world—a valley of leagues where the high hills were fashioned of the mere rubble and refuse from off the knees of the mountains. Here, one day's march carried them no farther, it seemed, than a dreamer's clogged pace bears him in a nightmare. They skirted a shoulder painfully for hours, and behold, it was but an outlying boss in an outlying buttress of the main pile! A rounded meadow revealed itself, when they had reached it, for a vast table-land running far into the valley. Three days later, it was a dim fold in the earth to southward.

" ' Surely the Gods live here,' said Kim, beaten down by the silence and the appalling sweep and dispersal of the cloud-shadows after rain. ' This is no place for men ! '

" Above them, still enormously above them, earth towered away towards the snow-line, where from east to west across hundreds of miles, ruled as with a ruler, the last of the bold birches stopped. Above that, in scarps and blocks upheaved, the rocks strove to fight their heads above the white smother. Above these again, changeless since the world's beginning, but changing to every mood of sun and cloud, lay out the eternal snow. They could see blots and blurs on its face where storm and wandering wullie-wa got up to dance. Below them, as they stood, the forest slid away in a sheet of blue-green for mile upon mile; below the forest was a village in its sprinkle of terraced fields and steep grazing-grounds; below the village they knew, though a thunderstorm worried and growled there for the moment, a pitch of twelve or fifteen hundred feet gave to the moist valley where the streams gather that are the mothers of young Sutluj."

Then there is Mr. Algernon Blackwood, who is, I think, rather a ski-runner than a mountaineer. Certainly he has unravelled the

psychology of hill-wandering, and discovered something of that strange personality behind the mountains. No writer has so successfully caught the uncanny atmosphere that sometimes haunts the hills.

The contrast is even more marked in poetry than in prose. In prose, we have half-a-dozen Alpine books that would satisfy a severe critic. In poetry, only one mountaineer has achieved outstanding success. Mr. G. Winthrop Young, alone, has transferred the essential romance of mountaineering into poetry which not mountaineers alone, but every lover of finished craftsmanship, will read with something deeper than pleasure. But, while Mr. Young has no rival in the poetry of mountaineering, there is a considerable quantity of excellent verse of which mountains are the theme. We have spoken of Shelley and Byron. Among more modern poets there is Tennyson. He wrote little mountain poetry, and yet in four lines he has crystallised the whole essence of the Alpine vision from some distant sentinel of the plains—

"How faintly flushed, how phantom fair
Was Monte Rosa, hanging there
A thousand shadowy pencilled valleys
And snowy dells in a golden air."

Sydney Dobell has some good mountain verse; and if we had not already burdened this chapter with quotations we should have borrowed from those descriptions in which Morris clearly recalls the savage volcanic scenery of Iceland. Swinburne, in the lines beginning—

> "Me the snows
> That face the first of the morning"—

has touched some of the less obvious spells of hill region with his own unerring instinct for beauty.

F. W. H. Myers in eight lines has said all that need be said when the hills have claimed the ultimate penalty—

> "Here let us leave him: for his shroud the snow,
> For funeral lamps he has the planets seven,
> For a great sign the icy stair shall go
> Between the stars to heaven.
>
> One moment stood he as the angels stand,
> High in the stainless eminence of air.
> The next he was not, to his fatherland
> Translated unaware."

Mrs. Holland has written, as a dedication for a book of Alpine travel, lines which have

the authentic note; and Mr. Masefield in a few verses has caught the savage aloofness of the peaks better than most mountaineers in pages of redundant description.

The contrast is rather too marked between the work of those who loved mountains without climbing them and the literature of the professional mountaineers. Even writers like Mr. Kipling, who have only touched mountains in a few casual lines, seem to have captured the mountain atmosphere more successfully than many a climber who has devoted articles galore to his craft. Of course, Mr. Kipling is a genius and the average Alpine writer is not; but surely one might not unreasonably expect a unique literature from those who know the mountains in all their changing tenses, and who by service of toil and danger have wrung from them intimate secrets unguessed at by those who linger outside the shrine.

Mountaineering has, of course, produced some great literature. There is Leslie Stephen, though even Stephen at his best is immeasurably below Ruskin's finest mountain passages. But Leslie Stephens are rare in the history of Alpine literature, whereas the inarticulate are always with us.

In some ways, the man who can worship a mountain without wishing to climb it has

a certain advantage. He sees a vision, where the climber too often sees nothing but a variation route. The popular historian has often a more vivid picture of a period than the expert, whose comprehensive knowledge of obscure charters sometimes blinds him to the broad issues of history. Technical knowledge does not always make for understanding. The first great revelation of the mountains has a power that is all its own. To the man who has yet to climb, every mountain is virgin, every snow-field a mystery, undefiled by traffic with man. The first vision passes, and the love that is based on understanding supplants it. The vision of unattainable snows translates itself into terms of memory —that white gleam that once belonged to dreamland into an ice-wall with which you have wrestled through the scorching hours of a July afternoon. You have learned to spell the writing on the wall of the mountains. The magic of first love, with its worship of the unattainable, is too often transformed into the soberer affection founded, like domestic love, on knowledge and sympathy; and the danger would be greater if the fickle hills had not to be wooed afresh every season. Beyond the mountain that we climb and seem to know, lurks ever the visionary peak that we shall never conquer; and this unattainable ideal

gives an eternal youth to the hills, and a never-failing vitality to our Alpine adventure. Yet when we begin to set down our memories of the mountains, it seems far easier to recall those objective facts, which are the same for all comers, the meticulous details of route, the conditions of snow and ice, and to omit from our epic that subjective vision of the mountain, that individual impression which alone lends something more than a technical interest to the story of our days among the snow. And so it is not altogether surprising that the man who has never climbed can write more freely and more fully of the mountains, since he has no expert knowledge to confuse the issue, no technical details to obscure the first fine careless rapture.

The early mountaineers entered into a literary field that was almost unexplored. They could write of their hill journeys with the assurance of men branching out into unknown byways. They could linger on the commonplaces of hill travel, and praise the freedom of the hills with the air of men enunciating a paradox. To glorify rough fare, simple quarters, a bed of hay, a drink quaffed from the mountain stream, must have afforded Gesner the same intellectual pleasure that Mr. Chesterton derives from the praise of Battersea and Beer. And this joy in emotions

which had yet to be considered trite lingers on even into the more sedate pages of *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers.* The contributors to those classic volumes were rather frightened of letting themselves go; but here and there one lights on some spontaneous expression of delight in the things that are the very flesh and blood of our Alpine experience—the bivouac beneath the stars, the silent approach of dawn, the freemasonry of the rope, the triumph of the virgin summit. " Times have changed since then," wrote Donald Robertson in a recent issue of *The Alpine Journal*—

" Times have changed since then, and with them Alpine literature. Mountaineering has become a science, and, as in other sciences, the professor has grown impatient of the average intelligence, and evolved his own tongue. To write for the outside public is to incur the odium of ' popular science,' a form of literature fascinating to me, but anathema to all right-minded men. Those best qualified to speak will only address themselves to those qualified to listen, and therefore only in the jargon of their craft. But the hall-mark of technical writing is the assumption of common knowledge. What all readers know for themselves, it is needless and even impertinent to state. Hence, in the climbing stories written for the

elect, the features common to all climbs must either be dismissed with a brief reference, or lightly treated as things only interesting in so far as they find novel expression."

Those who worship Clio the muse will try to preserve the marriage of history and literature, but those whose only claim to scholarship is their power to collate facts by diligent research, those who have not the necessary ability to weave these facts into a vital pattern, will always protest their devotion to what is humorously dubbed scientific history. So in the Alpine world, which has its own academic traditions and its own mandarins, you will find that those who cannot translate emotions (which it is to be hoped they share) into language which anybody could understand are rather apt to explain their discreet silence, by the possession of a delicate reserve that forbids them to emulate the fine writing of a Ruskin or the purple patches of Meredith.

Now, it should be possible to discriminate between those who endeavour to clothe a fine emotion in worthy language, and those who start with the intention of writing finely, and look round for a fine emotion to serve as the necessary peg. Sincerity is the touchstone that discriminates the fine writing that is

good, and the fine writing that is damnable. The emotions that are the essence of mountaineering deserve something better than the genteel peroration of the average climbing book. Alpine literature is a trifle deficient in fine frenzy. The Mid-Victorian pose of the bluff, downright Briton, whose surging flood of emotions is concealed beneath an affectation of cynicism, is apt to be tedious, and one wonders whether emotions so consistently and so successfully suppressed really existed within those stolid bosoms.

A great deal of Alpine literature appeals, and rightly appeals, only to the expert. Such contributions are not intended as descriptive literature. They may, as the record of research into the early records of mountaineering and mountains, supply a much-needed link in the history of the craft. As the record of new exploration, they are sure to interest the expert, while their exact description of routes and times will serve as the material for future climbers' guides. But this is not the whole of Alpine literature, and the danger is that those who dare not attempt the subjective aspects of mountaineering should frighten off those who have the necessary ability by a tedious repetition of the phrase "fine writing," that facile refuge of the Philistine. The conventional Alpine article

is a dreary affair. Its humour is antique, and consists for the most part in jokes about fleas and porters, and in the substitution of long phrases for simple ones. Its satire is even thinner. The root assumption that the Alpine climber is a superior person, and that social status varies with the height above sea level, recurs with monotonous regularity. The joke about the tripper is as old as the Flood, and the instinct that resents his disturbing presence is not quite the hall-mark of the æsthetic soul that some folk seem to think. It is as old as the primitive man who espied a desirable glade, and lay in wait for the first tourist with a club. "My friends tell me," writes a well-known veteran, "that I am singular in this strange desire to avoid meeting the never-ceasing stream of tourists, and I am beginning to believe that they are right, and that I am differently constituted from other people." The author of this trite confession has only to study travel literature in general and Alpine literature in particular to discover that quite commonplace folk can misquote the remark about the madding crowd, and that even members of the lower middle class have been known to put the sentiment into practice. A sense of humour and a sense for solitude are two things which their true possessors are chary of mentioning.

It might be fairly argued that the average mountaineer does not pretend to be a writer, fine or otherwise, that he describes his climbs in a club journal intended for a friendly and uncritical audience, and that he leaves the defence of his sport to the few men who can obtain the hearing of a wider audience. That is fair comment; and, fortunately, mountaineering is not without the books that are classics not only of Alpine but also of English literature.

First to claim mention is *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers*, a volume " so fascinating," writes Donald Robertson, " so inspiring a gospel of adventure and full, free life, that the call summoned to the hills an army of seekers after the promised gold." That is true enough. But the charm of these pages, which is undoubted, is much more due to the fact that the contributors had a good story to tell than to any grace of style with which they told it. The contributors were drawn from all walks of life—barristers, Manchester merchants, schoolmasters, dons, clergymen, and scientists; and unless we must affect to believe that Alpine climbing inspires its devotees with the gift of tongues, we need not appear guilty of irreverence for the pioneers if we discriminate between the literary and intrinsic merit of their work. They were

ĕducated men. They did not split their infinitives, and they could express their thoughts in the King's English, a predecent not always followed by their successors. We must, however, differentiate between the Alpine writing which gives pleasure because of its associations, and the literature which delights not only for its associations and story, but also for its beauty of expression. Let us, as an example, consider two passages describing an Alpine dawn—

"We set out from the bivouac at three in the morning. The night was cloudless, and the stars shone with a truly majestic beauty. Ahead of us, we could just see the outline of the great peak we proposed to attack. Gradually, the east lightened. The mountains became more distinct. The eastern sky paled, and a few minutes later the glorious sun caught the topmost peaks, and painted their snows with the fiery hues of dawn. It was a most awe-compelling spectacle."

This passage may please us, not because the language is fine or the thoughts subtly expressed, but simply because the scenes so inadequately described recall those which we ourselves have witnessed. The passage would convey little to a man who had never climbed. Now consider the following—

"On the glacier, the light of a day still to be born put out our candles. . . . We halted to watch the procession of the sun. He came out of the uttermost parts of the earth, very slowly, lighting peak after peak in the long southward array, dwelling for a moment, and then passing on. Opposite, and first to catch the glow, were the great mountains of the Saasgrat and the Weisshorn. *But more beautiful, like the loom of some white-sailed ship far out at sea, each unnamed and unnumbered peak of the east took and reflected the radiance of the morning.* The light mists which came before the sun faded." . . .

Like the other passage this brief description starts a train of memories; but, whereas the first passage would convey little to a non-climber, Sir Claud Schuster has really thought out the sequence of the dawn, and has caught one of its finer and subtler effects by the use of a very happy analogy. The phrase which we have ventured to italicise defines in a few words a brief scene in the drama of the dawn, an impression that could not be conveyed by piling adjective on adjective.

There are many writers who have captured the romance of mountaineering, far fewer who have the gift for that happy choice of words that gives the essence of a particular Alpine

view. Pick up any Alpine classic at a venture, and you will find that not one writer in fifty can hold your attention through a long passage of descriptive writing. The average writer piles on his adjectives. From the Alpine summit you can see a long way. The horizon seems infinitely far off. The valleys sink below into profound shadows. The eye is carried from the dark firs upward to the glittering snowfields. "The majestic mass of the . . . rises to the north, and blots out the lesser ranges of the . . . . The awful heights of the . . . soar upwards from the valley of . . . In the east, we could just catch a glimpse of the . . . and our guides assured us that in the west we could veritably see the distant snows of our old friend the . . ." And so on, and so forth. Fill in the gaps, and this skeleton description can be made to fit the required panorama. It roughly represents nine out of ten word pictures of Alpine views. Examine Whymper's famous description of the view from the Matterhorn. It is little more than a catalogue of mountains. There is hardly a phrase in it that would convey the essential atmosphere of such a view to a man who had not seen it.

Genius has been defined as the power of seeing analogies, and we have sometimes fancied that the secret of all good Alpine

description lies in the happy choice of the right analogy. It is no use accumulating the adjective at random. Peaks are high and majestic, the snow is white. Certainly this does not help us. What we need is some happily chosen phrase which goes deeper than the obvious epithets that apply to every peak and every snowfield. We want the magical phrase that differentiates one particular Alpine setting from another. And this phrase will often be some apparently casual analogy drawn from something which has no apparent connection with the Alps. "Beautiful like the loom of some white-sailed ship," is an example which we have already quoted. Leslie Stephen's work is full of such analogies. He does not waste adjectives. His adjectives are chosen for a particular reason. His epithets all do work. Read his description of the view from Mont Blanc, the Peaks of Primiero, the Alps in winter, and you feel that these descriptions could not be made to apply to other Alpine settings by altering the names and suppressing an occasional phrase. They are charged with the individual atmosphere of the place which gave them birth. In the most accurate sense of the word, they are autocthonous. A short quotation will illustrate these facts. Here is Stephen's description of the view from the Schreckhorn.

Notice that he achieves his effect without the usual largess of jewellery. Topaz and opal are dispensed with, and their place is taken by casual and apparently careless analogies from such diversified things as an opium dream, music, an idle giant.

" You are in the centre of a whole district of desolation, suggesting a landscape from Greenland, or an imaginary picture of England in the glacial epoch, with shores yet unvisited by the irrepressible Gulf Stream. The charm of such views—little as they are generally appreciated by professed admirers of the picturesque—is to my taste unique, though not easily explained to unbelievers. They have a certain soothing influence like slow and stately music, or one of the strange opium dreams described by De Quincey. If his journey in the mail-coach could have led him through an Alpine pass instead of the quiet Cumberland hills, he would have seen visions still more poetical than that of the minister in the ' dream fugue.' Unable as I am to bend his bow, I can only say that there is something almost unearthly in the sight of enormous spaces of hill and plain, apparently unsubstantial as a mountain mist, glimmering away to the indistinct horizon, and as it were spell-bound by an absolute and eternal silence.

The sentiment may be very different when a storm is raging and nothing is visible but the black ribs of the mountains glaring at you through rents in the clouds; but on that perfect day on the top of the Schreckhorn, where not a wreath of vapour was to be seen under the whole vast canopy of the sky, a delicious lazy sense of calm repose was the appropriate frame of mind. One felt as if some immortal being, with no particular duties upon his hands, might be calmly sitting upon those desolate rocks and watching the little shadowy wrinkles of the plain, that were really mountain ranges, rise and fall through slow geological epochs."

Whymper never touches this note even in the best of many good mountain passages. His forte was rather the romance of Alpine adventure than the subtler art of reproducing Alpine scenery. But in his own line he is without a master. His style, of course, was not so uniformly good as Stephen's. He had terrible lapses. He spoils his greatest chapter by a most uncalled-for anti-climax. He had a weakness for banal quotations from third-rate translations of the classics. But, though these lapses are irritating, there is no book like the famous *Scrambles*, and there is certainly no book which has sent more new

climbers to the Alps. Whymper was fortunate, for he had as his material the finest story in Alpine history. Certainly, he did not waste his chances. The book has the genuine ring of Alpine romance. Its pages are full of those contrasts that are the stuff of our mountain quest, the tragic irony that a Greek mind would have appreciated. The closing scenes in the great drama of the Matterhorn move to their appointed climax with the dignity of some of the most majestic chapters in the Old Testament. Of their kind, they are unique in the literature of exploration.

Tyndall, Whymper's great rival, had literary talent as well as scientific genius, but his Alpine books, though they contain fine passages, have not the personality that made *Scrambles in the Alps* a classic, nor the genius for descriptive writing that we admire in *The Playground of Europe*. Of A. W. Moore's work and of Mummery's great classic we have already spoken. Mummery, like Whymper, could translate into words the rollicking adventure of mountaineering, and though he never touches Leslie Stephen's level, some of his descriptions of mountain scenery have a distinct fascination.

A few other great Alpine books have appeared between *Peaks, Pastures, and Glaciers* and the recent work *Peaks and*

Pleasant Pastures. Mr. Douglas Freshfield and Sir Martin Conway are both famous explorers of the greater ranges beyond Europe, and their talent for mountain description must have inspired many a climber to leave the well-trodden Alpine routes for the unknown snows of the Himalayas. Mr. Freshfield's Caucasian classic opens with a short poem that we should like to have quoted, and includes one of the great stories on mountain literature—the search for Donkin and Fox. Sir Martin Conway brings to his work the eye of a trained Art critic, and the gift for analysing beauty, not only in pictures, but in Alpine scenery. He is an artist in colour and in words.

Contrary to accepted views, we are inclined to believe that Alpine literature shows signs of a Renaissance. Those who hold that the subject-matter is exhausted, seem to base their belief on the fact that every virgin peak in the Alps has been climbed, and that the literature of exploration should, therefore, die a natural death. This belief argues a lack of proportion. Because a certain number of climbers have marched up and down the peaks of a certain range, it does not follow that those mountains no longer afford emotions capable of literary expression. The very reverse is the case. It is perilously easy to

attach supreme importance to the sporting side of our craft. Mountain literature is too often tedious, because it concentrates on objective facts. When all the great mountains were unclimbed, those who wrote of them could not burden their pages with tiresome details of routes and times. When every mountain has been climbed by every conceivable route, the material at the disposal of the objective writer is fortunately exhausted. There are few great Alpine routes that remain unexplored. There are a thousand byways in the psychology of mountaineering that have never been touched, and an excellent book might have been written on this subject alone. Every mountaineer brings to the mountains the tribute of a new worshipper with his own different emotions. "Obtain an account of the same expedition from three points on the same rope, and you will see how different. Therefore, there is room in our generation for a new *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers* by the best pens in the Club telling freely, and without false shame, the simple story of a day among the mountains."

The pioneers had every advantage, a new subject for literary expression, a new field of almost untouched exploration, phrases that had yet to become trite, emotions which never become trite though their expression

is apt to fall into a rut. And yet it seems doubtful whether they wrote more freely and more truly than some of those who are writing to-day. In some directions, mountain descriptions have advanced as well as mountain craft. We have no Leslie Stephen and no Whymper, but the best pens at work in *The Alpine Journal* have created a nobler literature than that which we find in the early numbers. "*The Alpine Journal*," remarked a worthy president, is "the champagne of Alpine literature." Like the best champagne, it is often very dry. The early numbers contained little of literary value beyond Gosset's great account of the avalanche which killed Bennen, and some articles by Stephen and Whymper. Neither Stephen nor Whymper wrote their best for the club journal. *The Cornhill* contains Stephen's best work, and Whymper gave the pick of his writing to the Press. One may safely say that the first forty years of the club journal produced nothing better than recent contributions such as "The Alps" by A. D. Godley, "Two Ridges of the Grand Jorasses" by G. W. Young, "The Middle Age of the Mountaineer" by Claud Schuster, "Another Way of Alpine Love" by F. W. Bourdillon, "The Ligurian Alps" by R. L. A. Irving, and "Alpine Humour" by C. D. Robertson. Nor has good work been con-

fined to *The Alpine Journal*. The patient seeker may find hidden treasures in the pages of some score of journals devoted to some aspect of the mountains. The new century has opened well, for it has given us Prof. Collie's *Exploration in the Himalaya and other Mountain Ranges*, a book of unusual charm. It has given us Mr. Young's mountain poems, for which we would gladly jettison a whole library of Alpine literature. It has given us *Peaks and Pleasant Pastures*, and a fine translation of Guido Rey's classic work on the Matterhorn. With these books in mind we can safely assert that the writer quoted at the beginning of this chapter was unduly pessimistic, and that England has contributed her fair share to the subjective literature of the Alps.

Let us hope that this renaissance of wonder will suffer no eclipse; let us hope that the Alps may still offer to generations yet unborn avenues of discovery beside those marked "No Information" in the pages of *The Climber's Guides*. The saga of the Alps will not die from lack of material so long as men find in the hills an inspiration other than the challenge of unclimbed ridges and byways of mountain joy uncharted in the ordnance survey.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE Alpine Club collects every book dealing with the mountains and also most of the articles that appear in the Press and Magazines. The Catalogue of the Alpine Club Library should, therefore, be the most complete bibliography in existence. The additions to the Club Library are published from time to time in *The Alpine Journal.*

The most useful bibliographies of Alpine book that are accessible to the general reader are contained in *Ueber Eis und Schnee,* by Gottlieb Studer (1869–1871), and *Swiss Travel and Swiss Guide Books,* by the Rev. W. A. B. Coolidge (1889).

Perhaps the most thorough book on every phase of the Alps, sporting, social, political and historical is *The Alps in Nature and History,* by the Rev. W. A. B. Coolidge (1908).

For the Geology of the Alps and the theory of Glacier Motion there are no better books than *The Glaciers of the Alps,* by John Tyndall (1860; reprinted in the Everyman Library), and *The Building of the Alps,* by T. G. Bonney (1912).

For the practical side of mountaineering, *Mountaineering,* by C. T. Dent (Badminton Library), is good but somewhat out of date.

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Winter mountaineering and ski-ing are dealt with in *The*

Ski-Runner, by E. C. Richardson (1909); *Ski-ing for Beginners and Mountaineers*, by W. R. Rickmers (1910); *How to Ski*, by Vivian Caulfield (1910); *Ski-ing*, by Arnold Lunn (1912).

For the general literature of mountaineering the reader has a wide choice. We cannot attempt a comprehensive bibliography, but the following books are the most interesting of the many hundred volumes on the subject.

The early history of mountaineering is dealt with in Mr. Coolidge's books referred to above. There is a good historical sketch in the first chapter of the Badminton volume. The most readable book on the early pioneers is *The Early Mountaineers*, by Francis Gribble (1899). *The Story of Alpine Climbing*, by Francis Gribble (1904), is smaller than *The Early Mountaineers*; it can be obtained for a shilling.

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Scrambles among the Alps. By Edward Whymper. 1871. This famous book went into several editions. It has been reprinted in Nelson's Shilling Library. The original editions with their delightful wood-cuts cannot be bought for less than a pound, but are well worth the money.

The Playground of Europe. By Leslie Stephen. 1871. This classic can be bought for 3*s.* 6*d.* in the Silver Library. The original edition is scarce and does not contain the best work.

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In Praise of Switzerland. By Harold Spender. 1912.

The reader will find good photographs very useful. The earliest Alpine photographer to achieve distinct success was Mr. Donkin, whose excellent photographs can be bought cheaply. Signor Sellâs—the supreme artist in mountain photography—also sells his work. Messrs. Abraham of Keswick have photographed with thoroughness the Alps and the rock climbs of Cumberland and Wales. Their best work is reproduced in *The Complete Mountaineer.* (1908.)

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