THE
SPIRIT OF THE HILLS

by
F. S. SMYTHE

Photographs by the Author

HODDER & STOUGHTON, PUBLISHERS
AT ST. PAUL'S HOUSE, LONDON, E.C.4
FIRST PRINTED . . . October 1935
TO MY WIFE
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. CHILDHOOD</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. YOUTH</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. LOW HILLS</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. A LOW HILL</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. HIGH HILLS</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. A HIGH HILL</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. THE HIGHEST HILLS</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. DAWN</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. DUSK</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. NIGHT</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. MUSIC</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. FLOWERS</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII. UGLINESS</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV. STORM</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV. CALM</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI. REST</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVII. HUMOUR</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII. FRIENDSHIP</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIX. DEATH</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XX. THE PHYSICAL</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXI. THE MENTAL</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXII. THE SPIRITUAL</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIII. THE THREADS</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# ILLUSTRATIONS

"AN OUTPOST OF THE FOREST" . . . . . Frontispiece

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERWENTWATER</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE PÉTÉRET RIDGE . . . . . . 204
MONT BLANC: THE SOUTH SIDE . . . . 211
LLYN ARDDU . . . . . . 222
REST . . . . . . 226
FROM THE MARGHERITA HUT, MONTE ROSA . . 230
NIMA TENDRUP . . . . . . 243
A CAMP ON KANGCHENJUNGA . . . . 254
CLOUDS OVER ITALY . . . . . . 273
ROCK CLIMBING . . . . . . 288
AIGUILLE DE BLAITEMÈRE . . . . 291
ON THE ADLERHORN . . . . . . 296
MONTE ROSA AT DAWN . . . . . . 306
PREFACE

In this book I have endeavoured to express, through the medium of the written word, the meaning of the hills and the reasons that inspire men to climb them.

It is difficult to explain the idealism underlying so concrete a performance as mountain-climbing in words which do even remote justice to the subject, or in words which are intelligible to those who have yet to “discover” the hills. Words at their best can only reveal a quality; they cannot do more than present a glimmering of the spiritual truths underlying man’s relationship with the universe. Such a question as, “Why do you climb mountains?” is only answerable in terms of concrete experience and the expressible thoughts that permeate such experience; and when that experience is transcendental and made up of many parts, just as white light is made up of many colours, the task of translating into words more than a tithe of its beauty becomes impossible. Much of this book can be intelligible only to those who are prepared to accept as a truth the Divine Love and Purpose behind all creation.

In their urge to climb hills in the face of difficulty, hardship and danger, men and women are actuated
by the most complex of motives. Yet these motives may be focused to a point, and this point is beauty. Mountaineering is a search for beauty. There is beauty all about us, and the more we develop our vision, the more do we perceive it. Beauty is as necessary to a man as food and drink. Spiritually, he cannot exist without it. He must have it in some form, whether it is music, art, literature, philosophy or religion. The hills are beautiful. They are beautiful in line and form and colour; they are beautiful in their purity, in their simplicity and in their freedom; they bring repose, contentment and good health.

In addition to this, man, being a physical, mental and spiritual entity, has been given the supreme power of self-determination, which in itself raises him to an akinship with his Maker. It behoves him, therefore, to develop himself physically, mentally and spiritually. The hills afford him an ideal medium for this development.

There are some to whom the hills do not appeal, and some to whom they appeal in a limited physical or material sense. There are also those who maintain that mountaineering is a foolish pastime, and that a man has no right to risk thus the life given to him. It is sufficient, they say, to view the hills from a distance, and to climb them is vulgar or atavistic.

It is foolish to indulge in definitions on the strength of personal convictions, or to answer a definition thus inspired by another definition similarly inspired. The
practice of mountaineering can be defined in concrete terms, but the motives underlying mountaineering cannot be defined, for the reason that they are essentially personal and capable only of personal interpretation.

In this book, therefore, I have set down, within the limited scope already mentioned, what I feel about the mountains and what the mountains mean to me. If I have indulged in definitions and relapsed into dogmatism, it is not because I am anxious that others should accept as true what I feel and believe, but merely because, being human, I could not help doing so. The only true thing is truth, and truth is known only to God.

In these days of indoor and mechanised life man is beginning to realise that he is in danger of being ensnared and enslaved by his mode of living and by the power and prodigality of his inventions. He longs for contrast; longs to escape from the artificial to the natural order of things; longs to free himself from mass suggestion and mass hypnotism, from narrow die-hard religious, social and political creeds and dogmas, and rejuvenate himself; to seek in purer airs, amid the grandeurs and beauties of Nature, a physical well-being, a mental solace and a spiritual expansion.

The appreciation of natural beauty, which has developed so quickly during the past century, is an inevitable development; it is a part of man's progress. It is not an entirely new development. There have
always been those who have found joy in the hills. But people who could contemplate with equanimity the injustices, the physical and mental cruelties, of one hundred or more years ago could scarcely appreciate Nature as we appreciate it now. They were not ready. We have our miseries; materialism in its grossest forms exists to-day, driving men to bloodshed and rendering them callous of human misery. We are still struggling through a moral twilight. But the dogmas of a past age no longer ring true, they no longer satisfy our craving for knowledge gained from personal experience. More and more we learn from science that only a Power of Divine Thought could render possible such perfect motivity and mutation as inspires our universe. We see this Power in the beauty and grandeur of the hills, and we feel it in our struggles with difficulty and danger. Its marvellous rhythm is in the movement of every muscle as we fight our way upwards. For these reasons the hills have a power for drawing out the best that is within us; on them we are given a full measure of a perfect happiness.
DERWENTWATER.
CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

My earliest memory of life is of being wheeled daily in my perambulator along a path beneath a high stone wall. This wall fascinated me. I wanted to see over it and beyond it. Sometimes it was shadowed and cold and grey; at other times it was light and cheerful and reflected the heat of the sun. It was incalculable, enormous, mysterious.

I have seen that wall since; it was at once recognisable. It is a very ordinary wall, not more than 7 feet high, but the sight of it sent the memories flooding back and invested it with the wonder and the romance of childhood. A stone wall: a few stones piled on one another—as in a hill.

Is it possible that anything so trivial as a stone wall could determine a course of thought and action? Is a love for hills an acquired taste, or is it hereditary or rooted in some previous existence? Are some born with it? I believe they are and that I was one of these fortunate ones.

Along the road near the wall trams jolted past. I disliked them; the noise they made scared me: they rushed by with a horrid clangour, like monsters that
sought to destroy me. But the wall was always there, solid, immovable, comforting, friendly, changing only in degree.

The North Downs of Kent were the first hills I saw. They were the highest hills in the world. I knew this when I stood on them and gazed into the blue distance where the world ended.

I was a solitary child, but never a lonely one. There was always Jimmie the spaniel to accompany me on my rambles. Together we explored the woods or hid and watched the rabbits pop in and out of the warren at the end of the orchard. There were fairies too. We saw them one September dusk when the grass was dewy and a thin mist lay along the mill-stream.

When I was seven my health broke down so badly that I was sent to Switzerland.

After a sleepless night in a stuffy train I cautiously raised a blind and lowered a window.

We were on a down grade and moving fast. A clean, cold air tore at my hot face. Above rose hills and forests. The dawn was putting out the stars.

The train swung round a corner and passed clear of the hills and forests. I was suddenly conscious of space and distance. A plain was spread before me. But it was not that which caused a strange stirring of my blood, a quickening of life itself; it was that beyond the plain, and just visible in the dawn, I saw the Alps. So high they were and so remote, so distant, dim and cloud-woven, that to me, a child, gazing for the first
time, it was as though God had chosen to manifest Himself by raising earth to sky and making of it a single step to heaven.

At Montreux we changed trains and travelled over a narrow-gauge railway to Château d'Oex.

We spent the next six months at an hotel which smelt always of coffee, hot rolls and floor-polish, an odour which I have ever since associated with Switzerland.

A fine summer merged into a tranquil autumn. I became familiar with the shape of the hills—the rounded outline of the Rocher du Midi, the alp- and forest-clad hills up and down the valley. But none of these compared in my estimation with the abrupt rock-peak of the Gummfluh. To me this was the tallest and most difficult peak in the world.

There were walks through the forests, and lazy picnics with our backs to the weather-beaten log walls of alp huts: but these only increased my longing to climb a mountain. The opportunity came; it was decided by my elders that Mont Cray should be scaled, a hill some 6,000 feet in height.

We started early. It was a calm September morning; the pastures were damp with dew; the smoke from the chalets stood up in a thin blue haze with scarcely a quiver.

Our way led up a path already known to me, but presently we came to the point where we had previously turned back. Beyond that was the unknown.
There was a frosty nip in the shadow of the forest, but presently the sun broke through the pine ranks and lit a brown carpet of needles.

The hills were in my lungs that morning, the scent of them in my nose, and the feel of them beneath my badly nailed boots. I was no longer a weakling: I was charged with a new strength.

I found myself copying the slow but certain steps of the guide, who was not a certificated guide but a youth of sixteen. It was, I found, tiring to walk uphill on the toes or to punctuate hurry with frequent halts. Rhythm was the secret of upward progression; a deliberate placing of each foot squarely and firmly to the slope; a steady upward heave of each hip in turn; a gradual transference of weight from one foot to the other.

The path, loose and steep in some places and in others covered with pine-needles, wound up the hillside, now crossing a shadowed gully, now breasting a sunny shoulder.

It was hot work. My thin, weak little body was wet with sweat. But this I accepted gratefully, even joyfully. Mont Cray would not be worth climbing if it were too short and easy. It was the getting to the summit, not the summit, that counted—the kingdom, not the crown.

There seemed no end to the forest; it was like the forest of a fairy tale, only there were no wolves or witches. But it ended at last, save for a few gnarled
pines, and we emerged from it on to an alp of short springy turf every whit as resilient as that of the Kentish downs, over which blew a breeze of delicious coolness.

This alp was green, not the vivid green of spring, but the matured green of autumn, when nature no longer frets to maintain her youthfulness but resigns herself contentedly to the fateful turn of the year.

I looked upwards. The slope lifted to a serene brow tressed with fleeting clouds. Beauty I had already seen—a Kentish down. There was a gentle dignity in the down, a tale of forces manifest but slumbering. But here was something different, something rude and challenging. Beauty had taken a longer stride, had shaken from itself some limitation, had set a greater and a grander vision.

There was a hut on the alp, brown, weather-worn and redolent of cows, tenanted by herdsmen, who brought us warm rich milk to drink. Near it we rested in the sun, seated on the wiry turf. Cow-bells clanged lazily in our ears, and the breeze lapped about us.

There was no path above the hut. We had to find our way up a swelling cheek of grass. This was mountaineering with a vengeance. There was feminine nervousness. What if there were a sudden mist? Supposing the white clouds which strolled along overhead, apparently oblivious of Mont Cray, were to
gather and descend? Grass slopes were always dangerous. Once you slipped, it was impossible to stop, and you rolled down, over and over, until you came to the edge of a precipice—there was always a precipice—and that was the end of you.

Our guide must have sensed this nervousness, because he assured us that it was absolutely safe and advanced resolutely to the attack.

The topmost portion of Mont Cray consists, if memory serves me aright, of an earthy grass-clad mound, conical in shape and some hundreds of feet in height. We climbed this—it seemed interminable—until the slopes no longer stretched ahead of us and we stood beside a little heap of stones—the summit.

The summit did not come as a climax or an anti-climax. To reach it was part of the natural order of things. I did not cheer or wave my cap in the air with boyish enthusiasm. I stood there, a trifle puzzled, a trifle bewildered. It was not what I had expected or imagined. In pictures I had seen, the mountaineer stood in a dramatic attitude, with one foot forward like a conqueror treading the neck of the conquered. I wanted to do nothing like this; I did not want to join in the chorus of exclamation—of triumph, self-congratulation and admiration; I had no desire to unpack sandwiches and guzzle food. I wanted to sit silently and quite still, and absorb through every sense the scene about me; to let my vision span a hundred peaks or rest contented on a single hill; to rejoice in a freedom
I had never known; to draw from all about me a new virtue and a new strength.

Winter passed, and with it skating and lugeing. The snow thawed and we went to Glion. This village, perched on the hillside above Montreux, commands a view of the lake of Geneva, the hills of Savoy and the square-topped, battlemented Dent du Midi.

Near the hotel was a steep slope of grass in which were embedded boulders great and small. I discovered a fearful joy in uprooting these boulders and sending them rolling down the slope into a wood below. A heave, and over one would topple, and over again, faster and faster, turned in a few instants from something rooted peacefully in the ground to a destructive missile, leaping into the air, tearing the ground as it alighted and leaping again, gathering pace and force and fury, crashing into the wood with a frightful velocity, crushing and splintering the trees and saplings.

One day, after considerable labour, I managed to wrench from the ground a boulder greater than any I had yet dislodged. But as it heeled over I heard a sudden hissing, and saw that in a hollow, which had been beneath it, writhed a brood of vipers. I loathed and feared snakes, and fairly took to my heels and ran. That was the end of my boulder-pitching. There is a moral somewhere or other in this episode.

Later, the narcissi bloomed in the fields of Glion
and Les Avants, and the waters of Geneva, as sensitive to cloud and colour as any I know, assumed a deep royal blue in response to the sun, which shone day after day from cloudless skies.

May found us at Wengen.

I had already seen innumerable pictures of the Jungfrau on dinner menus, advertisements, cheese wrappers, picture postcards and railway posters. In shape at least there was nothing unfamiliar in the mountain, but the Jungfrau was not a shape, it was a presence, a personality. And every day, each dawn and sunset, some new beauty of snow and ice was revealed by the march of sun and cloud.

Every afternoon ice avalanches fell. Seen from Wengen, they appeared as thin white streams suspended from the cliffs. They looked harmless, and it was difficult to credit them with the deep reverberating roars that echoed and re-echoed from side to side of Lauterbrunnen's trench-like valley.

At the Wengernalp I saw my first mountaineers, genuine mountaineers, very different from the tourists who climbed the hills around Château d'Oex, with sandwiches in their pockets, mackintosh capes over their shoulders and carrying walking-sticks adorned with a metal point at the toe end, and a sprig of eidelweiss carved on the handle.

They were Englishmen, and they had with them a guide. They were all tanned by the sun, but there was a certain permanency in the guide's tan, and his
eyes, which were deeply set in his wrinkled, weather-beaten face, spoke of constant watchfulness combined with frequent exposure to bright light.

I noted the ice-axes they were carrying. This was the first time I had seen these curious implements. I told myself that one day I would grasp one and swing it into the green face of the ice. To me those mountaineers were not ordinary human beings. I surrounded them with the same romantic qualities that a year or two previously I had surrounded the heroes of Grimm and Hans Andersen. Someone said they had climbed the Mönch, the square-topped peak next to the Jungfrau. It seemed almost incredible that anyone could climb to that aloof summit, yet it never occurred to me to disbelieve the story. A child only disbelieves fools and knaves, and there was nothing foolish or knavish in the looks of these climbers. In many ways, they were ordinary men. It is true that they were clad in somewhat shabby garments, which contrasted oddly with the trim attire of the tourists, but they had on more or less ordinary hats, and the guide wore a collar and a tie. They chatted and talked and laughed like ordinary men, and they drank ordinary-looking beer, lots of it, yet—they had climbed the Mönch.

Later we went to Bern. At any other time I would have been delighted with the old town: the intriguing covered-in side-walks, the bear-pits and the clock tower with its queer procession at the hour. But I
had been torn from the mountains, which I already loved. Bern was flatter and made up of ordinary things—trees and houses and people. There was no peak to greet me in the morning. I was inconsolable.

Back in England the Kentish hills seemed very small, but not for long.

From the window of my den I could see across the orchards and the meandering Medway, the gentlest of rivers, to the freakish tower of Hadlow and the heights of Wateringbury and Mereworth, where the primroses grow so abundantly in the spring.

To that view I added my memories of Switzerland. Sometimes I saw enormous mountains towering above the hills. Then I clambered up and up to summits unscaled, and heard once again the wind in the pine tops, the deep clangour of the cow-bells from the pastures and the low insistent thundering of the torrent. My mountains were tall clouds, and sometimes even less substantial—of the stuff of dreams.

After enduring various scholastic experiments complicated by chronic bronchitis, influenza, pneumonia (twice) and an enlarged heart, I eventually became a "day-bug," which is another name for day-boy, at Berkhamsted School.

The war broke out during my first summer holidays. On August 4th, 1914, a family party of us travelled down to Tintagel in Cornwall, where we had rented a house. It was a slow and uncertain journey, due to the train being frequently shunted into sidings to allow
troop trains to pass. There was an unnatural, feverish feeling in the air.

When war was declared I busied myself knocking over red-painted soldiers with my toy cannon, which was equipped with such a powerful spring that sometimes it dented in their bravely bulging breasts, and would even knock their heads off if they were hit at close range. Flags and plumes and thundering masses of cavalry all in perfect lines; drums and big guns; medals to be won; heroes, who were always shot in the breast (it is vulgar to shoot a hero in the entrails); it was great fun, war. I hoped that it would not be over before the holidays were finished. People said that even if we were not ready for it, an Englishman was worth ten Germans. England was always right and could beat any foreigner. I remembered a red-faced naval man saying that when he lectured to the preparatory school where I had previously spent a year or two.

But our house at Tintagel was far from war’s alarms. It was in a rocky valley cutting deeply into the hills. There was a view up and down the valley; a deep “V” of blue slow-heaving Atlantic at the lower end and a wider combe at the upper end. It was to this combe that my eyes most often turned. When the sun shone it was filled with light, and the cloud-shadows fled across it and vanished over the lip of it. But when the mists stole in from the sea and twined grey fingers around it, it was no longer possible to tell where the hills ended and the sky began.
There was a pine wood behind the house, and I often sat by it and listened to the soft combing of the wind, or breathed deep breaths of an odour that I had learned in Switzerland to associate with mountains.

It was at Tintagel that I indulged in my first rock climb. It was up a small cliff of warm red rocks near King Arthur’s Castle. There was nothing cool or deliberate in my climbing; the ascent was a rash adventure of a rash schoolboy, but it presented me with a whole set of new sensations, in which fear and joy were predominant and strangely mingled.

We returned to Berkhamsted. That sleepy little town was in the throes of war’s alarms and excitements. A number of elderly local luminaries had already formed themselves into a committee of public safety. Precisely who and what they proposed to protect was never explained. They made one announcement which deserves to be handed down to an “air-minded” posterity. They advised that in the event of an air-raid the populace should stay indoors. They were safer there, as “bombs nearly always slid off the roof.”

There were recruiting meetings in the High Street, at which more elderly gentlemen, too old to fight, exhorted the youth of the town to die for their country. And there were German spies everywhere. Even our inoffensive little German master was arrested, but to everyone’s surprise he was found to be innocent of spying and released.
The school armoury was put under a nightly guard in case the "enemy" should appropriate the antiquated Mauser rifles, relics of the Boer War, housed there. The net result of this move on behalf of National Security was that an elderly and unsuspecting tramp, to whom the armoury was nothing more than a good pull-in for tramps, narrowly escaped a violent death.

My schooldays were not happy ones. This was due to myself, the system of education and the war. The system of education then in vogue was primarily competitive and devil take the hindmost. I was among the hindmost. There were forms and a certain number of boys in each form, and there was a classical side and a science side. Most subjects the forms took, but there were outside subjects, such as French, German and mathematics, which were taken in forms outside the form group. A boy's position in his form at the end of the term depended on his aggregate number of marks in all form subjects, and it was decided from these whether or not he was moved up to a higher form at the end of the school year.

Whether an educational method should deliberately seek to enlarge and exploit the competitive instinct is very questionable. Competition implies acquisition at the expense of others. Certainly a boy should acquire knowledge, but in acquiring knowledge should the driving force be a desire to rise by that knowledge above his fellows or should it be a desire for knowledge
as knowledge? Is it not better to develop the creative instinct, which is more deeply rooted and fundamental than the competitive instinct? Should not competition be an inward one against ignorance, animated by a quest for knowledge uncontaminated by a desire for material advancement? Is this an impractical ideal? I do not think so. The present system of competitive examinations stimulates the competitive instinct during the years of boyhood, and for this reason, apart from any grave doubts as to whether it is of any value in determining intellectual worth or mental fitness for administrative posts, it is to be deplored as a sole means of assessing human values.

The competitive instinct is responsible for many evils, and a system of education which deliberately exploits it as a spur in the pursuit of knowledge defeats its own ideals. The educative methods of the future will exploit the creative rather than the competitive instinct.

It is, in the main, a sound principle that education should be as general as possible. At the same time a tendency to excel in any subject on the part of a backward boy should be encouraged, for helpful encouragement of the right nature is the fertiliser at the root of all creative force.

In my own case there were two subjects which interested me—English and geography. The number of marks I obtained in these brought me to the top, or near the top, of the form. These marks, however,
were not sufficient to counterbalance the appallingly few marks I obtained in other subjects. Thus, my final place was not sufficiently high in the form to justify a move up into another form.

I spent two years in one form and two years in another form, and in each double period went through the same curriculum in all subjects—including English and geography.¹

Eventually I drifted into the Remove, the euphemism for which was the “Fifth Modern,” and there, in company with other flotsam, remained for the remainder of my schooldays.

To the “Fifth Modern” were relegated all those whose aggregate marks suggested that, as they were likely never to earn a living by their brains, it was better to teach them the use of their hands. We made things. Many hours a week were spent in shaping pieces of wood, or hammering pieces of metal into supposedly artistic or useful shapes.

I justified all that was said anent laziness and inattention, for when I could muster no interest at all in what was being said, in the hieroglyphics on the blackboard, in the bits of wood and metal that had to be shaped and hammered, and in the drawing master’s little idiosyncrasies, principal among which was a never-failing and feverish desire to alter the position of the furniture in the art room every other day, I lapsed

¹ It is only fair to say that this system of education has since been discarded at Berkhamsted.
into day-dreaming—and my dreams were always of mountains.

I read every book on mountaineering in the school library, and most of the books on exploration, particularly exploration in the frigid and mountainous regions of the world, and I spent most of my pocket-money on maps—maps of North Wales, the Lake District, Scotland and Switzerland, over which I pored for hours. I read *Scrambles Amongst the Alps*, and followed the peregrinations of Edward Whymper on a map of Switzerland. I scaled in imagination the bleak pyramid of the Matterhorn, the savage ridges of Les Écrins, the ice-steeps of the Col Dolent, and descended by the same safe vehicle. The Alps were already mine.

Sometimes I gazed at a shapeless mass of brown that sprawled across the physical map of Asia—the Himalayas. Mount Everest, Kangchenjunga, Mount Godwin Austin and Nanga Parbat. I knew them all, and their heights too, but only Everest was ever worth a form mark. I was asked which was the highest mountain in Switzerland and confidently replied the Dom, for it was written in my beloved *Scrambles* that the highest peak of the Mischabelhörner was also the highest mountain entirely in Switzerland. Alas, in that geography class it was Mont Blanc. I was sent to the bottom of the form, and severely reprimanded for arguing the point.

It was many years since I had seen a high hill, but
THE SUMMIT OF LLIWEDD.
my longing for adventure and exploration upon hills grew stronger and stronger during these dull, uncongenial schooldays. And so, when I should have been attempting with my "backward" and "inattentive" brain to imbibe knowledge, it often happened that my thoughts were treading some far-off land or lofty peak.

Somewhere, not very distant, the Great Killing went on. It was possible to hear the sound of it from a dell on Northchurch Common—a dull vibration as though something evil breathed. And when it was not audible, it could be felt as a presence. On Sundays aged clerics, specially imported for the occasion, ranted and rhapsodised from the chapel pulpit. We were approaching man's estate, they told us—it was apparent that it was not a freehold estate. Soon we would be serving our country, perhaps dying for it. It was a Holy War. We were soldiers of Christ fighting against the forces of darkness and evil. Right was on our side. God would grant us the victory. Let us pray to Him. And day by day a line of black-edged cards along the chapel wall grew longer.

If war were to break out to-morrow, what would the representatives of the Church of Christ do about it? In 1914 the flock was out of hand, but the shepherds were also stricken with panic.

There was one boy. We called him "Spider," because he was long and thin, all arms and legs. He had a mop of sandy hair, and a freckled face in which was set a snub nose and humorous, mischievous blue
eyes. Although in the "Upper Fifth" or "Sixth," his mercurial, happy-go-lucky disposition was always landing him in trouble. One Saturday afternoon I found myself, as was not uncommon, in detention school for laziness and inattention.

It was a glorious afternoon, ideal for cricket, and I had to copy several pages of irregular French verbs. I found myself next to the "Spider." He turned to me and whispered:

"I say, it's not much fun being cooped up here an afternoon like this. You know," his eyes were unusually serious, "I've a feeling——"

But what the "Spider's" feeling was I do not know, because the master on duty overheard him and ordered us to move apart. It was a pity that the "Spider" could not have enjoyed that sunny afternoon, for a few months later when some more of those black-edged cards were posted up on the chapel wall, his name was on one of them.

Many school hours in those days were devoted to military training, and many teeth and claws began their sharpening in the Officers' Training Corps. We shot at targets which had a human figure in lieu of a bull's-eye. After the war the human figure was doubtless replaced by the bull's-eye. What is the difference between aiming at a bull's-eye and aiming at a human figure? To say that school O.T.C.s are not for training boys in the art of war, and that the only object of an O.T.C. is to
inculcate a habit of discipline and command, is as fantastic as it is absurd. They wear the trappings of war. They drill. They have field-days which are nothing more nor less than mimic battles. They learn the curriculum of musketry and field service regulations. They have dummy machine-guns and co-operate with Royal Air Force aeroplanes. Has any school the pluck to print in its prospectus: "One of our aims is to teach your son to be a soldier. From thirteen years of age onwards we will instruct him in the art of killing. He shall be well grounded in this before he has time to think for himself. Otherwise it might occur to him that it is disagreeable to kill his fellow-men. Worse still, he might learn to prefer living to dying for his country. Horrible thought—he might even become a pacifist." Foreigners are continually having our peaceful intentions rammed down their throats. A German asked me:

"Do you or do you not train your boys to be soldiers?"

"Yes," I replied, "we do." And that is all there is to be said. We do. Why not be honest about it?

I was brought up to seaside holidays. This was because of the beneficial effects of the "sea air." What difference there is between "sea air" and country air I have never discovered. Can any scientist enlighten me? But in 1915 we discovered that the "sea air" at Ramsgate was not so beneficial as we had supposed. It discovered a knack of dropping things
out of the sky, things that exploded violently and destructively. One of these things inconsiderately exploded in the midst of some Sunday-school children. There were little arms and little legs and little bodies all along the road. So we went to the "sea air" of North Wales to the little village of Penrhyn Bay, between Llandudno and Colwyn Bay.

It was a long way from Snowdonia. The highest hill within easy reach was one above Colwyn Bay, which attained to the magic altitude of 1,000 feet above the sea. I pushed my bicycle up a road almost to the top of it. It was not much of a hill—merely high ground—but it was my first 1,000-foot hill in Britain. I made quite sure of it by leaving my cycle and walking across a field to what I judged was the highest point. This attained, I sat down beneath a loosely built stone wall and ate my lunch, just as I have eaten hundreds of lunches since on the British hills. A fresh wind bustled across the wall above me, and the sun dodged in and out of smoke-like clouds. The grass was not luscious like the grass of lower elevations, but coarse and wiry, and the trees were short, sturdy and weather-beaten. It was a lonely place. I could see or hear no one.

There was a view. Strangely enough, it had not occurred to me when I planned my expedition that there might be a view. When I studied the map, my sole concern was to ascend the highest point within reach. I climbed the hill, not for the sake of the view,
but for the sake of the hill, and I walked up it without speculating as to the view it might command. Thus the view was as unexpected as it was revelatory.

After nearly twenty years, it remains clear-cut in memory.

From the point where I ate my lunch the hills, patched untidily with stone walls and sprinkled with trees and cottages, extended northwards towards the valley of the Conway. Beyond this valley were the hills of Snowdonia. The nearer hills were vividly green, but the hills of Snowdonia were a dark purple in colour and partially obscured by masses of cloud, which formed a tall range of vapour impermeable to sunlight.

Instantaneous with my first sight of these hills, my consciousness leapt the intervening distance, and in the same moment sought and found repose. I knew in the quickness of a lightning flash the power and the beauty of mountainous horizons, the perfection of being that is a mountain, the joy of distances tenanted only by clouds and winds, the unity of beauty and creation. I saw the clouds pass slowly, bearing in their wombs children of bright sunlight. I saw the colours ebb and flow. I heard a harmony played on divine strings.

There came to me a great desire to tread those hills. I wanted to feel them beneath me, to see them around me, above me and below me. I longed to grasp them and lift myself up; I wanted to be soaked by rain and
dried by sun; to sweat, to shiver, to toil, to rest. There was something I had to seek. What it was I did not know. I only knew I had to seek it.

Because I was older and more susceptible to impressions, my first view of the hills of Wales taught me more than anything I had seen seven years previously in Switzerland. Anyone who seeks solitude and quietude, and the qualities associated with these, will find what he desires amid the British hills.

I ate my sandwiches, and after lunch went for a walk along the high ground, and then free-wheeled in a very dangerous manner down a long steep hill to Colwyn Bay, where I stood myself a schoolboy’s tea of cream buns. The hill air had made me hungry.

A day or two later I climbed the Penmaenmawr Mountain. I pedalled to the foot of it in the teeth of a stiff wind. There was a path, but I scorned paths in those days; they were not adventurous enough. So, with the impetuosity of a schoolboy, I scrambled straight up the heather-covered hillside. I reached the summit in a few minutes, and lay there panting and supreme. To the south, no fields, trees or roads were to be seen. I was on a real mountain, so I told myself, the first mountain I had climbed in Britain. I looked longingly at the hills and moorlands leading towards Carnedd Llewelyn; then I scrambled happily down and pedalled back to Penrhyn Bay. It had been a great day.

My next summer holiday headquarters were at the
little village of Borth-y-Gest, near Portmadoc. This
time I set out to explore every hill within a day’s
bicycling range.

Moel Hebog was my first high hill. I cycled to the
Aberglaslyn Pass, left my cycle at the inn and struck
straight up the hillside. In my inexperience I tore up
the hill as fast as I could go; but this was no Penmaen-
mawr Mountain, and before long the weakness of the
flesh checked youthful enthusiasm. I discovered the
wisdom underlying the seeming paradox of “hasten
slowly.” I discovered also that it is a mistake to move
jerkily and thus impose an unnecessary strain on the
muscles, and foolish to climb on the ball of the foot or
the toes; it is better to place as much as possible of
the foot on the slope, and to swing the leg, not from the
knees, but from the hips.

It was a bright morning when I started, but as I
trudged over the long bog-drenched slopes a light
mist, which had formed early around the hilltops,
increased in volume until the sky was overspread. A
thin rain began to fall.

I was not content to reach the summit by an obvious
and easy way, and chose for my route a gully cutting
through a belt of cliffs. It was my first mountain, and
it had to be climbed in a manner worthy of the occa-
sion. Below the mouth of the gully was a steep slope
of boulders. Up this I scrambled, an ever-increasing
excitement surging within me. Then the jaws of the
gully enclosed me. Damp rock-walls rose on either
hand, which seemed almost to breathe coldly upon me.

Up and up I climbed. Then, of a sudden, I realised that I was no longer scrambling up a slope of loose boulders; I was on rocks—a part of the living mountain. I paused and looked up. Above me the gully walls, sternly separate, vanished into the mist; the bed of the gully between them was dreadfully steep. I looked down. The portion of the gully I had already climbed looked even steeper, and the initial slope of boulders was far below and remote. All I could see was a narrow, vertical slit of desolate hillside veiled with rain.

I was afraid, quite suddenly I was afraid; an empty tingling, an animalish, primitive feeling, not a product of reasoned thought, but a wholly illogical displacement of mental vertebrae. Supposing I slipped? I could imagine the slip: the frantic clutchings, the slide, the sudden bound outwards and downwards, the sickening impact with one wall, then with the other wall of the gully. I saw my body, broken and torn, strike the slope of boulders up which I had scrambled so happily, then roll over and over down it in a loose uncontrolled ridiculous way like a tailor’s dummy; half stop, roll on and finally flop to a standstill and sprawl limply and without movement, with glazing eyes—life’s hopes and aspirations lost and won in the adventure and mystery of death.

I retreated, and during my retreat found that the rocks I had climbed with never a thought of difficulty
or danger now seemed both difficult and dangerous, perhaps because they had become wet with rain. I had to curb a tendency to clutch wildly at anything. It was, of course, an absurdly easy gully. Any rock-climber who knows Moel Hebog will marvel at this description, but it is a true and unvarnished account of a boy’s adventure and impressions. I eventually reached the summit by another route.

Experience in mountaineering cannot eliminate fear; if it did, there would be no experienced mountaineers living. Fear is an essential part of the mountaineer’s make-up; not the kind of fear I have just described, which should never occur and is a product of hell rather than of heaven, but controllable fear, the other name for which is prudence, a fear allied and not opposed to experience. Mountaineering is at variance with gravitational laws. For this reason it demands a never-ceasing vigilance. Safe climbing, free from fear, enables the mountaineer to enjoy the manifold beauties of the universe. To incur fear deliberately on a mountain is as wrong as to drug the body in order to stimulate it mentally and physically. Whether or not fear is incurred accidentally or deliberately it is wrong, because it is opposed to the first condition of the universe, which is love. To seek fear as a mental stimulus, or in order to foster a competitive instinct, can only lead to eventual moral and physical disaster, for fear is destructive and inimical to life and hope and joy; it throws the moun-
taineer out of rhythm with all those things that matter on a mountain, and interposes a sudden harsh discord into the harmony of a day on the hills. Fear is allied to the competitive instinct, which on a mountain implies a pushing of mountaineering powers beyond all normal limits of enjoyment. Mountaineering is a lifting up, a communion with Nature. It should never be allowed to deteriorate into a struggle in which fear is the predominating factor.

The man who experiences fear on a mountain should not seek to conquer fear by going on, he should eliminate it by going back. This requires more moral courage than going on. Fear destroys and enjoyment builds; how can the two live together? Mountaineering should be something enjoyable, something to be cherished, not something to be abused through the medium of fear. From sea-level to the summit of Everest it should be kept free from any taint of fear deliberately incurred. So let us by prudence eliminate fear, and let us return from the hills and say truthfully that our climbing was enjoyable; not a wretched task performed at the behest of some obscure and material motive of conquest, but a happy relationship with Nature.

Since these early days of walking and rambling, I have learned more and more to love and respect the British hills. The Alpine or Himalayan mountaineer is frequently asked what he can see in the little hills of Cumberland or Wales after the giants of the Alps or
Himalayas. He will reply that comparison is difficult, and that it is not a matter of height or scale. He knows how deeply rooted in his heart is his love for the Homeland hills; it is a love inexpressible in words.

Expeditions in the Alps and Himalayas have served to strengthen my affection and respect for the British hills; I know how precious is a day spent among their heather and on their crags.

On them there was born in me a new happiness and a new strength. I climbed on their crags and was saved from serious accident by a beneficent Providence on more than one occasion. I found my way about them in all weathers. And, best of all, I acquired that "feel" for a hill which is more important than mere gymnastic ability to anyone who seeks to discover and interpret through body and mind the spirit of the hills. For it is in this discovery and interpretation that the mountaineer finds happiness and health, and becomes at one with the forces of the universe and the Infinite Power that directs them.
CHAPTER II

YOUTH

The train toiled up the steep gradients towards the Arlberg tunnel. It had been a slow, cold journey: the heating apparatus had frozen; there had been icicles inside the compartment; we had been turned out at Feldkirch, and had waited, shivering, until such time as the customs officials condescended to examine our luggage. We were warm enough now, but outside it was cold, and the windows were decorated with petals and fronds of ice.

It was a moonlit night. There was snow on the ground, and clusters of dark pines passed at intervals.

I pulled down the ice-caked window. The cold flowed in almost like a liquid. Through the clouds of steam billowing from beneath the coach I could see the moon, shriven and brilliant above the mountains, and in the valley beneath feeble amber-coloured lights.

It was December 1921, and I had returned to the high mountains after an interval of twelve years. In doing so I fulfilled a great ambition. How many years had I dreamt of the Alps? Providence had designed a golden road of thought, a vision of the hills to illumi-
nate the dark side-passages of life. And so I gazed, at peak and forest, heedless of the cold.

We arrived at Innsbruck. Famine and destitution lurked at every street corner; queues of professional-class people lined up at soup kitchens for a wretched meal. Yet, if Austria went empty of pocket and stomach, the Tirolese strove to maintain the same convivial and hospitable spirit as of old. The cafés were crowded of an evening by those whose homes were fireless and cold. There were dances: a bakers’ dance, a postmen’s dance, even a chimney sweepers’ dance. Merriment continued into the small hours. But by the time the dancers had returned to their homes the Austrian crown would have fallen a few more hundreds or thousands against the English pound.

So it went on; gaiety in the face of ruin; light jest and stark poverty hand in hand; true gallantry in the face of odds as terrible as a battlefield can produce.

Perhaps the reason for such courage, in Innsbruck at least, was not far to seek. If you looked down the Maria Theresien Strasse you saw the mountains, remote, steadfast, immutable. You could see them, too, from almost any street corner, and if you went northwards you could see the Inn slipping, green and cold, over the stones, with a tale on its lips of peak and glacier and snowfield, a witness of eternal order and rhythm. It may be that the contemplation of these things helped men in those distressful days. Mountains cannot
provide bread and warmth, but they can provide secure anchorage for a troubled mind. In Innsbruck they taught many that it was better to accept fate than to brood over it; better to ski or luge than repine over the past or fulminate doubts as to the future. Fortunate are those who have an ear and a heart for Nature.

To me Innsbruck is a place of delightful memories: of friends and hospitality, of cheerful evenings and simple greetings. Of beauty: the old Hofkirche; the town on a winter evening with the cafés lit up, and golden peaks glancing down between thin blue scrawls of smoke and vapour.

I tried to climb the Brandjoch, but I did not get very far. There had been new snow, and the sun was blazing straight upon it. It was soft wet snow that balled and rolled in great cart-wheels down the slopes. I had read various books on the theory and practice of mountaineering, and I knew the snow to be dangerous. I retreated, and lounged about in the sun for the remainder of the day, looking down on Innsbruck.

Without any lessons, I somehow taught myself to get about on skis. Then, one day in January 1922, I crossed the Solstein Sattel from the Inn Valley to Scharnitz.

It was a simple little pass, a mere 6,000 feet in height, but it was hard work getting to it through deep clogging snow and up a wearisome gully. I remember vividly the thrill of gaining the crest of it, my first
pass, and of sliding cautiously down unknown slopes on the other side.

I discovered the meaning of silence—the silence of high mountains in winter. It was a complete and absolute silence, save only for the noises I made myself: the throbbing of my lungs, the hiss of the air in my throat and nostrils, the light plop of my ski-sticks, the creak of the ski-bindings and the swish of the skis.

Snow fell with a sound like invisible finger-tips gently touching and exploring the earth. Distances vanished. Soon I was among the trees.

Snow fell and fell and fell as I ski-ed through the afternoon and finally through the evening to Scharnitz.

I had my fair share of mountaineering experiences in those early days.

My next expedition was from Fulpmes in the Stubai Thal. I had planned to cross the Schlicker Schartl. The approach to this pass lies up a valley beneath the rugged limestone peaks of the Kalkkögel. New snow had fallen heavily during the past three days and lay nearly a metre deep. It was hard work climbing, even with the aid of skis, and I sank in above the knee at each step.

It was a brilliant morning. The air was without motion, the sky without clouds, the world without sound. The snow had fallen without wind, and clung
to the pine branches nearly as deeply as it lay on the ground. The trees were scarcely visible, and they were bent this way and that by the weight of the snow. And over everything, impartially, reigned the cold. Not a searing cold or a bitter cold, but a still motionless cold, invigorating, vapourless and transparent. And the sun shone with extraordinary brilliance, pouring boundless energy upon the world, but without melting a single crystal of snow.

It soon became apparent to me that I could not cross the pass that day, I was progressing much too slowly; and ahead of me, where the valley narrowed, it was commanded by the snow-laden precipices and terraces of the Kalkkögel. I had yet to see an avalanche, but I had read of them. I had read all the mountaineering literature, both technical and descriptive, that I could lay my hands upon. And I remembered reading a warning to ski-ers and winter mountaineers not to venture into a narrow valley immediately after a heavy fall of snow. So, when I came to the huts of the Schlicker alp, I decided to rest there, eat my lunch and afterwards return to Fulpmes and Innsbruck.

The log wall of a hut made a pleasant sun-trap, and taking off my skis, I sat down upon them and investigated the contents of my rucksack. The sun warmed me as I ate, and there was a slight odour of hay from the hut behind, which mingled agreeably with the resinous scent drawn by the sun from the logs at my back.
I was hungry and glowing with health and exertion; never had food tasted better.

I was seated thus when I heard a dull rushing noise, which seemed to come from higher up the valley. It was not loud, but it was vibrant with power. I realised at once that it must be an avalanche and, jumping up, waded through the snow until I could obtain a view of it.

It was an avalanche of powdery snow, and it was pouring from one of the rock peaks of the Kalkkögel. It had started from a point near the summit of the peak, thence poured from ledge to ledge and terrace to terrace, gathering enormous quantities of loose snow as it did so. The light, powdery nature of the snow helped to project it far out from the mountain-side, this movement being aided lower down by the wind displaced by the falling masses and released from the snow itself, so that the avalanche in appearance suggested the discharge of a volume of heavy white gas rushing rapidly downwards, gaining in power and weight every instant.

It was an interesting and magnificent spectacle. The impression of power was amplified by the sound which increased gradually from a dull rushing noise to a low booming roar. Finally, when the avalanche leapt over the last precipice on to the lower slopes, it was projected horizontally outwards across the valley in a blast of such extraordinary velocity and violence that I saw stout pine trees, growing hundreds of feet up on
the opposite slopes, bend over before it like palms in a West Indian hurricane.

The sound of the avalanche subsided, but the snow filled the valley, billowing turbulently far up into the sky. Then, probably borne by some air draught created by the avalanche, the snow-clouds rushed down the valley, and a few minutes later I was driven to seek shelter from a blizzard which lasted for several minutes and filled the air so thickly with powdery snow that the sun was completely obscured.

Had I proceeded up the valley, I should have been overwhelmed. I was immensely impressed with one danger that the winter mountaineer or ski-er must face. Some knowledge of snowcraft, at least, can be acquired from reading the numerous books and papers that have been written on this intricate subject, and here was a case in point. A heavy fall of new snow and a narrow valley, dominated by a range of limestone peaks, had provided the two essential ingredients for an avalanche accident. Yet, if I had never read a word about avalanches, how could I have known of the danger that lurked in that innocent-looking valley that sunny, peaceful morning?

Strangely enough, a week or two later I witnessed another avalanche, of a type dissimilar to the one I have just described. In this case it was an avalanche of wet snow, which fell at a temperature above freezing-point from the Saile, a peak overlooking the Inn Valley.
It was a dull day, with a restive wind and heavy damp clouds moving quickly out of the south from the direction of the Brenner Pass, when I ascended this mountain. It was neither an easy nor an enjoyable ski run, and I left my skis behind me and climbed the last part of the peak on foot. The air became gradually warmer as I ascended, and by the time I left the summit the Föhn wind was in full blast and the snow was wet and sticky. In order to save time, I decided to make a short-cut by descending a steep snow-slope, which I had avoided during the ascent because of its laborious nature. This slope was perhaps 500 feet high, and as there were no protruding rocks or intervening cliffs and the run out was gentle, a glissade seemed the quickest and most convenient method of descending it. As the reader may be aware, it is possible to descend in a standing glissade, in which case the mountaineer uses his ice-axe as a prop and a brake, or in a sitting glissade. In either case it is not unusual to end in the latter position, if not in a position which a sack of potatoes would be expected to take up were it projected pell-mell down a slope.

I chose to descend sitting, this method being dictated by my inexperience and the softness of the snow. I had not proceeded for more than a few yards when I discovered that instead of sliding through the snow I was sliding with the snow, which was piling up to an alarming degree in front, on either side and even behind me. I contrived to stop myself by driving in the pick of my
ice-axe and holding on like grim death to the shaft. The snow, however, continued to slide, rapidly widening as it did so in the form of an inverted V, until the area involved was not less than 50 yards in width.

This was my first view of an avalanche at close quarters. It appeared a simple, harmless affair on a slope unbroken by any rocks or cliffs. I did not realise how powerful it was until I saw the masses of sliding snow shoot out from the foot of the slope and pile up in walls and tongues of debris on the level snow-covered ground beyond. It started so unostentatiously and with so little fuss. To begin with, it did not occur to me that it was dangerous. It only seemed advisable to stop, and that there was something fundamentally wrong in descending a slope, even a simple unbroken slope, helpless and out of control, something opposed to mountain craft which postulates control in all circumstances.

I descended without difficulty or hesitation in the track of the sliding snow. Even then, I did not realise the potentialities of the avalanche; I was still obsessed by the harmless nature of the slope which, as I told myself, was nothing but a grass slope with some snow on it. But when I came to the debris of the avalanche, I changed my confident tune. I saw that the hundredweight or so of sliding snow from which I had extricated myself had multiplied into a mass weighing many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of tons, which lay 6 feet deep in places, piled in heavy, sodden,
consolidated masses of snow wide enough and deep enough to have imprisoned and stifled a score of men. I remember gazing in open-eyed amazement, with mingled feelings of fear and thankfulness in my heart, and of saying to myself with a certain grim humour: "Here might have ended the second lesson."

They were not all such eventful days as I have described, yet every expedition I made disclosed new beauties and acquired for me new experiences. I could not go far or high; I had neither the experience nor a companion. So I set myself to learn ski-ing on the slopes above Seefeld and Iglis. I was too impatient to learn methodically, for I regarded ski-ing merely as a means of climbing mountains and crossing passes. The expedition which I remember with the greatest pleasure was made from Fulpmes in the Stubai Thal to the Waldrastjoch, and along the ridge to the north-east of that pass.

There had been a heavy snowfall, followed by a severe frost, which had so crystallised the surface of the freshly fallen snow that it appeared as though strewn with flakes of glass.

It was a cloudless morning when I alighted from the train at Fulpmes. The Stubai Thal was in shadow, and the cold was that motionless, intense kind that precedes a perfect winter day. The snow-covered peaks reflected the light of the sun into the shadowed valley, so that I trudged up the path in a faint opalescent light which cast no shadows, yet seemed to em-
brace all like the light from the stars on a moonless night.

As I climbed the blood coursed more and more warmly through my veins, and that exhilarating glow, which is the product of healthful exercise in a cold atmosphere, embraced the whole of my body.

The sun rose ahead of me. First of all it lit a forest-clad skyline, and the snow-laden trees stood out fringed brilliantly with silver light. Then it sailed above the forest, pouring its light down the avenues of pines, tracing long fine shadows, and revealing the snow as a rich uneven carpet of purest white, dusted with diamonds.

The sun invited me to rest. I took off my skis, placed them together and sat upon them. I rummaged in my rucksack and extracted the edible contents. I ate, and the sun poured its light and warmth upon me as I did so. I kicked my feet energetically together until they were warm and glowing like my body.

There was silence. The air was still; the forest slept. No cloud burdened the sky; the sun burnt furiously without disturbing a single crystal of snow.

I reached the Waldrastjoch, then turned north-eastwards along the ridge. It was not a bare ridge, but planted thinly with pines. The snow was unbroken; no other ski-er had been that way; I had to find my own route. I seated myself with my back to a pine
and pored over a map. I must go this way and then
that way. It was such easy country, I could have
gone almost anywhere; but I regarded my future
movements with an absurd seriousness.

The sun was high now. It was midday. The air
was still without movement, and no cloud dimmed
the vast crystal of the sky. The day was mine. I
lounged, and ate, and smoked, and dozed, and luxu-
riated in the sun with animal-like complacency.

I ran along the ridge, then down from it, at first over
slopes dotted with pines, where I endeavoured inade-
quately to turn and dug a mighty hole in the snow
each time I fell; then down a steep and narrow path,
in a desperate stick-braking slide; down and down
through the forest, concerned only with movement or
the prevention of movement; an uncertain, hot, fever-
ish business, much less enjoyable than the slow, rhyth-
mical upward plod.

I came out of the forest on to an alp. The sun was
nearing the horizon. Its rays were no longer search-
ing and vigilant, but dusky and languid. The valleys,
after a brief sojourn in its warmth, were in shadow.
The atmosphere was marvellously still. The snow
reposed on the branches and twigs as it had reposed
all day long. The sky was unclouded, yet charged
with subtle colourings: in the east, a deep indigo; in the
zenith, a light blue charged with mauve and green
and daffodil; in the west, golden.

I paused. The sun lollyed down behind the moun-
tains. The indigo in the east deepened and rushed up the sky, sowing a few bright stars in its wake.

I glanced upwards: the light was retreating fast from the hill I had climbed. I looked northwards: the wall of peaks above Innsbruck was aglow from end to end. It was a peaceful sunset.

So ended the day.

After Innsbruck, Kitzbühel. From the hills above this village the range of the Höhe Tauern is visible in the south. From it one crest rises above other crests, the Gross Venediger.

There was a day which I can only describe as a "blue day." There are occasional days in the high mountains when, owing to some curious quality of the atmosphere, blue predominates and lends to all distant views an ethereal, almost unearthly quality. It was on a "blue day" that I first saw the Gross Venediger. According to local information, it could be climbed on skis. I persuaded a college friend, Mr. G. N. Hewett, and his sister (now Mrs. Brooke) to join me in the enterprise. We could not afford a guide. We did not want a guide. He would have spoilt for us the adventure. For adventure it was, the greatest adventure of my life.

In late February a thaw came to Kitzbühel. In teeming rain we tramped over the Thurn Pass, but it would have taken more than rain to have damped the ardour of three such adventurers.
We descended from the pass to Mittersil in the Pinzgau Thal, and failing to connect with a train, resigned ourselves to a ten-mile trudge to Neukirchen. Darkness overtook us, but we tramped resolutely on through drizzlling rain, grimly striving to enliven our progress with "On Ilkley Moor" and "Six Men, Five Men, Four Men . . . went to mow a meadow."

We lost our way, but were fortunate enough to find a Gasthof a mile or so from Neukirchen. Tirol without its inns would be a vastly different country. One of their pleasantest features is the great stove, which usually stands in one corner of the Gastzimmer. It is pleasant to lean your back against it, especially when you have been carrying a heavy rucksack all day.

I prefer an inn to an hotel in mountainous countries: a clean inn; a friendly host and hostess; a comfortable bed; simple, well-cooked food. There are many inns in Tirol that answer to these requirements, where the wanderer, whatever nationality he may be, can forget the multifarious cares and complexities of the twentieth century; where he can sit, and smoke, and drink his wine, and imagine himself back a hundred years or more in time.

We rose early next morning and were away by 6 a.m. The rain had stopped and the Pinzgau Thal was enveloped in mist. We reached Neukirchen and purchased some provisions.

So dense was the mist that we experienced some difficulty in finding the entrance to the Ober Sulzbach
As we mounted the path, there came a sudden bright light. With dramatic suddenness the mists swept asunder. Inconceivably far above us gleamed a sunlit sickle-like edge of snow. The thought of treading it seemed fantastic. In that cold, shadowed and mist-wreathed valley we were like beggars turning eyes towards a king’s throne.

Hours later, we emerged from the forest on to a snow-clad alp whence we could discern the ice-fall of the Ober Sulzbach Glacier, and, more distantly, the sturdy pyramid of the Gross Geiger.

We ate a meal in the sun, and ate impatiently. We had to reach the Kürsinger hut, and the way marked on the map was steep and complicated.

As it proved, this route was practicable only for a short distance. Burdened with our skis and other impedimenta, we crept along a ledge holding on to a wire rope fixed to the rocks. A snow-filled gully intervened. The sun shone full on this; it was obvious, even to our inexperienced eyes, that the soft wet snow would avalanche if disturbed.

The sole alternative was to ascend the Ober Sulzbach Glacier and contour back to the hut. But there was no time for this. Our attempt to follow the direct route to the hut had cost us two or three valuable hours. The sun was declining, and already there was a tinge of gold in its light.

We retreated, and ran down over snow-slopes which were already crusted with frost. Fortunately, on the
alp below the glacier there were several huts, and we decided to shelter for the night in one of these.

One hut was superior to the others. We effected a burglarious entry, and were rewarded with a stove, cooking utensils, mattresses and an abundant supply of wood. We made ourselves comfortable by raising a "fug" of an almost tropical order. We cooked, and ate and retold the fortunes of the day. Outside it was bitterly cold, and the stars quivered and glittered from a cloud-free sky. It was necessary to keep the fire going all night, for we had no blankets, and directly it fell low we awoke shivering.

We rose early, and in the first light of dawn re-ascended the hard snow-slopes to the glacier. We bore across this to a corridor or trough we had noted the previous day. So continuous was this that, with the exception of one short steep slope, we were able to ascend it entirely on skis. The trough brought us above the ice-fall. Here the glacier was smooth and unbroken, and it was an easy matter to ascend it and contour back to the Kürsinger hut. This we found to be a cheerless place. We could discover no blankets or fuel. And we were short of food. We had purchased some at Neukirchen, but our appetites had made sad havoc of it. What remained could only be described as an "iron ration." Even so, we were tempted to remain overnight at the hut and complete the ascent of the Gross Venediger the following day. But supposing the weather broke? Supposing we
were confined to the hut by a blizzard, and were unable to descend? Our position would become a dangerous one. Inexperience would tell heavily against us. With no blankets, no fuel and no food, existence in a low temperature is not possible for long. There was nothing for it but to retreat. It was a sorrowful decision. The weather was marvellous: not a cloud; not a breath of wind.

We sat for a while on the threshold of the hut. All about us snowfields and glaciers lay immobile in the sunlight. To abandon the ascent we had planned so carefully and so ambitiously in such conditions went sadly against the grain. Yet, we could scarcely regret our decision to retreat. It was the sensible, indeed the obvious, thing to do. Gambling with the weather was not for us. That my first essay in high mountaineering should have ended in failure did not distress me. There were many memories to carry back with me. I had known good comradeship; I had trodden my first glacier; I had seen the beauty of the high mountains. Now, after some years of mountaineering, I look back upon my first venture into the high Alps with a feeling deeper than that inspired by mere pleasurable success. Good adventure is not to be measured in terms of victory or defeat. The greatness of mountaineering lies in the doing and the experiencing, not in the fact of success.

Many successful expeditions on far more difficult peaks stand out with less clarity in memory than my
YOUTH

first and unsuccessful attempt to ascend a high peak. I remember, as if it were yesterday, sitting on my skis outside the Kürsinger hut, comfortable and warm in the sun, with the prospect of many thousands of feet of exhilarating downhill ski-ing before me, and around me glaciers, peaks and snowfields, static, seemingly immutable, shining in the sun. I remember a silence into which my ears strained; a space profound, into which I seemed to soar on the wings of some perfect melody.

Down. Down to the glacier. Down the glacier. Down the trough. Down the alp. Down the forest path. Down to Neukirchen in the evening.

Youth. How pleasant its uncertainties, its hopes and fears, its experience and inexperience. How glorious the hills of youth.
CHAPTER III
LOW HILLS

Comparisons between low hills and high hills are invidious. There is no denying the grandeur of the Himalayas; there is also no denying the grandeur of the British hills. I have seen Snowdon on a misty September morning as far removed from earth as Kangchenjunga. Altitude in terms of figures counts for little. It is the instant vision that matters. To wrest the maximum of enjoyment from mountaineering, it is better to start humbly on the humblest hills and build upwards, rather than downwards, on experience. I count myself as fortunate in having served my mountaineering apprenticeship, in part at least, on the British hills. Doubtless, I could have learned more had I applied myself assiduously to Alpine peaks, but in mountaineering a sense of proportion is at least as important as skill, and the most valuable lesson that the British hills teach is the unimportance of mere height. The mountaineer returns to them gratefully from the highest mountains of the world. It never even occurs to him to make comparisons in terms of size or beauty, and when he is asked, as he frequently is, by well-meaning but ignorant people, whether he does not
find them beneath his notice after the Himalayas or other of the world's greatest ranges, he cannot think of a suitable reply, for the reason that it has never occurred to him to make comparisons in his own mind.

Everest's 29,002 feet and Snowdon's 3,560 feet are symbolic only of conditions. It may be argued that there must be a limit, but even this argument can be fallacious. An anthill is more important to an ant than it is to a man. Yet, as regards men, their love for hills is a matter of instinct rather than reason; they react in a certain way at sight of a hill without knowing why. I do not understand those who decry instinct in their fanatical adherence to "reason." Does not the present trend of thought suggest that in the future instinct in human thought and affairs will be more closely united with reason, and that a new philosophy is in process of being evolved, which seeks to reveal the whole and not a part of the human scheme; an awareness based on a development of the higher faculties?

As regards the hills, it is a simple matter to explain logically why men love them: their fresh air and sunlight, their wide horizons, the healthful exercise they afford. Yet there is something very threadbare in estimating thus the benefits derived from them. What really matters is our feeling towards the hills, and this feeling we qualify as instinctive. Does not an acceptance of this instinctive feeling permit of a wider
and happier view of life than "reason" founded on a pseudo-logical conception which has its roots in materialism and a mess of well-turned phrases?

It is for the reader to form his own estimate of relative values. For myself, I know that were I given the opportunity of rediscovering the hills, I should choose no other way than that which fate has already ordained.

The scent of turf and wild thyme on waves of warm air is one of my earliest recollections of the hills. I associate this odour with happy childhood days on the Kentish Downs. Since those days I have learnt not to prefer high hills to low hills, or low hills to high hills, but simply to love hills, to want to be among hills and to climb hills. I do not mean by this that I would be content always to dwell among or climb on low hills. Variety is the spice of life. To gain in experience is surely man's first duty to himself? My point is that when I am among low hills, I am as happy as when I am among high hills. It is another force, another urge, which transports me from one place to another place and from one hill to another hill. And if there are no hills at all, what better than a vast plain or desert along which the tall clouds march? Memories can be sad drab things, mere wraiths scurrying confusedly along dark lanes; but some march proudly, their heads upheld: the memories of the hills form a gallant legion.

Some mountaineers are lazy by nature. To walk
for the sake of exercise is abhorrent to them. So they climb hills.

There is, doubtless, much to be said for the virtues of walking such-and-such a distance over the hills in such-and-such a time, but I wish somebody could tell me what are these virtues, for, lazy fellow that I am, I have never been able to discern them. Because of this laziness I have only once done a long walk; it was some fifty miles in length and the time occupied was in the neighbourhood of twenty-four hours. And only once have I been over a large number of summits in one day. I am far too lazy ever to want to do anything like it again.

The fifty-mile walk was over the Surrey hills a few years ago. It was a still, calm evening when Hugh Slingsby and I left Ashtead and the glow-worms were plain to see on the slopes of Box Hill. Possibly it is due to some hard-bitten prejudice, or possibly to some association with my upbringing, or maybe to some ingrained pride of race and country, but if I had an unlimited choice for the site of my home, I would choose the English countryside. Instinct again; an emotion incapable of a material interpretation or analysis. Home to an Englishman is not only his house, his street, his village or his town, it is the English countryside. To know how much it means you should walk over it as we walked during a moonlit night in June. Then, whatever your feelings, however much you deplore nationalism, however much of a pacifist
you are, you will understand why men have died, and are still ready to die, for England.

We passed over Box Hill, that great close-cropped grassy hump on which the ski-ing is so good when there is snow, and strolled down to the Burford Bridge Hotel, where we refreshed ourselves and talked Test cricket with the proprietor. Then on, over Ranmore Common, Netley Heath and Albury Downs to the little church of St. Martha's, which stands by the Pilgrims' Way. This is a lovely viewpoint. We stood there and looked across the moonlit hills from Hascombe to Holmbury and Leith Hill, and saw between Hascombe and Hurt Wood Hill the level line of the Weald.

Bands of diaphanous vapour lying in the valleys picked out the crests of the ridges, which rose, one after the other, in dark orderly waves. And over all reigned an immense peacefulness. Not silence—there is never absolute silence in a countryside—but peace.

Dawn found us on Blackheath Common. There was nothing dramatic in its advent, no fierce and wild rush of colouring, no bold sallies, nothing to ape the drama and pageantry of an Alpine dawn. It was an opening of dim eyes, a gradual realisation of wakefulness.

We were sleepy; not tired in the sense that our limbs ached or were fatigued, but sleepy, so much so that we found it difficult to make a straight course across country, and presently discovered that we were going
LOW HILLS

in quite the wrong direction. So we sat down to rest for a moment. . . .

We awoke four hours later. The sun was well up and fast drying the dew, the fresh air was full of bird song, and a light breeze was stirring the gorse and heather.

We ate breakfast, then went on our way and, true to Alpine tradition, ate another and larger breakfast at the first inn we came to.

All that day we lounged along the hills: Hurtwood Hill, Pitch Hill, Holmbury Hill and Leith Hill. It mattered nothing to us how many miles we covered or the time we took to cover them. We walked when we liked and rested when we liked.

There can be few eminences whence the eye can take in more of England's beauty than Holmbury Hill.

From Hampshire the hills stretch ridge on ridge, then comes a long line of Downs crowned in one place by Chanctonbury Ring and broken in another by Brightling Gap. Northwards is the Thames Valley and the Chilterns. Eastwards the long escarpment of the North Downs extends towards Westerham and Sevenoaks, Wrotham and Maidstone—the North Downs of my childhood. Those who love hills need go no higher than Holmbury's summit. They will discover there that height counts for little and that it is the hill that matters. The low hills teach us that height, be it a mere two or three hundred feet, is
something precious, something that quickens life to a nobler rhythm. No earth raised on earth can accomplish so subtle a transformation, can bring such joy. There is something greater. It is the spirit of the hills.

Another walk was along the main ridge of the Coolin Hills. The Isle of Skye is unique. Nowhere does such sombre colouring lend such mystery and enchantment to the hills. And nowhere in Britain are hills more subject to the vagaries of the weather. In the space of twelve hours the climber may battle along, head down to sheets of driving rain and gusts of tempestuous wind, and recline at his ease upon some ledge while the smoke from his pipe lofts gently up the gabbro precipice above. In this fickle atmosphere no two days are alike, for Nature is a prodigal spendthrift in the dressing of her darling child. She is ever arranging and rearranging. She drapes the peaks with clouds and casts long shawls of mist across the moors; wind and rain are seldom far from her mind. But there are times when she rests. Then Skye sleeps in motionless air on a sleeping sea.

It was during a spell of calm weather that James Bell and I traversed the main ridge of the Coolins. We left Mary Campbell’s at Glen Brittle soon after midnight. The clegs and mosquitoes, the pests of Skye, slept, and the still air was charged with earthy fragrances and the indefinable vigour of the hills.
Dawn broke as we trudged up Garsbheinn. Slowly the hills were revealed. Slowly the stars receded. Slowly the Hebrides took shape and form, mere breaths on the dim mirror of the sea.

Nature reclined half waking, half sleeping, suspended between dreams and reality on delicate breadths of twilight. And when at last the sun came it trod lightly on the hills; not firing them fiercely, but illuminating them gently.

Up we climbed; at first on slopes of dew-soaked heather, then over tumbled boulders and finally up broken crags to the summit of Garsbheinn. There we rested. Nearly 3,000 feet beneath lay the sea, a blue unmoving floor on which a solitary steamship moved; so toy-like, we might have flung a pebble and sunk it.

From Garsbheinn the Coolins bend round in a noble parabola to Sgurr nan Gillean. Perhaps thirty peaks had to be traversed. It was a grand day's scrambling: now along some rocky edge; now over some tower; now down to some sunless gap with the loose stones whirring and jarring into the scree gullies on either hand. And always, on either hand, luminous horizons, moors, hills and sea.

We climbed lethargically down the pinnacle ridge of Sgurr nan Gillean. Never shall I forget my craving for water; still less the moorland stream into which I plunged my hot face, and the feel and taste of the cold peaty water in my parched mouth. I forget how long we took: I think it was seventeen or eighteen hours.
Someone has done it since in twelve, or less. The traverse of the Coolins is the grandest day's scrambling in Britain. Next time I shall lounge along like the lazy fellow I am.

The charm of British hills is almost infinite in its variety. I have slept out on the South Downs in blissful warmth, and crawled on hands and knees over the ice-bound plateau of Ben Nevis in the teeth of a snow-laden hurricane worthy of Everest at its worst, and I have spent hours hacking away at ice and snow on the steep side of the Ben. I have wandered over the Yorkshire fells, balanced on the clean, genial facets of Gimmer Crag and the unrelenting slabs of Clogwyn-dur-Arddu. And every walk, every scramble, every climb has been different. In the British hills nature is never satisfied with her work: she changes her colours and distances and atmospheres; she is elusive, evanescent. Yet, hers is not a fickle or a coquettish charm. There is something permanent running through her moods that ignores superficial changes and strikes deeply into the hearts of those who woo her: something steadfast, noble and dignified; something simple, peaceful and human that men can love. These hills of ours may be low in stature, yet they reach very nearly to heaven.
CHAPTER IV

A LOW HILL

A SATURDAY in spring. I had no plan—that was the beauty of my week-end. I wanted only to climb, to forget the workshops that had claimed me for the past week, to live for a spell in solitude and peace.

I travelled by train from Baden and alighted at Ziegelbrücke.

A forest path took me upwards. An accumulation of dead leaves swished dryly beneath my feet.

An hour previously I had seen the Alps as the train hastened south: remote and dim through an opalescent haze like a row of small handkerchiefs suspended from invisible fingers; now they were reality, the snow on them not of the stuff of dreams, but snow—plastered coldly to the sunless hollows, clinging unbrokenly to the mountain-sides above a certain level.

Beeches, birches and undergrowth gave way to pines; the odour of dead leaves and arboreal decay was replaced by the odour of resin.

Presently I emerged from the forest on to an alp above it.

A hut stood there, brown and weathered, as natural
a thing to find as a farmhouse of mellowed brick in Sussex.

The snowline was only a few feet higher and stretched down irregular fingers almost to the back door, but on a grassy terrace, perhaps two yards broad, that extended the length of the hut, the first crocuses were blooming, peeping half fearfully from the sodden turf.

I unshot two wooden bolts, unlatched a door and entered the hut. It was dark within and smelt of cows and hay. I unloosed the shutters. They swung creaking back, and the afternoon filled the interior with a warm light.

At one end of the hut was a bricked-off space where-on lay the ashes of the last fire burnt there. A thick wire bent into a hook was suspended from a smoke-blackened rafter over it. In the roof a trap-door worked by a cord did duty as chimney.

A table, a bench and a couple of milking-stools completed the furniture, whilst against one wall was a stack of pine logs.

The sleeping quarters were above—a snug little loft, half filled with hay reached by means of a rickety ladder.

Such was my week-end residence. I would not have exchanged it for the most expensive suite in the most luxurious hotel in the world.

The sun was a laggard that evening. Long I sat on the terrace. I was within sight of many who passed
about their tasks in the villages at my feet, and yet unseen. The dusk filled the valley very slowly and the crocuses as slowly closed their petals. The air was without movement, and the earth as still as a great expanse of sand before the coming of the tide.

The sun lolled earthwards, but when it touched a distant crest it seemed to drop more quickly, as though it had discovered a secret and was anxious to be gone.

For a few minutes the warmth of it remained. I felt it radiating from the log walls of the hut and rising in waves from the turf at my feet.

Above, snow was pink like coral; below, time measured its pace with a dark hand.

So still was the evening that I could hear little hissing and sucking noises from the wet turf. I heard also church bells in the valley ringing forth for evensong. So motionless was the air that, paradoxically perhaps, I imagined I could feel it ruffling and quivering about me like the waters of some deep pool.

In earth and sky there was nothing startling, no wild colourings to presage a storm, no violent contrasts. It was not a sunset where earth turns a bloody then a pallid cheek to fretful heaven, but an end where peace leads peace and earth slips care-free into sleep.

I made a fire in the hut; first of all of chips and then, when these were well ablaze, of larger pieces of wood. The smoke was loath to leave the hut, but presently, by manipulating the window openings and the trap-door in the roof, I managed to coax it outside.
I brewed soup in an aluminium pan, converting it gradually to a stew by adding eggs and pieces of meat. I ate this mess by firelight. Then I took the pan outside and washed it in a trough fed by a stream, and when it was clean filled it with water and carried it inside to brew tea.

While the water was heating I smoked. My body was warm and somnolent; my pipe was drawing as it should; the fire was well alight, and filling the hut with scampering flickers; the odour of burning pine wood mingled agreeably with the odour of tobacco smoke. I was animalish in my comfort and complacency and would not have exchanged the wooden bench on which I sat for a king's throne.

The water boiled. I made tea. It was fragrant with earth and sun. Perhaps it came from a tea garden on the slopes of the Himalayas.

I thrust a log into the fire and watched its destruction; watched until the first fierce flames had died to a more peaceful glow and the glow was lost in a crumble of white ash. Presently the ash would be cold, then it would be dispersed and become a part of earth and air. Youth, middle age, old age, death. I was only twenty-two, but I thought I understood the meaning of life and death. Even if I did not believe in the immortality of the spirit, I think I should still find a measure of consolation and happiness in the thought of being reabsorbed into Nature, in becoming once more a part of that universal cosmos from
which life springs—a part of earth and air and natural force. There is a glory in decay.

The fire and my pipe died. I knocked the ashes from the latter, yawned, stretched and went outside for a look at the weather.

A star-filled night met me at the door. Far below were strings and chaplets of lights. Both stars and lights trembled a little, like bright grains of sand viewed through gently shivering water.

It was warm by the fire, and warmth breeds drowsiness, but when I stepped outside warmth and drowsiness were stripped from me. One moment I had huddled over a fire, scarcely conscious of my well-fed and comfortable body, the next I was conscious both of my poor body and of the universal forces surrounding it. The night was cold. The coldness of space embraced the earth. The turf no longer made little noises; it was frozen hard. There was nothing to suggest that warmth had existed or ever would exist.

There were no clouds; not a single smudge of vapour to despoil heaven of its jewellery. The atmosphere was so clear that the stars nearest the horizon were as bright as those immediately above me, and the mountains were plainly outlined against them.

As I gazed upwards at the stars, which gleamed and flashed with a blue electric fire, I was aware for a fleeting, revelatory instant of the incalculable and awful depths of space.

The hay in the loft was fragrant and warm. I
burrowed deeply into it and made a nest for myself. A bright star eyed me through a small window as I closed my eyes.

I woke once during the night. I was on the brink of coldness, not shivering and yet not warm—a condition that failed to accord with slumber and sharpened the wits to a raw edge. The bright star no longer eyed me and the night seemed dead. It was that period when life is enfeebled and rides on heavy springs. The very hay seemed to have lost its fragrance and brushed harshly against my face. I burrowed more deeply into it, and presently felt warmth stealing upon me; and with warmth came sleep.

The sky showed pale blue through the window when I awoke. I emerged from the hay, pulled on my boots and clambered down the ladder.

The ground floor of the hut, which had seemed so cheerful in the leaping flames of the fire, showed stark and mean in the harsh light of dawn. It was cold, too, and smelt mustily of earth, cows and stale smoke.

Outside the hut the sky was one vast poster of amber, amethyst and green on which dawn's message was scrawled in thread-like golden clouds.

Gone now was my first lethargy and fretfulness. The keen air washed sleep from my brain and braced my body anew. I breathed deeply, absorbing through every sense the beauty of the new-born day.

I made a new fire among the ashes of the old, and cooked and ate my breakfast. Then I packed my few
possessions in my rucksack, placed on the table a sum of money for the wood I had burnt, closed up the hut, and set off uphill.

Dawn's hour had passed, and already the sun was busy shattering the little spear-heads manufactured by the frost.

The hill lifted me up that morning, for the air was full of strength and the sun warm in my face.

I passed from turf to frozen snow wind-ruffled and bedded firmly on the ground: my boots struck it with a slight hissing noise, and it yielded creakingly beneath my weight.

I tramped up the snow; the sun blazed nearly levelly at me and cast my shadow far across its surface. I saw the slope curving before me like a monstrous sail, up and over against the blue sky. Each upward step was like the last, yet there was no monotony. My lungs filled themselves, not only with air, but with the cosmic power of earth and sky; my limbs worked with tireless assurance, lifting me up and up into the morning. I thought of people with naught but house-tops to greet their rising, and I thanked my Maker for my health and for the morning.

Presently, without difficulty, I reached a summit, on which stood a surveyor's wooden tripod.

From this summit I looked down the snow-slopes I had ascended: they ended tattered and ragged on an alp, above a forest which swept valleywards in a single sheet of sombre green. The hillside compared in its
scale of colour with a deep-sea roller, dark green and solid in its body, lighter green in its topmost portion, where the light showed faintly through its narrowing mass, and broken with foam on its crest.

But this was not all. Lakes lay to north and south of me: to the north, distantly, the Lake of Zürich, looming faded and pale through the lowland haze; to the south the Lake of Wallenstadt, a gallant stretch, so blue the very sky might hereabouts have wept a spate of tears.

The summit on which I found myself was but a minor eminence. A loftier summit lay half a mile away. To reach it I had either to descend some distance and make a wearisome detour, or else follow the crest of the ridge connecting the two summits. The first route I vowed I would not attempt, for, apart from its tedious nature, it might well become dangerous from avalanches later in the day. So I turned my attention to the ridge. This was narrow, precipitous on either side and plentifully decorated with cornices; it was beautiful to look at, but to a novice like myself, treacherous to tread.

When free from snow it would afford the mountaineer with little more than a walk. Snow had transformed it into something quite different. To walk sure-footedly was not sufficient. A new element, calculable only with experience, to be safely dealt with only by skill, had been interposed between foot and earth.

Once embarked upon the ridge, I found that my
ice-axe was no longer a mere walking-stick. It became as necessary to me as a cricket bat to a cricketer. I drove it, tentatively, into the snow—snow no longer hard-crusted but softening in the sun—and I stamped my forward foot cautiously yet with a certain determination.

For perhaps ten minutes I proceeded thus, step by step, with infinite caution. Then I stopped and glanced back. There was my line of steps across the steep side of the ridge, well below the cornice, leading to the summit I had left. The surveyor’s signal looked very small and remote. I felt like a swimmer who suddenly finds himself much farther from the shore than he had anticipated.

I did not get very far along that ridge. My excuse for retreat was the softening of the snow which, even to my inexperienced eye, would, sooner or later, avalanche.

An experienced mountaineer would have forced his way to the summit, avoiding danger by the exercise of that judgment and skill which spring only from experience in mountaineering. In my case, young and inexperienced as I was, I had developed neither of these qualities, but my limited knowledge of mountains was valuable in that it made me realise that if I went on I should be risking my life.

At the time, however, I did not weigh matters with any delicacy, I merely felt instinctively that I had attempted something too difficult and dangerous.
Consciously, at least, I was not influenced by wisdom; it was entirely a matter of self-preservation.

I retreated without difficulty, but it was not without a sigh of thankfulness that I regained the first summit.

I spent a long time there. I undressed and lay naked for a while, my body absorbing the radiant energy of the sun. I closed my eyes and relaxed completely in mind and body.

I dressed, and reflected as I did so that on the morrow I should be enclosed by walls, breathing the odours of men and machinery. I was young then and a rebel; yet rebellion made the hill hours seem all the sweeter.

For hours I reclined on the summit, postponing my descent to the last possible moment. I ate when I felt hungry, and cooked tea over a spirit-stove when I felt thirsty.

The day was almost completely calm and scarcely a breath of wind stirred. The filaments of cloud, which had announced the dawn, had vanished and the sky was an aloof dome of pure blue.

Feather-like fragments of ice clinging to the surveyor's signal were detached by the sun and fell with light brushing sounds, and around me I heard slight noises from the water-logged snow, as it stirred uneasily like a man in the grip of disturbing dreams.

It was Sunday and church bells sounded from the villages below. The Swiss seldom peal their bells, but merely sound them in any order. The effect is harsh
and unmusical, yet space, distance and the presence of mountains transmute the harshness to softness and even impart into the sound an agreeable rhythm.

The shadows shrank, then lengthened. The morning was limpid and bright-eyed, but the afternoon was dusky and languorous. The peaks lost their youth and vigour: they became older and more peaceful with the day's experience. In a few hours of turning, the earth had aged a little.

I rose reluctantly to my feet, heavy-eyed and giddy from a surfeit of sunlight, and set off downhill. At first I ploughed through soft, wet snow, then strolled over an alp. Finally, the pine forest received me, slumberous, warm and perfumed with resin.

I jogged down a path. Yesterday I had toiled up it with a week-end before me. Now that week-end was almost gone. During a few short hours I had drunk deeply of a spring which is drawn from the wise and simple things of life. I was well content.
A large proportion of any worth-while technique or philosophy is founded on personal experience; the experiences of others is the mortar between the bricks, not the bricks themselves. In mountaineering a great deal can be learnt from the experiences of others, but the feeling for mountains is a personal matter, and mountain-climbing can never become fashionable in the sense that men climb because it is fashionable to climb. There are, unfortunately, many instances where the approach to the task is not all to be desired, and Nature sometimes expresses her resentment in no uncertain manner towards those who profane her sanctuaries with their impudent vulgarities. Yet, most of those who climb, though their motives be complex, climb because, unknown to themselves, some driving force arising out of their inmost consciousness impels them towards the heights.

Our love for mountains is too often overlaid by superficial and material aspirations, which become magnified out of all proportion to their true importance. The balance between the development of a climbing technique and the instinct that prompts a
man to climb is not easily maintained. A perusal of climbing-club journals will prove the truth of this contention. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that there are many who love the hills who have no desire to experience the "refinements" of modern mountaineering.

Mountaineering itself exhibits a sharp line of cleavage in its modes of approach, and there are many mountaineers who wonder sometimes whether the man who thinks only of mountains as physical problems, who ascends and descends otherwise unclimbable precipices by means of pitons and ropes and other mechanical paraphernalia, who rushes about making hideous noises, who fouls Alpine huts with his dirt and litter, and is not concerned for the comfort, enjoyment or safety of others, has any love at all for the hills. It may be that instances occur in which evil manifests itself even in so noble a pursuit as mountaineering, but it is more generous to suppose that a great deal of the vulgarity and callousness which distinguishes Alpine mountaineering is superficial and irrelevant to the real issue. Just as there are people who seek the countryside of a week-end in England yet vulgarise it or cover it with their litter, so are there some who seek high mountains who have not yet learnt how best to appreciate them. To appreciate fully the hills is a matter of education and experience. The desire to vie with others, to establish a reputation, to test skill and endurance beyond legitimate limits, is only a phase
in the evolution of a true mountaineer and mountain lover. Experience reveals the paltriness of the material considerations that dictate such an approach and enhances the preciousness of the hills. So long as beauty is not defaced or the pleasure of others interfered with, there is no occasion for mountaineers who have gained that experience to deplore the methods of a younger generation.

It is better for a man to climb, however deplorable his methods of climbing and his mental approach to climbing, than for him not to climb. Unless there is something inherently wrong with him, he is certain to discover through experience a love of hills, which will enable him to cast aside the material or superficial and join with Nature in a happy union of thought and action. Is it not better, therefore, that a generous and sympathetic attitude should be taken by experienced mountaineers towards the methods of some of the younger generation? Mountaineering is a practical expression of the love men have for Nature. No veneer can alter the character of the wood.

It is certain that intensive employment of anything artificial or mechanical in mountaineering, other than those articles of attire and equipment necessary for safety's sake, is contrary to the interests of mountaineering, for the reason that anything interposed between man and mountain spoils the personal and direct contact with Nature on which true happiness depends.
It is not easy to know where to draw the line, especially the line between safety and expediency. On grounds of safety and expediency it is justifiable to use an oxygen apparatus on Mount Everest, but on sentimental grounds many mountaineers would prefer to fail without it than to succeed with it. Their tenet is that mountaineering should remain an adventure, in which nothing so artificial as oxygen should be employed, and that if a mountain cannot be climbed without it, it is better not to attempt the ascent. This is a nobler philosophy than one rooted in expediency.

I believe that mountaineering will remain a natural adventure. I find it impossible to imagine a moral deterioration in mountaineering either as an art or as a philosophy, for it expresses in a practical way men’s love for Nature, and this love is a part of life and a measure of progress.

Some Englishmen start their mountaineering in the British hills, and then migrate to the Alps, and from the Alps pass to other and greater ranges. Others begin their apprenticeship in the Alps with or without guides. Some prefer rocks, and others snow and ice. Some like a little of everything. It is all a matter of personal taste, opportunity and convenience. If a man enjoys climbing rocks in preference to snow and ice, let him climb rocks. Why should he do something he does not enjoy? It may be justifiable and expedient to formulate the principles of mountaineer-
ing and state the desirability of safe and happy climbing as opposed to dangerous and unhappy climbing, but it is not justifiable to attack a method of approach unless the attacker is convinced in his own mind that evil rather than good can come of such a method. Criticism should always be constructive, but destructive criticism, inspired in many cases by jealousy, is too often levelled at mountaineers by other mountaineers. Heaven knows, I have been guilty of it myself. Destructive criticism and prejudice are the dread harpies of life, and are for ever insinuating themselves into thought and deed. You will find them in this book. I should like to tear them out root and limb, but they are too elusive. My apologia must be that I have set down only my own thoughts, feelings and convictions, and do not expect others to adopt them or to agree with them.

It was my good fortune to spend nearly two years in Switzerland and Austria shortly after the war. It was seldom possible to obtain a companion, and I could not afford a guide. It is wrong to climb alone, inasmuch as it is liable to cause anxiety to others. In my case, my solitary ramblings and scramblings taught me more of the hills than several seasons in the tow of first-class guides could possibly have done. At the same time, it has always been a matter of regret to me that my mountaineering education did not include guided climbing. A man can teach himself how to climb, but he can only improve his technique quickly by studying the technique of others. Much of the technique of
mountaineering is only acquired through practice. The best amateurs I have seen were inferior in their technique to the best guides. On the only occasion that I have climbed with a guide—it was with Adolph Rey for one day on Mont Blanc in 1934—I experienced the feeling of a pupil in the presence of a master.

Rock-climbing, I have come to the conclusion, is, up to an advanced stage, largely a matter of nerve and agility. I have neither the nerve nor the agility to become a good rock-climber. Furthermore, I am far too frightened of falling off to risk falling off. I admire tremendously the nerve, or lack of nerve, of a man who can write a whole article on the art of falling off safely, or at any rate of minimising the effects of a fall where it is possible to do so, and who demonstrates his theories in a charmingly practical manner. It has always seemed to me that the great thing in mountaineering is not to fall off, and that everything the mountaineer does should be directed, even at the expense of failure, towards this happy end. My cowardice in this matter, and the assumption that mountaineering is a pleasurable pursuit, prompts me to enquire wherein lies the pleasure in falling off a mountain? Undoubtedly, falling off is a phase through which some mountaineers must pass. The pity of it is that the climbing career of so many of them comes to an abrupt conclusion during this period.

High hills can be friendly or unfriendly, unexacting or exacting. All hills are friendly to men, whether
they be high or low. It is the conditions obtaining on them that determine the qualities of friendliness and unfriendliness. Bad weather can transform a low hill into something hostile and exacting, while a high hill cannot support human life under certain conditions. Everest on a sunny windless day can be almost agreeable to climb, and if to this were added a sufficiency of oxygen to breathe, it would be positively enjoyable. As it is, the lack of oxygen and the oft-recurring storms transform it into a mountain that is implacably hostile. It resists the flesh and accepts only the spirit.

Weather is seldom a serious obstacle on the British hills to anyone versed in mountaineering. On high hills it is a different matter. Good and bad weather is not merely a distinction between pleasantness and unpleasantness, but a distinction between safety and danger. High hills mean harder and longer days than low hills. The east face of the Matterhorn is easy enough on a fine day when the conditions are good, yet even then it involves so many thousands of feet of climbing, occupying so many hours. Bad weather may prolong the ascent by many hours and expose the climber to serious danger.

Weather adds to the dignity and grandeur of high hills. Because of it a high hill is more exacting on temper and temperament than a low hill, and develops qualities not only of physical skill and endurance, but of patience, determination, resignation and comradeship under trying circumstances.
It is in rapid reaction to conditions that the difference lies between high hills and low hills. Weather brings a charm to any mountain range. Mountains on which little or no moisture is precipitated are mountains virtually dead. Desert hills have a beauty of their own, but they lack some power of attraction. There is something new to be seen every day, sometimes every hour or minute, in a mountain subjected to weather influences. Nature is ever weaving new patterns of light, shadow and colour, ever indulging in some new experiment.

The weather has called the tune on more occasions than I can remember.

My first high hill was the Claridenstock. I climbed it alone on skis on a day of mist and threatening storm. Then came the Tödi, one bitterly cold but fine morning in May. That was in 1922. Since that date the weather has given me cause to remember it on many occasions. Outstanding in these was a blizzard in the Stubai Alps which confined me for three days to a hut without food; several thunderstorms, of which one on the Schreckhorn accompanied by a blizzard and hurricane and two on the south side of Mont Blanc are the most memorable, and wind storms on Mount Everest.

On many other occasions the weather has been the deciding factor between success and failure, yet, in looking back on a series of unfortunate seasons the prey to this autocratic element, I regret nothing. To
estimate a climbing holiday in terms of victories and defeats is to miss much; it is the being on and among the hills that counts for most pleasure. Whether or not the climbs are associated with victory or defeat is incidental to memory. To walk down the Rongbuk Valley, leaving Mount Everest’s untrodden summit enshrined in the clouds, is one of life’s great experiences.

When I was young, the hills meant so much to me that other things suffered by comparison. I resented an indoor life; cities were anathema to me; I chafed against convention and many other things without ever pausing to ask myself what they really meant or the place they occupied in the scheme of things. I longed for the hills—to climb them, to let youthful fires expend their energy upon them. The long lift of a distant moor or fell held more than mere enchantment for me; the feel of a bootnail gritting against a rock spelt romance. The hills claimed a willing slave.

When I worked as an engineering student in Switzerland, I used to walk up to a vantage point above Baden, and there forget for a while the noise of machinery and the smell of oil and sweat. There was a hill-top which I remember as it were yesterday, half covered with pines, whence I could gaze towards the Alps. Many an evening I sought it and watched the sunset light the Oberland snows.

How strange and wild a heart-stirring was inspired by that vision of far-off peaks, how much of beauty and
adventure was borne to me on the blue wings of distance.

I did not know why two miles of earth raised on earth should stir me thus. And still I do not know. But I know this: then high hills were all of life to me; now they are a part of it. Something more reasoned, more mature, has replaced youthful enthusiasm; yet when the train turns the corner near Thun and the Oberland comes into view, I am a boy again.

Adventure, if it is not to become rash and useless, needs to be controlled. Safety in mountaineering depends primarily on instinct and experience. This is no place to enter into a discussion on the meaning of instinct. A wholly inexperienced climber may possess some latent or residual instinct in respect to mountaineering art, but instinct is, save in rare cases, a faculty developed by experience. When I was a novice in the art of climbing, I sometimes resented the experience of others. The dangers of mountaineering, the necessity for experience of minor climbs before tackling difficult climbs, were overdone. Mountaineering was altogether too much of a trade union of elderly gentlemen who rammed their beastly experience down younger men's throats in order to glorify their own feats and satisfy their lust for superiority. I thought I knew a great deal about mountaineering fifteen years ago.

Often I climbed alone. On several occasions it was only a benevolent Providence that preserved me from death. My most salutary lesson occurred as the
result of a solitary traverse of the Kreilspitze, a peak in the Stubai Alps.

After a night at the Franz Senn hut, I left early next morning. An easy scramble brought me to the summit of my peak. Here the Devil, a word by which men seek to explain away their foolishness, prompted me to traverse the peak and descend by another route to another glacier.

After an enjoyable scramble along a rock ridge I found that, to reach the glacier in question, I had to descend a slope several hundred feet high and separated from the glacier by a bergschrund.

Then and there I should have retreated by the way I had come, but I did not relish the possibility of being caught by a thunderstorm that was gathering in the south, and this objection—it was not a serious one, as I could easily have raced the storm—combined with further promptings of the Devil, decided me to descend to the glacier.

To reach the bergschrund took much longer than anticipated. The slope was easy enough to begin with, and broken rocks afforded me a quick passage for 300 feet, but below these and separating them from the bergschrund was an ice-slope.

Never in my life had I cut steps in an ice-slope. Here, then, was an opportunity for putting into practice all I had read anent the art of step-cutting. With a blithe abandon, which I shudder now to think of, I set to work to cut my way down the ice-slope.
It was not a long nor a particularly steep ice-slope, but it took an unconscionably long time to negotiate. Step-cutting in ice is, as I subsequently discovered, not so much a matter of brawn as an art. It is the shoulders and body, not the arms, that do the bulk of the work. To watch a master of ice-craft at work is like reading good poetry.

I was abominably clumsy and slow, and put much unnecessary effort into the work. My arms soon became so tired that I could cheerfully have dropped the axe.

Half-way down I nearly decided to return, but the storm clouds were now gathering about the peaks, and the breathless, water-logged air quivered with long-drawn detonations of thunder. So on I went.

I reached the bergschrund. A disagreeable surprise awaited me. From the ridge it had appeared as a narrow and relatively insignificant rift that could easily be jumped if not stepped across, but when I reached the upper lip, I saw that it was a more formidable affair than I had bargained for.

At this point it was at its narrowest, so that, unless there was a secure snow-bridge, there was no object in seeking to cross it elsewhere. There was no bridge that I could see, save one immediately before me, and this was as rickety an affair as may well be imagined, a mere attenuated tongue of rotten snow, so gnawed and eaten by the sun that it would not have afforded a safe passage to a kitten.
I can remember the scene to this day: tawny thunder-clouds gathering in the sky and, from a window between their ponderous pillars of electrically charged vapour, the sun shining hotly upon me as I stood irresolutely in my steps.

And below, the bergschrund, a rift of unknown depth, in the throat of which the daylight faded, white, blue, green, deeper and deeper to a cold translucent twilight.

The lower lip of the bergschrund was 8 or 10 feet from the upper. The width of the schrund itself I should not care to estimate. I could jump it easily, yet hesitated to make the necessary leap downwards and across the chasm.

It was the withdrawal of the sun and a peal of thunder, louder than any before, that decided me. First of all I hacked out a platform from which to take off, then bracing myself as firmly as possible, and holding my ice-axe in my right hand with the pick projecting away from me ready to be driven into the snow and ice if need be, I jumped.

It was not, as I have said, a formidable leap, and was easily within my capabilities. Unfortunately, however, at the moment of taking off one foot slipped on the little platform I had cut in the ice slope, with the result that some of my forward impetus was lost and I landed, not well away from the lower edge of the bergschrund as intended, but with my body on the lip and my feet on the rickety snow-bridge. The latter
collapsed the moment my feet alighted on it. At the same moment I drove the pick of my ice-axe into the snow before me. My body was safely on terra firma and prevented from sliding into the bergschrund, but for an instant my legs kicked in space. Next instant I had hauled myself forward into safety. As I did so, I heard the fragments of the snow-bridge falling into the bergschrund. They went with a hollow-sounding shushing noise that became fainter and fainter, broken once by the light silvery tinkle of a dislodged icicle, as though the demons who dwelt below were shaking an anticipatory cocktail.

That was all, so far as the bergschrund was concerned. It sounds much more exciting in print than it appeared at the time; mountaineering adventures and misadventures always are.

It was late in the afternoon. Thunder was booming and the sky was overspread with clouds; light and shadow were absorbed into a heavy monotone, which smoothed out the irregularities in the snow-covered glacier before me. The descent of this glacier, although accomplished without incident, was far and away the most nerve-racking performance of the day. The memory of my legs kicking momentarily in space, and the noise the snow-bridge made as it disappeared into the gullet of the rift, obtruded unpleasantly. The glacier was considerably crevassed, and the crevasses were difficult to detect, owing to the snow that covered them and the poor
light that merged their scarcely perceptible ripples into an expanse of dull toneless white.

I went down that glacier one step at a time, sounding with my ice-axe for concealed crevasses until my shoulder and neck muscles ached abominably. My caution was worth while; on several occasions my axe drove through a pie-crust of snow into nothingness. To an experienced mountaineer, I must have presented a pitiable spectacle, but I found a route off at last and made my way joyfully to a moraine. After so much treacherous and incalculable snow, it was a fine feeling to have stones beneath the feet.

I rested awhile, then hastened downhill in a desultory thunderstorm to the Franz Senn hut.

It is a pity in some ways that men can only die once, because similar escapades by similarly inexperienced people so often end fatally. Solitary climbing cannot be recommended on the score of safety, but as an education in mountaineering there is much to be gained by it. During my first two years of Alpine climbing, holidays with friends were incidental, but they served to bring me into closer alignment with the sounder principles of mountaineering. Solitary mountaineering is the grand cognac of mountaineering, and to be preserved as such.

Familiarity with high hills does not breed contempt; it brings in its train experience which inspires love and respect. Yet, the high hills have a power of leading age and experience along the high road of adventure.
It may be an interesting and even thrilling experience to climb a rock-face, but there is something nobler and grander about a high peak, not because it is high and difficult, but because it provides a greater test of mountaineering qualities. It is in man's nature to test himself against his environment.

For these reasons the mountaineer likes to seek out some new route, not because it has not been "done," but because of the pleasure it gives him to do it, a subtle but distinct difference in definition. There is something in an untrodden height that pulls at his heart-strings, that draws irresistibly at every fibre of his being.

Yet the true mountaineer does not scorn well-trodden routes. He can climb and enjoy a mountain, though it has been climbed ten thousand times before.

To climb a mountain is to make a friend of that mountain. A man might climb the Matterhorn a hundred times by the ordinary route, yet find a new interest and a new beauty in each ascent.

The impulse to go where none has been before has its roots deep in the human race. Yet, it is an impulse which is liable to become perverted in its idealism by the demon of expediency. Mountaineering is in many respects an individualistic pursuit, yet mountaineers are united in a love for mountains and for one another. For these reasons mountaineering has established its ethical code. The majority of mountaineers are agreed that mountaineering should
remain a pursuit free from the interposition of mechanical things, and eschew ideas which involve the application of mechanical things. This is because in mountains and mountaineering a man discovers happiness through personal contact with universal forces, and anything mechanical, anything which spoils mountains and which sets up a barrier between him and these universal forces, destroys that happiness, and substitutes in its stead a feverish, restless attitude which is destructive of happiness.

To scale an unclimbable mountain-side by driving iron spikes into it is not a happy way of climbing. But it is not wise to be too dogmatic on this question of aids to climbing. Mountaineers may condemn the use of pitons and fixed ropes, and rightly so, yet there can be few who have not benefited at one time or another by a piton or a fixed rope. It is a question always of knowing where to draw the line. The desecration of one of the noblest Dolomite precipices, the north face of the Grosse Zinne, is an outstanding example of vandalism in the history of mountaineering. It has rightly aroused the disgust of the great majority of mountaineers. Even to those who perpetrated the outrage, the eventual "first ascent" after months of steeplejacking must have come as an empty, senseless "victory."

No decent-minded person would deliberately spoil the pleasure of his fellow-men. Even to think of one of the noblest of precipices with
innumerable iron spikes driven into it is to tarnish a memory.

There is a fallacious argument in favour of the spoil-
ing of mountains. What does one mountain, more or less, matter? is the persuasive argument of the com-
mercially minded. Yet sufficient drops of water will fill a bucket. Surely we have a duty to perform to-
wards future generations of hill lovers?

A rope railway is proposed from the village of Linthal to the Clariden hut. I was discussing it recently with the proprietress of an hotel in the village.

“It may be ugly, this railway,” she said, “but it will bring more tourists and more money to this valley. As for scenery, there is plenty elsewhere.”

I commend this saying to the Swiss Government. All who love the Alps look towards the Swiss Govern-
ment, and for that matter to the Austrian, French and Italian Governments, to preserve and protect them.

There is another argument, and one not so easy to answer. It is that railways and roads enable some people, especially invalids and the infirm, to visit scenery that would otherwise be beyond their reach. No one but a selfish fanatic would begrudge others pleasure in order to gratify their own. The only question I would ask is whether there are enough Alpine roads and railways to satisfy this “demand”? Some of the choicest scenery is now accessible by rail and road. Is it necessary that there should be more railways and more roads? People who are not pre-
pared to make an effort to see beauty set no store on beauty. Should beauty be spoilt for such as these?

A man's attitude towards mountaineering changes with the passing of the years. The first wild enthusiasms, the reckless disregard for danger, the irrational outpourings of physical and mental energy, the prejudices and inhibitions, the awkward corners and sharp uncomfortable angles, are smoothed and remoulded gradually into a simpler, more understandable form. Slowly thought weaves a close, harmonious pattern from many variegated threads. Vexing problems are absorbed into the general scheme, and the purpose of each thread becomes manifest. I am happy on a hill, but I am happiest on a high hill. This is not to say I do not love low hills, but to love is not necessarily the same thing as to be happy. There is a bubbling effervescent quality in the happiness inspired by the high hills. I feel as though I have been reborn. Care disappears. Worrying thoughts that loom large at lower elevations vanish like dew before the sun. I step lightly. My very body seems to weigh less than it does on the plain.

I do not believe that mountaineering will suffer in its ideals from the mechanical things of future generations. It will either be a healthful relationship between man and mountain, as it is now, or it will cease to be. The nature of it automatically prohibits it from becoming a semi-personal, semi-mechanical pursuit. It gives all and demands all. My own conviction is that
as men learn to appreciate Nature it will go from strength to strength. Mountains possess a power of taking a man by the hand, whatever his religion or calling, whatever his beliefs, whatever his sins and sorrows, and of leading him upwards to immeasurable happiness.
CHAPTER VI
A HIGH HILL

It was a sultry afternoon towards the end of August 1934, when Dr. G. Graham Macphee, C. W. Parry and I left Zermatt for the Schönbühl hut. Our intention was to spend the night at the hut, and on the following day traverse the Matterhorn, via the Zmutt ridge, or ascend via the Col Tournanche and the Italian ridge to the Italian hut, and after a second night there, complete the traverse.

The weather was doubtful. A snowstorm had defeated an attempt to traverse the Lyskamm and chased us down the Grenz Glacier. At the moment not a cloud was to be seen, but the air, which was charged with a moist warmth, lacked life and vigour, and there was a filmy, steely look about the sky suggestive of bad weather, possibly a thunderstorm, in the near future.

Of the party, only Parry had previously climbed the Matterhorn, though I had, in the words of an Irish mountaineer, "turned back before I had started" no less than three times on account of bad weather.

The path from Zermatt to the Schönbühl hut passes first of all through a forest, then over an alp and
DAWN: THE MATTERHORN.
through the hamlet of Zmutt, and finally along the bank of the Zmutt Glacier to the grassy shoulder on which stands the hut.

During the whole of this walk the Matterhorn dominates the landscape, and the apparent shape of the mountain alters in a striking manner between Zermatt and the hut, so much so that those familiar with the view from Zermatt or the Gornergrat would fail to recognise the mountain were they to be suddenly transported to a point on the path near the Zmutt Glacier.

The appearance of the Matterhorn from Zermatt or the Gornergrat need not be described even to those who have never set eyes upon it; its simple and unique outline is familiar throughout the world, and there is probably no natural object which has been so often depicted by artists. It is a strangely thrilling experience to set eyes for the first time upon this stupendous rock, with its bending sides and final lithe and graceful lift and twist, which convert it from a staid geometrical proposition into something subtly beautiful and inspiring.

The Matterhorn is a versatile peak. A thousand photographs may be taken of it from the same place and no two will be alike. The bewildering multiplicity of its vestments of ice and snow, its changeful load of cloud and the interplay of light and shadow, result in combinations of beauty and grandeur outside the descriptive range.
The Matterhorn is mutable and immutable. I have seen it when it was in dazzling white, like a young bride, and I have seen it when it was haggard, bloodless and careworn, like an old man who has nothing left to live for, and crouches cold and almost lifeless before the fire. Yet the very forces which contribute to the beauty of the mountain, snow, frost, sun, wind and rain—are pulling it to pieces. Its enormous structure is being slowly rifted and rent, and the glaciers on which it is based bear the marks of its destruction. Yet this destruction is so slow that man may have ceased to exist before this proud mountain is reduced to fragments.

Of every hundred visitors to Zermatt who admire the Matterhorn from the north-east, there are not ten who see it from the north-west to south-east quadrant, though there must be many who study one or other of the numerous models of the mountain, which may be seen or purchased in Zermatt, and note how subtle and yet how drastic is the change of shape in relation to the change of viewing angle.

During two hours of walking from Zermatt towards the Schönbühl hut the mountain changes from the sharp peak by which it is best known to something not unlike a deep-sea wave. The eastern face, which so deceived Edward Whymper, appears no longer sheer, but rises at a relatively easy and uniform angle until the "Shoulder" is reached, whence the final tower leaps upwards and almost, as it seems, outwards to the
summit. It is strange now to think how long Whymper was deceived by the apparent impregnability of the eastern face; it was only by chance that he saw the face in profile from the north-west, and was made to realise that in it lay the key to the ascent.

But if the easiest route is apparent from the Schönbühl path, so also is the most difficult—the north face, which has only once been scaled. In one comprehensive glance the eye can take in the growth of mountain craft from the year 1865, when men sought for the easiest and safest route up the Matterhorn, to the year 1931 when they achieved the hardest and most dangerous route. It was an adventure in 1865 and it was an adventure in 1931. The question that now engrosses mountaineers is: Was the 1931 adventure a legitimate one or not?

The ordinary route up the Matterhorn by the east face and ridge, when it is in good condition, calls for nothing more than ordinary mountaineering skill. The north face of the Matterhorn in its easiest condition, a special condition which may obtain only once in a season or even two or three seasons, calls for much more than ordinary or extraordinary skill—it calls for cold-blooded courage. The man who attempts it balances life against death, hoping that Providence will tip the scales in his favour.

"Magnificent! A triumph of youth," said some, referring to this ascent. "Unjustifiable! A sign of the times," said others. Perhaps, therefore, it is
of interest to endeavour to examine and estimate the motives and values underlying the feat.

Mountaineering inspires most people with a feeling of happiness which is associated primarily with the act and only secondarily with the deed. But we would scarcely be human if we did not experience some satisfaction from the knowledge that we tested ourselves high and won through in the face of considerable odds. Yet a sense of proportion is one of life's most precious gifts, implying as it does a capacity to distinguish between good and evil and separate the important from the unimportant. It also postulates human amity and the sanctity of life, for no one with a sense of proportion enjoys wars, revolutions or other forms of applied human misery and artificially induced death. A sense of proportion is to the mind what the thyroid gland is to the body. Unless it exists, many unsightly, unpleasant and even dangerous developments are liable to take place, or failing that, growth may be stunted or atrophied.

Making full allowance for a natural development in technique, it is impossible not to associate some aspects of modern mountaineering with the political, economic, social and racial difficulties and animosities now animating mankind. All these discover an echo, if only a faint echo, in mountaineering. Those mountaineers who are relatively uninfluenced by these difficulties and animosities know that it is pleasanter to confine the mountaineering idea to an association
between man and mountain, rather than allow any taint of flag-waving nationalism to permeate it. Mountaineering is a pursuit which appeals to people of many nationalities; it is essentially free in its conception and divorced from sectarianism, religious, political or social. At the same time it imposes on itself certain fundamental limitations in order to protect itself from obloquy, and has established through experience a technique and moral code, so that all who climb mountains may climb, if they so choose, with a maximum of safety and enjoyment.

If mountaineering is a sport, it may well be asked why there are no rules. The answer is that there are rules, but that they are unwritten rules which have been evolved from experience, common sense and common ideals, allied to a sense of proportion. When these rules are ignored, the fundamental verities of mountaineering are outraged.

Never was a more absurd slogan foisted on the world than "live dangerously." When he climbs a mountain a man places himself within the scope of exacting natural laws, but it does not follow that he is justified in exploiting those laws to his own selfish satisfaction, especially if by so doing he involves others in sorrow, difficulty or danger.

It may be courageous to live dangerously, but there are two kinds of courage: physical courage which is in the nature of the beast; moral courage which is divine.

Generally speaking, where enjoyment and happi-
ness end in mountaineering, unjustifiability may be said to begin. But this simple statement, true though it may be, is open to objections. "What about Everest?" I hear some say, and "Supposing you are accidentally involved in unpleasant or dangerous conditions?" say others. Climbing on Everest can be exacting, unpleasant and even dangerous work, but unless memory tricks me, I can recall a feeling of satisfaction, a grim physical and mental exhilaration, such as a man might get who was shot in a projectile to the moon. It is easy to be led into a trap. Everest is the highest peak in the world, and to climb it is worth a greater risk than an Alpine climb. In theory at least this statement is illogical. To think of any climb, whether it be up Everest or on the rocks of Tunbridge Wells, in such a way means deliberately throwing a sense of proportion overboard without even the dignity of a burial service. Everest is an adventure, but an adventure can be justifiable and remain an adventure without jettisoning security.

Justifiable mountaineering has always a background of safety and pleasure. Unjustifiable mountaineering deliberately discards both these virtues under the pretext that the accomplishment is worth the risk.

I have mentioned "rules." Can any written ones be drawn up? If all the mountaineering clubs in Europe were to hold a convention on Alpine accidents, would accidents be reduced? No. Mountaineering is something personal between man and mountain.
Like everything else in which morality of any kind is involved, it is a matter of conscience. If a man can look his conscience in the face and truthfully say:

"I know I am doing more than I ought to do, and am deliberately over-reaching my skill and risking my life. I know that if I die there will be those who will grieve for me, worthless fellow that I am. I know that others, perhaps with wives and families, may have to risk their lives to recover my useless body. I know that I have been brought into the world by love, through pain, and brought up by those who loved me, and that I exist to fulfil some Purpose, but I still feel that it is worth while staking everything to make this climb"—then let him kill himself and be damned to him.

The brothers Franz and Toni Schmid of Munich were engineering students, and little more than boys when, after having cycled most of the way from Munich to Zermatt, they camped on July 28th, 1931, at about 7,700 feet on the slopes below the north face of the Matterhorn. The following day they prospected the face and worked out a route through the broken ice of the Matterhorn Glacier, which covers the plinth whence the peak rises in one bound of over 5,000 feet.

After a rest-day to prepare themselves for their fatiguing task, they left their camp a few minutes after midnight, carrying with them provisions for two or three days, a bivouac tent-sack, about 260
feet of rope, and an assortment of pitons and karabiner for use on rocks and ice.

They first of all visited the hut on the Hörnli at the foot of the east ridge, and asked the hut-keeper to warn all parties ascending by the Zermatt route that an attempt was being made on the north face, and that they must be careful not to dislodge any stones above the "Shoulder" where the route debouches on to the north face.

After this, they descended and climbed to the upper plateau of the Matterhorn Glacier and the foot of the north face. They crossed the bergschrund and embarked on the ascent of an ice-slope 1,000 feet in height and inclined at an angle of about 60 degrees. Speed was essential, for the sun was already gilding the top of the mountain and this ice-slope was exposed to any stones or ice that fell from the precipices above. They were expert in the use of crampons, and climbed without cutting steps, but protecting themselves to some small extent by means of an ice piton which the leader periodically drove into the ice, thus securing the ascent of his companion. Presently, they came to rocks—narrow ribs projecting but a few inches from the ice, and too smooth and glazed to afford them with hitches for the rope or any but the smallest and most precarious footholds.

It was obvious to them by now that their only hope was to ascend a shallow gully cleaving the face of the precipice above the ice-slope.
Progress was desperately slow, and the risk of stone-falls increased every moment as the sun crept downwards.

At last they reached the gully. Conditions which would have seemed appalling if experienced on any ordinary route, in this case, paradoxical though it may sound, contributed to the success of the venture. The snow that had sheeted the face as the result of a recent fall had melted and refrozen on the rocks in a thick glaze of ice. Without this glaze progress would have been impossible, as no footing could have been secured on the smooth outward-shelving slabs. The ice was thick enough to allow of their cutting small nicks, large enough to support one or two crampon points. Even so, there was a grave risk of the ice pealing off the slabs.

This ice glaze was also useful in preventing stone-falls, for there is no doubt that when free of snow and ice the gully, and indeed the majority of the north face, is raked by stones. In the words of the Editor of the Alpine Journal: "Danger and not difficulty has proved the deterrent to attempts on the north face."

Through the day the work went on, and sometimes Franz and sometimes Toni led. The oncoming of darkness found them approaching the level of the "Shoulder," and they could see parties descending by the ordinary route and exchange shouts with them. The comparative nearness of the "Shoulder" and the
Solvay hut some hundreds of feet lower must have been heartening, but whether they could have reached either had the weather changed for the worse at that point is doubtful, for the ice-filled grooves leading to the "Shoulder" appeared most repellent.

As it was obvious that the summit could not be reached that day, they had to resign themselves to a bivouac. But could a bivouac place be found, a place large enough on which to sit, even to stand upon, in that merciless precipice? They could see nothing.

The sun set, and with the withdrawal of its rays the cold suddenly became intense. They had been climbing for hours, without a halt; their nerves and bodies were weary from the continual strain, and their throats were parched with thirst. The daylight had almost gone, and an ominous mist was forming about the mountain, when Franz, who was leading, noticed a small sloping protuberance about a yard square projecting from the precipice. The two made for it. In doing so they all but met with destruction.

Toni was well placed and was paying out Franz on the rope when, without warning, the rock on which he was standing broke away. Franz, who was climbing, had no chance of holding Toni, and it seemed as though he must be torn from his hold and follow his brother down the precipice. But in falling Toni, with a supreme effort, just managed to seize a rock from which he hung by his hands, scraping desperately with his feet for a hold. At this critical juncture Franz
managed to find a secure stance. He seized the rope with both hands and gave his brother a pull which enabled him to reach a foothold and so take the strain off his tired arms, which could not have supported him much longer. This incident occupied but a few seconds, probably no longer than it takes to read this; it must have been a very near thing.

At length they reached their bivouac place, a projecting boss of rock which was some 1,200 feet below the summit. Never was a more perilous or uncomfortable dormitory. Having cleared the snow and ice from the boss, they secured themselves by driving in pitons and tying themselves to them. Then, after attaching their climbing equipment to another piton, they drew their rubberised tent-sack about them. Crouching side by side in this flimsy contrivance which weighed but a few ounces, and scarcely able to move on the yard-wide and outward-sloping platform, they somehow managed to eat some food and moisten their throats with snow.

It was dark now. About them was the frosty silence of the High Alps. The sky glittered and quivered with stars. Above and below, more felt than seen, was the precipice, immobile, immutable, cold, the antithesis of life and warmth.

No men can have had a more desperate day's climbing. From the moment they crossed the bergschrund there had been no relief. Every foot of the way had to be won by nerve as well as by sinew. A slip by one of
them would, in nine cases out of ten, have been fatal to both. Thus far it had been a magnificent conquest by animate man of inanimate matter, but what of the future? If the weather broke now they were doomed not only to defeat but to disaster. Mists gathered at sundown, but later they dissolved. Everything depended on the weather; they must have watched it as a mouse watches a cat.

Imagine, if you can, spending a night suspended over an abyss on a piece of rock so small that movement is almost impossible—a seemingly interminable night of bitter cold with cramp torturing your half-numbed limbs: unable to move, unable to sleep, with the hard angularities of your miserable couch eating into flesh and bone. You will discover one thing: that time is no longer the gay and dashing "mobsman" it was when you were climbing, but a bore with a plaintive, endless and infinitely wearying story.

Dawn began to break. With it came an icy wind. Then, when the two climbers had almost given up hope of seeing it, the sun struggled over the horizon.

They stripped their frozen tent-sack from them and luxuriated in its warm rays. So stiff and numbed were they with cold and cramp that they were unable to move until 7 a.m. Then began the task of surmounting the remainder of the precipice.

The rocks were thickly coated with ice, and progress was only possible wearing crampons. Soon they came to an impasse. Further advance at first sight appeared
A BIVOUAC: MONT MAUDIT.
impossible. The only way of avoiding the unclimbable rocks was to traverse to the Zermatt route. But to do this meant leaving the north face unscaled; their great effort would have been in vain. Franz was in favour of the traverse, but the indomitable Toni refused to abandon hope, and suggested a traverse in the opposite direction, that is, to the right. At this critical juncture, when victory and defeat were poised in the balance, a party, led by Alexander Pollinger, appeared on the “Shoulder” which was then level with them.

The two parties were nearly a quarter of a mile apart, but the air was still and Franz and Toni were able to deduce from the shouts of the guide that their only hope of climbing the remainder of the north face lay, as Toni had suggested, in a traverse to the right.

So to the right they went. It was a terribly difficult traverse, and only the glaze of ice on the smooth slabs, into which the points of their crampons were able to bite deeply, rendered it feasible. Never had men climbed more desperately, for now they were alive to a new and maybe deciding factor—the weather. Heavy clouds were gathering slowly about the Matterhorn, and from afar came a cannonade of thunder.

High up on any great Alpine route, the hardiest mountaineer experiences a disquieting sensation when thunder is first borne to his ears. To Franz and Toni, who knew that a storm must put “finish,” not only to
their climb, but to their lives, it must have sounded indescribably menacing.

One thing only could now bring success and safety—speed.

The traverse led to a snow-filled crack which ran up into the mist that now cloaked the summit of the Matterhorn.

Putting everything they knew into the work, they climbed and climbed. The crack petered out on to more slabs, vertically grooved and broken by horizontal bands plastered with snow. Up and up they climbed. The thunder was nearer now; it no longer boomed in the distance, but crackled balefully in the near vicinity like a giant rending calico. Darker and darker grew the gloom. Suddenly lightning blazed from it; almost simultaneously came an explosion of thunder. Then another flash and another, striking the summit of the Matterhorn just above them. Hail began to fall, hissing down the slabs in sinuous streams. But the angle was lessening, the difficulties decreasing. Tired limbs discovered a new strength in the imminence of victory, a victory no longer dangled beyond their reach by tantalising fate, but within their grasp. The summit ridge loomed through swirling mists; it was only a few yards away. Hand over hand they clambered up to it. At 2 p.m. they stood on it. The north face had been won.

There was no time for congratulations; they had
A HIGH HILL

not done with the Matterhorn, nor the Matterhorn with them. Tongues of mauve lightning were flickering round the metal cross on the Italian summit; the air was hissing, groaning and whining with electrical tension: the "Gods" of the Matterhorn were scornful of the drama they had witnessed; they sought now to express that scorn before the curtain should be rung down; the air was thick with their icy missiles.

There was not a moment to lose. Leaving their ice-axes, the steel heads of which were a source of danger, Franz and Toni hurriedly descended a few feet from the summit ridge and sheltered beneath an overhanging rock. They had scarcely reached shelter when the storm burst in full fury. All around them flamed the lightning, and the noise of it striking the summit ridge a few feet above them was deafening.

Presently, when the first fury of the storm was exhausted, they left their shelter and, returning to the ridge, recovered their axes, which were fortunately undamaged. Then they hastily traversed the Swiss summit and commenced the descent of the Zermatt route.

A little distance below the "Shoulder" they were overtaken by a second storm, even more furious than the first, which quickly transformed a comparatively easy descent into one both difficult and dangerous. So heavily did hail fall that it descended the rocks in torrents, nearly sweeping them from their feet. This storm was the forerunner of a furious and sustained
blizzard. Neither of the two had previously ascended the Matterhorn, and neither had any knowledge, other than that gleaned from guide-books, of the Zermatt route. They were sheeted with ice from head to foot. The rope was so heavy and caked with ice, that it became almost unmanageable. It was fantastic that they should have made the first ascent of the terrific northern face only to find themselves involved in difficult and dangerous climbing on the ordinary Zermatt route, a route which in dry conditions is an easy scramble. It was another instance of the capability of high mountains for sudden change. Most likely it imbued the brothers Schmid with a more wholesome respect for the Matterhorn than any of their adventures on the north face.

Not until 5.30 p.m. did they reach the Solvay hut, which is but 1,500 feet below the summit. This refuge has been blessed by many storm-bound or benighted mountaineers, and its shelter was very welcome to the two worn-out and well-nigh exhausted youths. Having escaped at last from the fury of the elements, they struggled out of their clothing: it was frozen so stiffly that they did not hang it on the wall but stood it on the floor. Then they got on to the bunk, wrapped every one of a dozen blankets round them, ate some food and slept.

They did not rise until noon of the following day. There was no need; descent was impossible owing to the storm which was still raging. They had no more
food of their own, and were forced to subsist on the scanty emergency rations with which the hut was supplied.

On August 3rd they continued the descent. Progress was very slow owing to the deep new snow concealing the rocks; also their ignorance of the route hindered them. But they got down at last, and reached Zermatt the same evening. There they were fêted, and might have lingered long in the lap of luxury. But they were anxious to attempt the solution of another Alpine problem—the north wall of the Grandes Jorasses—and set off from Zermatt to Chamonix on their bicycles.

If there is a mountain-side in the Alps more difficult and more dangerous than the north face of the Matterhorn, it is the north face of the Grandes Jorasses. Every summer human debris is recovered from the foot of it, and will continue to be recovered until such time as Fortune weary of slaughter. Then, perhaps, a couple of young fellows, or maybe even one, whose philosophy towards mountaineering may be summed up: "My life for a climb," will be permitted to win through.¹ Possibly, when mankind has probed more deeply into the nature of death such a philosophy may become generally accepted as a reasonable and even a desirable one. At present, however, life still possesses some value to the great majority of men, and those who set little store by it should remember that others do,

¹ This face was climbed in July 1935.
and that body-collecting from the foot of the Grandes Jorasses is not without its dangers to the collectors.

The brothers Schmid were unable to attempt this climb. The sequel to their climbing partnership is a sad one. Less than a year later, on May 16th, 1932, Toni Schmid fell to his death from the Grosse Wiesbachhorn. His companion, Ernst Krebs, survived, after falling no less than 1,600 feet down ice- and snow-slopes.

It is possible both to admire and to condemn the first ascent of the Matterhorn by the north face. The bravery, resolution and skill with which it was carried out were admirable. So also was the modesty shown afterwards by the Schmids. They were not stunt-mongers; they tackled the Matterhorn because they saw in it an adventure and a challenge to their youth, skill and strength. They thirsted for the sweetest fruits of life, which to them grew on the borderland of death. Yet, in its inception such a climb is wrong. The spirit which conceives it smacks of warfare. We can admire the bravery of men who fight in war, but that does not prevent us from deploring the principle of war. The example set by feats which are nothing but a flirtation with death, and which depend for success more on luck than on skill and prudence, is pernicious, inasmuch as it invests mountaineering with false values, which tempt the ignorant and the foolish to emulation and destruction. Youth needs no such justification of its
powers, and those who deliberately exploit such a slogan as "live dangerously" only expose their own inferiority complex to the scorn of those who know that a man is what he is and not what he seeks to delude others or even himself into thinking he is. To cast aside the soft and easy ways of living and seek a test of skill and courage should not become a cult, for a cult is nothing but self-assertive and therefore competitive—it should always remain a personal matter between man and his Maker.

Mountaineering, like other noble pursuits, tends to become outwardly degraded by popularity. The mountaineer finds himself described in print as "intrepid" or even as a "hero." He knows himself that such expressions merely reflect the ignorance of those who utter them and reflect also a threadbare past, chock-a-block with false values, which is still fostered for pecuniary reasons by retrograde sensation-mongers. The world needs an all-round adjustment of moral values even more than it does of material values. Meanwhile, mountaineering remains a noble pursuit—noble enough to strip from it the "muddy vesture of decay" with which some men seek to surround it.

II

On the way to the Schönbühl hut we overtook Mr. L. C. M. S. Amery and his two guides, resting at a small restaurant, where we joined them in some supposedly thirst-quenching liquid of a gaseousness
sufficient, I should imagine, to blow the top off the Dent Blanche.

A little later we met Herr Alfred Zürcher, a well-known Swiss mountaineer, and his guide, the famous Josef Knubel, strolling down the path. They had traversed the Ober Gabelhorn and reported good conditions. Knubel, however, was emphatic in recommending us to leave the Zmutt ridge of the Matterhorn alone. It was still iced, he said, as a result of recent storms.

Our suspicions concerning the evil intentions of the weather justified themselves as we trudged up the path by the side of the Zmutt Glacier, for ragged masses of cloud began to elbow their way out of the south and pour over the Tiefenmattenjoch and Stockje, casting deep shadows on the ice-falls of the Zmutt Glacier. Presently, as we passed along a sharp-crested moraine, the clouds with a sudden access of determination closed their ranks, rudely extinguishing what was left of the sun, and sent a desultory squall of rain and hail scurrying down the Zmutt Glacier.

Shortly before reaching the hut, the Matterhorn again changes in shape. It ceases to resemble a wave or some crouching monster, and becomes a sharply pointed and well-butttressed peak from which radiate three of its main ridges, the Zermatt, the Zmutt and the Italian, the last-named being broken at three-quarters of its height by the shoulder known as the Pic Tyndall. Its shapely neighbour, the Dent
d’Hérens, also becomes visible; a graceful mountain with terraces of hanging glaciers that now and again cast themselves loose in avalanches.

The Schönbühl hut is finely situated, easily accessible, a starting-point for numerous ascents, and comfortable. For these reasons, it is popular and usually crowded during the climbing season.

We had to wait our turn for food, but when the food came it was as appetising as could be wished for. We devoured it in an atmosphere compounded of the smell of the food itself, the stove, boots and humanity. Taken in toto it was without a doubt the authentic mountaineering odour.

Daylight had almost failed when we went outside for a sup of fresh air and a glance at the weather. We discovered an ominous evening pregnant with the threat of storm. Clouds were crowding up out of the south-west and massing heavily about the peaks, and now and again came a spatter of hail. In the north the sky was clear, and a belt of golden haze over the distant Rhône Valley contrasted oddly with the dark clouds that boiled immediately overhead.

Some hundreds of feet lower lay the Zmutt Glacier like some huge road rifted and upheaved by earthquake. Beyond it the Matterhorn rose from its ice-crowned plinth.

Where we stood the evening was calm, save for petulant shifts of rain or hail, and this made the visible but inaudible fury of the tempest thousands of feet above
our heads all the more impressive. We could not feel or hear, but we could see the onrush of the storm upon the Matterhorn, as men from a safe distance watch the stirring of slumbering volcanic forces into a white heat of rage. We could see the livid smoke-like mists writhing in the dark maw of the northern precipices; rushing on the Pic Tyndall and the Italian ridge with the reckless abandon of a Mahdi’s Dervishes; pouring in occasional questing battalions over the Col du Lion; toiling like the consciences of the damned in the towers of Zmutt; embracing with a thousand passionate arms that cold, aloof and unresponsive summit.

There was silence now; the hail had ceased. The world seemed to tremble on the verge of some revelation.

The Matterhorn disappeared. But it was there behind the clouds, sowing, multiplying, concocting its elemental savageries, bringing every dynamo to bear, amassing an incredible energy, filling its storehouse with force, faster and faster, revving up every generator with calculated, demoniacal madness, revving to a dreadful tension, a splitting, rending, bursting point. Blaze—crash! On peak and precipice the thunder was unleashed. Blaze—crash! The thunder reverberated in sound waves of enormous amplitude from the Matterhorn to the Dent Blanche, and from the Dent Blanche to the Dent d’Hérens.

We turned in to our blankets, and lay side by side in
a row on a bunk. I slept fitfully, and was a prey to uneasy dreams, so that the night passed slowly and wearily.

The hut-keeper woke us soon after 2 a.m. This is the time when the sleep-drugged mountaineer half hopes to find bad or doubtful weather, that may afford him with an adequate excuse for resuming his interrupted slumber.

We had expected to find the sky cloudy, but it was clear and bright with stars, stars so still that the world might have been the floor of some tropical ocean into the calm phosphorescent-charged surface of which the dark form of the Matterhorn loomed like the ram of a dreadnought. At our feet a swathe of mist, lit faintly by starshine, lay without movement on the Zmutt Glacier.

Satisfied as to the benevolent intentions of the weather, we ate our breakfast, pulled on our boots, packed our rucksacks, and set out from the hut.

The sky was paling in the east, but dawn was not yet breathing easily, and the earth was governed by a strange stillness made all the more intense by sounds from the Zmutt Glacier as it forced an uneasy passage over its rocky bed; a dull crump as the ice split to form a young crevasse, or the sudden rattle of a stone on a moraine, as though someone had trodden incautiously.

Our intention when we left Zermatt was to climb the Matterhorn by way of the Zmutt ridge, but as
Josef Knubel had pointed out, this relatively sunless side of the mountain was plastered with snow and ice, which would have been further augmented by the storm of the previous evening. The sole alternative route open to us, bar the ordinary Swiss route, was that by the Italian ridge. This ridge could be approached either by the Col du Lion or the Col Tournanche. The former, as already indicated, is difficult of access from Switzerland, and to reach it involves running the gauntlet of falling stones in the steep ice-filled couloir climbed by Mummery and Alexander Burgener. The ultra-modern climber prefers to establish his "reputation" on new and desperately dangerous routes that have the merit of newness rather than risk his life on dangerous routes that have been "done" before. For this last reason, the Col du Lion is nowadays seldom attempted from the Tiefenmatten Glacier. The Col Tournanche route is longer, but not so difficult or hazardous. This col lies between the Dent d'Hérens and the Tête du Lion, and to reach the Italian ridge of the Matterhorn the climber must traverse from the col across the southern flanks of the Tête du Lion.

The dawn gathered strength as we scrambled down slopes of rock and grass to the Zmutt Glacier. The mist on the glacier was not dense and did not at first impede our progress. Presently, however, our initial confidence was replaced by a doubt as to whether or not we ought to bear left up the Tiefenmatten Glacier.
Shortly before joining with the Zmutt Glacier the Tiefenmatten Glacier descends in an ice-fall. The previous afternoon we had noted a route which avoided the more broken section of this, but it was by no means certain whether we could discover it in the mist. The best we could do was to strike upwards diagonally in the hope of finding it.

The glacier ice was not only hardened by frost, but it had been rendered especially slippery by the rain of the previous evening, and when the angle steepened we wished we had equipped ourselves with crampons, and thought gloomily of the time we might lose in "this infernal mist" before we attained the upper basin of the Tiefenmatten Glacier, whence the Col Tournanche is accessible.

We had to cut steps and then zigzag between crevasses arranged in steep-sided tiers. The light increased: we must be rising out of the mist. Suddenly through its thinning waves, we saw a little pool of blue, in which gleamed a silvery sickle-shaped fragment of snow. It was the sun shining on the summit of the Dent d'Hérens.

A minute later we stepped out of the misty ocean into a brilliant morning. Below us lay the mist, the level surface of which was stirring uneasily in the sun. Above the mist rose the fluted summit of the Dent Blanche, radiant, serene and undisturbed by wind or cloud.

Even more beautiful is the Dent d'Hérens, a moun-
tain whose intermoulded ridge and glacier terrace lead the eye without conscious effort to a summit so subtly curved, so shyly and delicately shaped and pointed that beauty halts there contented with its handiwork.

There are higher mountains and more difficult mountains; mountains more beautiful and awe-inspiring; but there is only one Matterhorn. There is no mountain in the world of its height and difficulty that has been scaled more often; no mountain to which cling so much hope and disappointment, so much tragedy and joy, so much heroism and so much laughter. Look from Zermatt in Switzerland and you think of Edward Whymper, his triumph and his tragedy; look from Breuil in Italy and you think of Jean Antoine Carrel, the "Old Soldier." "Man cannot do much more than that," he said, when he returned from storming the Italian precipices. And you think of him when, old, weary and spent, but faithful unto death, he perished on the mountain he knew and loved so well after bringing his party down to safety through a blizzard.

"The manner of his death strikes a chord in hearts he never knew," wrote Edward Whymper. He recognised to the fullest extent the duties of his position, and in the closing act of his life set a brilliant example of fidelity and devotion. For it cannot be doubted that, enfeebled as he was, he could have saved himself had he given his attention to self-preser-
vation. He took a nobler course, and, accepting his responsibility, devoted his whole soul to the welfare of his comrades, until, utterly exhausted, he fell stagger- ing on the snow. He was already dying, life was flickering, yet the brave spirit said: "It is nothing."

"We tried to lift him," wrote Signor Sinigaglia, his employer, "but it was impossible—he was getting stiff. We stooped down, and asked in his ear if he wished to commend his soul to God. With a last effort, he answered 'Yes,' and then fell on his back, dead, upon the snow."

Years later, a tourist, who was climbing the Matterhorn, remarked to his guide:

"So this is where Carrel fell!"

"Carrel did not fall," was the indignant rejoinder.

"He died."

If you look at the Furggen ridge you think of the irrepressible Guido Rey, to whom every step on a mountain was a mental as well as a physical adventure. And if you look at the great Zmutt ridge, you think of Mummery, the dare-devil high priest of mountain enjoyment, a worthy challenger of "inaccessible" heights in the company of that gnarled old "heart of oak," Alexander Burgener, prince among guides. Mummery, with his bottles of Bouvier popping on every summit, is a worthy representative of a silver age of mountaineering when men renounced the pseudo-scientific hypocrisies and admitted
to an amazed world that they climbed because they liked it.

The pioneers are no more. Some lie within sight of the Matterhorn and some far distant—Whymper is buried at Chamonix, Mummery rests beneath Nanga Parbat—but the spirit of their achievements lives and links hands with the spirit of the Matterhorn, an inspiration to those who aspire to tread that marvellous peak and enjoy as they enjoyed the precious hours of life.

Once out of the mist, we soon dodged the rest of the ice-fall, and in a very few minutes were treading the upper basin of the Tiefenmatten Glacier.

The Col Tournanche is not accessible by a direct route from the Tiefenmatten Glacier except with great labour, as the ice-slopes separating the actual col from the glacier are both long and steep. But from the ridge linking the col with the Dent d’Hérens fall slopes of broken névé, which in their lower portion narrow into a sharp snow-ridge buttressed at its foot by rocks accessible from the glacier. In order to reach this snow-ridge we had first of all to circumvent the rock buttress which, in its lower portion, was steep and composed of loose, pastry-like rock. We therefore trudged round the base of it, and mounted a snow-slope until a short ice-slope presented itself, by ascending which it was possible to gain the ridge above the steepest section of the buttress.

The ice-slope was separated from the glacier by a
bergschrund. A bergschrund is nothing more than a glorified crevasse, one lip of which is considerably higher than the other. It is formed by a glacier moving away from the less tractable ice clinging to a mountain-side. A simple enough phenomenon, but one so necessary that one shudders to think what mountaineering would be like without it. Minus bergschrunds, it would be no more thrilling than modern Test-match cricket. What would the pioneers of the *Peaks, Passes and Glaciers* age have done without bergschrunds? How could the literature of the past have flourished without them? It would have been sadly reduced in its dramatic scope if this sort of thing did not intervene to lighten the account of a dull climb.

"We had barely extinguished our lantern when we arrived at the bergschrund. It was indeed a formidable moat stretching on either hand as far as the eye could see, of incalculable depth and with an upper lip fringed with giant icicles. I could see Hans Wildegg metaphorically taking in his braces a latch as he looked at it.

"The temperature was +15°C., the pressure 123 millibars of oxygen, and I observed a decided tendency of the air to ozonify.

"'Es muss gehen,' he rumbled deep down in the unfathomable depths of his black beard. A light gleamed in his cold glacier-green eye. 'Vorwärts!' he boomed, and sprang in one tigerish leap of 3.025 metres (Potkins aneroid) across the abyss, landing skil-
fully on the one and only ledge available, a ledge from which the feet of an ill-fated guide had recently slipped, and been cast in one fearful bound of over 2,000 feet.¹

"Now began the arduous task of making a staircase in the gleaming lip of the bergschrund. Standing below, and powerless to help, I could see Hans’s sinews rippling with the strain as one teak-like arm wielded the axe while the other clung desperately to the small rugosities of the ice. I shuddered as I heard the hollow tinkle of the ice fragments in the depths beneath.

"Inch by inch, my brave Hans hewed his way upwards, relying on his magnificent skill and strength. I could hear his laboured panting as he strove desperately to fill his lungs with oxygen. Presently, I saw him press his beard against the ice until it froze immovably, and he was able to lean back and rest. Then, with a few fierce breaths (to thaw out his beard) on he went.

"At length, after a desperate struggle, he found himself within a dozen feet of the overhanging lip of the bergschrund.

"Although not actually overhanging, the angle of this last slope measured by boiling-point clinometer was no less than 89.99° recurring.

"The fringe of giant icicles, each the size of a man’s thigh, hanging from the lip made further advance

¹ The feet when found were both wearing crampons.
appear impossible. But the old guide was undaunted. Knotting his beard round a tolerably thick icicle, he swarmed up with incredible agility.

"As I recorded in my notebook, my mercury vapour chronometer registered —12° at this point, and the specific gravity almost burst from my theodolite.

"At length my brave Hans, spurred on by shouts of encouragement, reached the very lip of the bergschrund. Embracing the icicle with his beard, he reached upwards and outwards with his axe, and drove it desperately into the treacherous surface above. There he remained for a few instants, poised, as it were, between heaven and earth.

Quid si nunc célem ruat.

"The next moment he had unknotted his beard from the icicle, which fell with a splintering crash into the depths of the bergschrund, and with a hoarse groan that told of the awful strain on his gigantic frame, swung himself one-handed over the edge of the gulf on to the slope above.

Quien tiene arte, va por toda parte.

"The bergschrund had been vanquished! We made haste to congratulate our brave Hans, and merrily breaking the neck from a bottle of Bouvier, toasted him royally. It was then that we remembered the ladder. . . ."

Compare the above with a modern account.
The bergschund we had to cross was well choked with snow at one point, which made the crossing a simple matter, but the upper lip was steep enough to necessitate hand-holds being cut as well as foot-holds. After 15 feet the lip was passed. Thence a slope of ice and snow, 100 feet in height, and a stretch of loose rocks brought us to the ridge.

The rocks of the ridge we designated as "muck," and made haste to escape from them. The snow on the Dent d'Hérens side of the ridge was well frozen, and we thankfully abandoned the rocks in favour of it. After a steep climb, during which step-cutting was constantly necessary, we found ourselves above the rocks at the commencement of the snow-ridge. Here we ate a meal.

At this point I should give the time, but to tell the truth I cannot remember what it was. This is a serious omission. An ascent nowadays does not really count unless it is timed to the nearest minute by the twenty-four-hour clock system. Mountaineers measure the conditions of a route and a man's capacity to climb it in terms of time. I fear I am a lazy fellow. To carry about a note-book and jot down times and places and events savours of hard work. To me, mountaineering is something to be enjoyed, not turned into an office or laboratory job. Once upon a time, when I was a young and ardent mountaineer, I

1 Continental time.
A SNOW RIDGE: COL TOURNANCHE.
used to study guide-book "times" and try to beat them, but now I care no more about "time." So long as I can get up and down before dark I am content.

One of the charms of mountaineering is that it takes the mountaineer beyond the usual considerations of ordinary life. He sets out to climb when it is expedient to do so, not because he must get the 9.10 a.m. to the office. And he eats when he is hungry, or when the climb allows of eating, not because it is 1.30 p.m., or some other arbitrary time fixed by the exigencies of civilisation. To bring even a suggestion of this plaguing element of time into mountaineering is distasteful, though, heaven knows, even on a mountain it is difficult to escape from its toils. I have finished with mountaineering as something to be logged and card-indexed, as though it was the ghost of some defunct but not forgotten science.

Our resting-place was in the sun, which was peeping over the Tête du Lion. Its rays emphasised the gloominess and ugliness of the Tiefenmatten Glacier, and the precipices of the Matterhorn above with their weirdly wrought rocks and twisting stone-swept couloirs. I marvelled at the temerity of Penhall, who forced a route up this face to a point high on the Zmutt ridge. We had speculated as to the possibility of making a direct route from the Tiefenmatten Glacier to the Italian hut, but we had no difficulty in preferring our adopted route. The grey
debris-scarred precipices *may* be climvable, but they would scarcely appeal to the most optimistic agent of a life-insurance office.

A quarter of an hour passed, and we re-engaged in the ascent. From our resting-place rose a snow-ridge as sharp as any I have set eyes on in the Alps. It was longer than the Brenva ice-ridge, and swept steeply upwards in two scimitar-like curves through a vertical height of some 300 feet. One side was illumined by the sun, the other was in shade.

It was a wonderful ridge, and to tread it was a celestial adventure. Climbing it epitomised mountaineering, perhaps life. It is better to tread a cloud but once, and fall, than root in earth for always.

Soon Parry’s axe was at work. The thin blade of snow was bitten into a ragged saw. There was no wind, but even so balance was delicate. Macphee and I advanced with feet planted outwards in the holds, like a pair of Charlie Chaplins.

The ridge merged into a hump of ice. This we traversed on the right. The snow was hard, and steps had to be cut; nevertheless, progress was rapid.

The sun shone warmly, but not oppressively. The storm of the previous evening had scoured the atmosphere of haze. The world was light and gay and youthful. On such a morning a man finds himself singing, not only from the lips but from the heart. His every nerve is attuned to beauty; sky, air, sun and hill are his.
No difficulty of a strenuous nature was encountered until we were within a few feet of the ridge crest. At this point a crevasse, insecurely bridged with snow, had to be crossed, and a nearly vertical wall of ice, to which a load of snow clung precariously, surmounted. A careful step, an implanted ice-axe, an upward pull, a certain movement, accurately described as a wallow, and Parry sprawled on the ridge. A grinning, snow-spattered, bespectacled face, silhouetted against an intensely blue sky, peered down; the rope hissed snakily through the snow.

“Come on!”

Macphee and I obeyed. A minute or two later we were all three congregated on the ridge.

We were one hundred yards or more from the lowest point of the Col Tournanche, so we descended the ridge to the col and, finding some sun-warmed slabs of rock, sat down for a rest and another meal.

It was a jolly spot. Behind us was Switzerland, before us Italy. Cliffs and ribs of shattered rocks fell away for thousands of feet towards the pastures of the Val Tournanche, where little fleecy clouds still sheltered in the morning shadow. Beyond were ranks of hills, orderly and blue; and bluer, between the hills, like a fragment of willow china, was the lake of Maggiore. Farther still, at an immense distance, a range of dusky golden clouds, curved and rounded in their contours like Botticellian Venuses, spanned the south-eastern horizon.
Presently, when we had eaten, we set off along the ridge of the Tête du Lion. This is a ruin of a mountain, and little more pleasant to climb than the chalk cliffs of Beachy Head. It needs but a sharp earthquake to send a few million tons of its loose rocks helter-skelter into the Val Tournanche.

From the summit of the Tête du Lion we gazed across the Col du Lion at the Italian ridge. None of us had previously set foot upon it, and we examined with interest the cliffs that mount to the Pic Tyndall and thence lift in a sheer 800 feet to the summit.

Words are liable to be inadequate in describing the Matterhorn. I knew my *Scrambles Amongst the Alps* almost by heart. As a boy, I had marvelled at the courage and perseverance of the pioneers who, time and again, had struggled up this ridge, only to be repulsed, some of them when victory was within sight. I had read of the "Chimney," the "Great Tower," the "Cravate," the "Shoulder" (now known as the Pic Tyndall), the Col Félicité, and "Carrel's Corridor." I had promised myself with what seemed presumptuous and absurd foolhardiness to climb it. And here it was, close to me. I was about to set foot upon it. And it was different, quite different, from what I had expected and pictured.

As a boy, I had pictured something rough and steep, and warm-coloured when the sun was shining. But here were precipices, smooth yet crumbling, with great rocks lying about like broken bricks and tiles
THE MATTERHORN FROM THE COL TOURNANCHE.
discarded as valueless during the building of a house, and a meaningless litter on every ledge. And it was cold; even in the sun it was cold; there was more shadow than sunlight, more chill than warmth, more sadness than laughter, in the gaunt hard-faced crags. A grey, monkish, bloodless mountain is the Matterhorn.

It is impossible to descend directly from the Tête du Lion to the Col du Lion; the cliffs are sheer. We had to descend the east face of the Tête, which proved even looser than the ridge and face by which we had climbed the mountain. A rough path, little better than a goat track, traverses this side of the mountain. On it we perceived two parties, evidently bound, as we were, for the hut, and had to wait until they were out of range of any stones we might dislodge. Then we descended to the track and followed it. It soon brought us to the Col du Lion, and we halted a moment in this chilly wind-swept rift to gaze down the couloir, up which Mummery and Burgener had forced their way from the Tiefenmatten Glacier. It needed but a single glance at this black twist of ice to convince us of the fearsome nature of the climb. Apart from the ever-present danger of falling stones, it is long enough and steep enough to tax the strength and skill of the greatest of ice-men. So tough was the ice when the first ascent was made that Burgener broke his axe and had to rely on Mummery's. That single axe stood between the party and calamity.
From the Col du Lion, the Italian ridge starts easily enough with a scramble up some broken rocks and a trudge up a slope of screes. Then the angle steepens, and the climber grasps the first of the fixed ropes. Some of these provide a more direct route, and one less exposed to falling stones than the route taken by the pioneers, but many follow the original route. For this reason it is safe to say that were all the ropes removed, the Italian ridge of the Matterhorn would rank as one of the hardest rock-climbs in the Alps. Perhaps one day, when guiding has died out and the vested interests of guides are no longer at stake, this will be done, and the Matterhorn reduced to its pristine condition. If, and when, this desirable end is reached, there will be no more "queues" waiting to ascend the Matterhorn by the Italian ridge.

The ropes below the Italian hut are for the most part unnecessary to a climber of moderate ability, but there is one which hangs down a steep, slimy and awkwardly splayed-out chimney which is hard work to climb.

Being a poor gymnast,¹ I detest fixed ropes on a mountain. Paradoxical though it may sound, I feel less safe and less sure of myself when clinging to a fixed rope than I do when climbing equally difficult

¹ It is a misapprehension to suppose that mountaineers are necessarily strong, athletic types. The muscle-bound "strong man" is altogether the wrong type, even given the skill. Mountaineering is essentially a matter of skill, rhythm and temperament, allied to a spare habit and a constitution which need be no more than average.
ropeless rocks. If any further objection is wanting, on the Matterhorn many of the fixed ropes are so bleached and shredded by the weather that it is scarcely pleasant to have to rely upon them for support.

The Italian hut stands on the ridge where the latter forms a narrow and almost level neck, abutting at its upper end against a cliff and splaying out below into a broken and indefinite edge that falls to the Col du Lion. It is a little box of a place, with neither cleanliness nor comfort to commend it. On the one hand snow-slopes slant down to the edge of unseen precipices falling to the Tiefenmatten Glacier; on the other hand the precipices are abysmal and begin less than a yard from the door. The sleeping accommodation is for twelve, but there were already more than that number of mountaineers present, and another party was ascending. It was obvious that we were in for a crowded and uncomfortable night.

The afternoon was lengthening when we reached the hut, and a cold breeze was fast eating up the warmth of the sun. The weather promised ill. During the day the wind, which had been in the west at dawn, had veered to the south, and the harmless-looking vapours over Italy, which we had first observed from the Col Tournanche, were creeping northwards, gaining rapidly in volume as they did so. All the distant hills were concealed, and an uneven lake of
mist lapped the lower crags of the Matterhorn, rising slowly as it gained in volume.

By sundown the hut was packed to capacity—sixteen persons in a space intended to receive twelve as the absolute maximum. Fortunately there was present a guide from Breuil, who good-naturedly and efficiently saddled himself with the onerous task of cooking for the company. Cooking and eating had to be done in relays, and most of those who were waiting their turn had to lie on the bunks owing to the limited floor area.

The presence of so many persons in a confined area should have resulted in the generation of a certain amount of warmth. Such, however, was by no means the case. The ill-constructed walls and door of the hut allowed free ingress to the wind which sallied exuberantly across the interior in numerous cutting and conflicting draughts, which sought out every portion of the anatomy. The only thing that can be said in favour of the cracks and the wind they admitted is that in the absence of either we should indubitably have been suffocated within a short space of time. Even with this efficient ventilation the clouds of smoke that belched forth from the stove—a wretched little iron box on four legs, from which sprouted a reeking, loose-jointed and woeful-looking length of piping, which permitted a small quantity of smoke to escape into the outer air—were well-nigh intolerable, and Macphee, Parry and I more than once were forced to
ease the ache of our eyes by seeking the pure air outside the hut.

Whatever the faults of this hovel as regards its structure, accommodation and interior decorations, one thing can be said for it: it is magnificently situated.

The mists had risen and now lay almost level with the ridge. Like the mists of the previous evening, they stirred and writhed uneasily, as though stricken with some feverish malady, and now and again the wind whipped a shred away from its parent mass and whisked it across the ridge and down into the depths of the Tiefenmatten, where it quickly melted and vanished.

There were higher clouds, always an ominous sign when taken in conjunction with a mist-sea; smooth, oily masses which closed about the sun, so that, instead of a lingering, peaceful light, a hurried glare illumined the crags and poured a watery radiance on the scurrying shreds of mist.

Our supper, which consisted of a sort of soup and stew, was at length prepared, not without some misgivings on our part, occasioned by one of our companions who expectorated morosely and at short intervals on to the stove on which this mess was warming. We watched fearfully, but so far as we could observe his aim was consistently accurate, and we consumed our meal with no more than the ordinary revolt which the ordinary person experiences when called on to dine off food which has been cooked in dirty utensils and is served on dirty plates.
Seated near us as we ate was an Italian lady who told us that she was a member of the Scottish Ladies' Mountaineering Club. She was accompanied by a single guide, a sturdy phlegmatic Swiss, whose silence contrasted markedly with the chatter of the Italian guides.

Our supper eaten, we ascended to the upper of two tiers of bunks and endeavoured to make ourselves comfortable in the pitiful space allotted to us.

I can truthfully say that the night which followed was the most uncomfortable that I have ever spent beneath a roof.

The mountaineer endures bodily discomfort of two kinds: that for which the mountains and the elements are alone responsible, and that which is due to the proximity or machinations of his fellow-mountaineers. During this particular night, we endured a combination of both kinds of discomfort, the latter kind occupying, I should estimate, some 80 per cent. of the sum-total.

It is invariable for mountaineers, who are conservative folk in their similitudes, to compare their residence in a crowded Alpine hut to that enjoyed by sardines in a tin. I would not dream of departing from so honourable and established a tradition, and will merely add that in the instance under review, if two tins of sardines are purchased and the contents of one tin then added to the other tin, a greater degree of justice is rendered to any description of the night we spent in the Italian hut on the Matterhorn.
As already mentioned, the hut possessed in a remarkable degree a knack of admitting the cold without expelling the smoke or smell. The effect of this was to produce what I can only describe as a cold fug.

Macphee and I shared a single threadbare blanket, the odour of which reminded me irresistibly of a ferretry owned by my uncle. The pillows consisted of slabs of solidified straw, or some such substance, covered in some fabric so thick from the accumulated grease and oil of innumerable heads that a wick applied to it would have burnt for hours.

There were few mattresses, and as these had been appropriated by early comers to the hut, we had to content ourselves with a small and, to judge by its smell, improperly cured piece of sheepskin which possessed the curious faculty of making the wood beneath appear even harder than it really was.

As I lay thus, I thought of the comforts of Himalayan mountaineering, and vowed that I would have paid a considerable sum to have been transferred to Camp VI on Mount Everest for the remainder of the night. I vowed, too, that Alpine climbing was an over-rated sport, and that never again would I risk such a night by climbing fashionable peaks during the height of the season. Alpine climbing is altogether too uncomfortable a business for Himalayan sybarites.

So we lay, growing stiffer and sorer and colder as the wretched hours slouched past.

It must have been some time after midnight that I
managed to sleep for a few minutes. I awoke from an unpleasant dream in which I was one of a pair of Siamese twins in the toils of a mediæval torturer.

The night passed, why I scarcely know. I should expect it to be going on still; for some grisly nightmare to supervene and transport me to the granite-like bunk in the tiny, cold, odorous hut on the Matterhorn.

It was not a promising morning. The wind had increased during the night, and was hammering the hut with savage gusts. Little was to be seen but flying mist and hoar-coated rocks. Even after our uncomfortable night, or perhaps because of it, we were disinclined to start. It was safer, we argued, to wait a little, to give the weather an opportunity of showing its hand. It was a compromise, but not a sound compromise. We should have decided there and then either to advance or to retreat.

Only two parties left for the summit. One had not spent the night in the hut, but had come up from the valley and looked in at the hut for a bite of food. The other party was the Italian lady and her guide, who gallantly set off up the wind-swept slabs into the mist. We told ourselves that they would soon return, but they did not return. They traversed the mountain and descended the same evening to Zermatt.

Macphee could not get over it. "To think," he said, over and over again, "of that woman and her guide getting down to Zermatt while we——"
The remaining parties, guided and guideless, decided to descend to Breuil. We elected to remain for a while.

The sun rose. It was not visible, but the warmth of it could be felt. The wind began to lose its sting. The mist thinned. Of a sudden, we saw blue sky.

We decided to start, after all. It was not a wise decision to make at 8.15 a.m., but we compromised with conscience by telling ourselves that if we were too late to descend to the Hörnli by nightfall, the Solvay hut, 1,500 feet below the summit, would shelter us.

The wind was still blowing when we left the hut, but the sun was increasing in power and fast melting the hoar frost from the rocks. We began inwardly to congratulate ourselves on having outwitted that wily element, the weather.

We were a slow party. This was due partly to my wrist, which for some reason, possibly as the result of a twist when cutting a step on the Tête du Lion, had developed synovitis, and had little strength for the intensive arm-pulling on the fixed ropes, and partly because we were a party of three not used to climbing in combination.

Many mountaineers now believe that the opinion, so forcibly expressed by a former President of the Alpine Club, that, whatever number is right on a mountain, two is unquestionably wrong, is no longer acceptable as a ruling. Four is a good number when falling stones have not to be considered, as they can
climb in two pairs on a mountain-side or rope together in one party on a crevassed glacier. Next to a party of four, I favour a single pair, on the grounds that two men who are both capable of leading are safer and faster than three men, and that the extra speed more than counterbalances the extra risk involved in traversing snow-covered glaciers. In this connection it is interesting to note that the worst Alpine disasters which have occurred to British climbers have, with few exceptions, occurred to parties of more than two. This I believe to be due to divided attention and lack of concentration during a climb. Two men learn to climb together safely in a very short time, and each has only the other to watch; three men may take seasons.

The same does not hold good as regards guided parties, for the reason that first-class guides are superior mountaineers on their own ground to the best amateurs, and even if the amateur is a hopeless "dud" a couple of first-class guides will "conduct" him safely and expeditiously up and down most of the greater Alpine climbs.

Above the hut, the route bears away diagonally from the crest of the ridge and slants upwards across the south-east face. Presently we came to a wide scoop, forming the head of a couloir, which had to be traversed by a series of snow- and ice-covered ledges. Steps cut by previous parties were visible, but at one point they were broken, and a groove in the snow
suggested a slip by some former climber. The groove ended some fifteen feet lower; the fallen one had been held by his companion, or companions.

The air was now reasonably warm, and on this sheltered portion of the mountain there was little wind. Now and again the mists parted, disclosing pools of blue sky.

Above the scoop a series of walls and chimneys of no great difficulty, but festooned with ropes, led to the ridge. We had looked forward for some time to regaining the ridge, but once on it, we wished that the route had continued for a greater distance across the face. There was wind on the ridge. It blew from the south in fierce gusts, which increased steadily the higher we climbed. This wind was at first merely spiteful and uncomfortable, but as we approached the Pic Tyndall it smote us so furiously that we were forced to advance singly where in ordinary circumstances we could have advanced all together.

There is no Alpine peak more temperamental in its weather changes than the Matterhorn; no mountain on which comfort is so quickly displaced by discomfort and safety by danger. A few minutes previously we had been climbing comfortably and easily. Now, on less difficult ground, we were climbing uncomfortably and with difficulty. A wind of constant strength can be allowed for, but a wind which at one moment falls almost to a calm and the next smites furiously and unexpectedly makes rhythmical progress impossible.
Sometimes we could hear it coming as it beat about the crags below, but for the most part it arrived without audible warning. It was not a dangerous wind, but it was sufficiently strong to blow the rope between us out to leeward in a horizontal curve, and to whip particles of snow and occasionally thin sheets of ice into our faces.

The ridge that connects the Pic Tyndall to the Col Félicité and the final tower of the Matterhorn is savage enough to strike awe into the heart of the most hardened mountaineer. It is best seen on a day of gathering storm, as we saw it, with cold mists breathing from appalling depths or in wild flight across the face of the final tower. On such an occasion, when all the safe and pleasant things of life are at a discount and the flesh shudders in the icy blast, it needs the spirit of a Tibetan philosopher to rise superior to physical considerations and rejoice in the awful grandeur of the scene. With me it is only in memory that I can enjoy the traverse of that storm-blasted ridge.

I hope to return and climb the Matterhorn on a day when it does not bristle with cloud and storm, but sleeps beneath an unclouded sky. I should like to climb in comfort and free from anxiety, quietly absorbing the grandeurs and beauties of the mountain. Mountaineering can offer no greater contrast than that between the day when not a breath stirs and the climbing conditions are perfect, when the sun is hot and the sky unsmudged by a single
cloud, and the day when every muscle is tensed to do battle with lightning, thunder, blizzard and hurricane, and the great mountain is imbued with the passions of the universe.

The ridge did not abut directly against the face of the final tower, but was separated from it by a gap some 15 feet deep. This gap, the Col Félicité, marks the highest point reached by Professor Tyndall's party in 1862. Yet it was not the gap itself which stopped this party—to descend into it is a relatively easy matter; it was the invincible appearance of the final tower which rises some 800 feet above it.

It was obvious now that a storm was brewing. Beyond the gap on the face of the tower the wind was not so violent, but mists were fast gathering and hail beginning to fall. There was no time to be lost; the sooner we were over the summit and descending the Swiss side of the mountain the better. We assumed that once the summit was reached there would be no further difficulty: we would rattle down the ordinary route to the Hörnli and Zermatt. With luck, we would be at the Monte Rosa Hotel in time for dinner.

From the Col Félicité the route, by which the Matterhorn was first climbed from Italy by Jean Antoine Carrel and J. B. Bich, goes to the left along a rocky, horizontal ridge, now known as “Carrel's Corridor,” across the Tiefenmatten face of the mountain towards the Zmutt ridge. Unfortunately, it is a route so difficult and dangerous on account of rotten rock and
falling stones and icicles that a route was subsequently forced up the face of the final tower by means of iron stanchions, fixed ropes and a ladder. There is no doubt that even if the ropes below the Pic Tyndall were left in position, and only those on the final tower removed, the Matterhorn would be exceptionally difficult to climb.

Hail fell more and more heavily as we clambered up the tower. Wind and frozen mist were combining to encase the ropes in ice, whilst time and weather had in some cases bleached and frayed the hempen strands, so that more than once Macphee, who led throughout from the hut, must have known a qualm of anxiety as he climbed hand over hand up their crackling, creaking lengths.

Presently we came to the well-known rope-ladder, which enables the climber to surmount an otherwise impassable overhang. It does not ascend the overhang direct, but bends to the right over and round it. The lower end of the ladder has been pulled inwards and fixed to a sloping niche under the overhang: if left to hang down it would be impossible to reach it, so pronounced is the outward bulge of the precipice. Thus, the ladder also overhangs, and the climber must ascend on the inside of it until the lip of the overhanging is reached, and then transfer himself to the outside, a movement complicated by the lateral slant of the ladder. It is a sensational manœuvre, and takes place on the face of a precipice 5,000 feet high.
None of us liked the look of the ladder. It creaked with ice when touched, and it was weather-worn and old, so old that it had frayed badly where it had rubbed against the lip of the overhang. Doubtless, our aversion for it was increased by its exposed situation and the fierce gusts of hail-charged wind which smote this bleak and desperate precipice.

However, like many another place, the longer it was looked at the worse did it seem, and after a halt of a few seconds, devoted to sundry uncomplimentary and derogatory remarks regarding the morals, manners and general behaviour of the Matterhorn, made in a still, calm, flat little voice that added immeasurably to their force, Macphee went at it with a will.

For perhaps half a minute I saw the seat of his trousers poised between mist-girded earth and hail-filled heaven, then suddenly it swung outwards even more remotely, as, with an agile contortionist-like movement, it was transferred from the inside to the outside of the ladder. Then it suddenly disappeared altogether; one moment it was, the next it was not, and all I could see was the polished bulge of the overhang and a little shower of ice-fragments shed by the straining, crackling ladder, which were instantly whirled away by the wind.

The ladder ceased to strain and tremble and hung immobile; the ice-fragments ceased to fall. There was silence, save for the surge of the wind and the sharp hiss of the hail as it struck the rocks. Only the
rope linking me with Macphee moved—moved upwards foot by foot, like some serpent that has learnt to defy gravity.

Presently, there came a faint, thin shout, which I interpreted as an invitation to advance. My gloves, which were iced, would not grip the slippery rungs or side of the ladder, so I removed them and shoved them into my pocket. For sheer sensation, the ascent of this ladder is supremely satisfying. I compare it in the nature of its exposure to the exit from the Zdar-dansky chimney on the Langkofel Eck, or the variation on the Winklerthurm to the right of the Winkler Riss.

A lack of training, a weak wrist, wind and hail, and the necessity for making an awkward trapeze-like movement from the inside to the outside of the ladder, materially enhanced the apparent airiness of the situation. It was one of the few places I have seen which could hold its own with a non-mountaineer's mental picture of mountain-climbing. The ladder was secured above by stanchions driven into the rocks. If the cords were frayed where they rubbed against the lip of the overhang, they were a mass of unravelling strands at the stanchions. It was fortunate for Macphee's peace of mind that these had been invisible from below.

A smooth slab slanted up from the overhang. There was no security for the party other than that afforded by the staples and stanchions, so Macphee went on while I secured him and myself as well as I could, and
then, when he had gained a safe place, where the rope could be securely belayed, proceeded to bring up Parry, who on being invited to join me, rose from the depths with almost Mephistophelian celerity.

We did not know that twelve days previously this ladder had witnessed a tragedy.

On August 13th (our ascent was on August 25th) two parties of young Italian climbers left the Italian hut at a late hour. Before reaching the Pic Tyndall one of them found himself unable to continue owing to mountain sickness. It was decided that he should wait while his comrades attained the summit and returned. As they did not return, he eventually descended alone to the hut, where he was discovered later, alive and well, by a search party. One party of two climbers duly reached the summit. The weather was becoming bad, so they descended as quickly as possible, but either on the ladder or on the ice-glazed slabs immediately above it a slip occurred, and they were seen by their horrified companions to fall from the overhang into the abyss.

Owing to the storm, which was increasing in fury, the surviving party, who estimated themselves to be within half an hour of the summit, decided to traverse the mountain and descend by the ordinary route to the Solvay hut. Unfortunately, by the time they reached the summit, the storm was so terrible that they found further progress to be impossible and were forced to bivouac.
A night spent on or near the summit of the Matterhorn in a storm is more readily imagined than described. Their sufferings were terrible. The next morning they were still alive, but one of them shortly afterwards perished. The remaining three struggled downwards through the blizzard, but although they eventually reached the neighbourhood of the Solvay hut, they were unable to find the hut in the blizzard, and after wandering about vainly searching for it, were again overtaken by night and forced to bivouac without shelter.

The next morning they managed to find the hut. Leaving one of their number there, who was too exhausted to continue, the remaining two struggled on down through the storm, going very slowly, owing to their exhaustion.

Meanwhile, two Italian guides from Breuil, who had followed the party and traversed the summit, overtook them at about six in the evening. Later, two more Italian guides of the search party organised from Breuil also overtook the party, but before the Hörnli hut was reached one of the two young men expired. His companion was assisted down in the last stages of exhaustion, as was also the other survivor from the Solvay hut.

This tragedy is as terrible as any that has taken place on the Matterhorn. It is sadly obvious that neither party was competent to climb the mountain safely. The reserve of skill and strength so necessary in mountaineering must have been lacking. The con-
duct of the Breuil guides who, suspecting that a dis-
aster had occurred, followed the parties across the
mountain through the storm, is in accordance with
the noblest traditions of mountaineering. Their swift
pace and certain progress contrast fantastically with
the wretched performance of the unfortunate young
amateurs.

The remainder of our climb scarcely needs descrip-
tion. It snowed and hailed and blew. There was
nothing to be seen save our immediate surroundings.
The rocks seemed interminable; up and up they lifted
into the mist. Then, of a sudden, when we were re-
signed to climbing on and on indefinitely, we saw the
faint outline of a cross. A minute later we stood on
the Italian summit, on which the guides of Breuil have
planted a large metal crucifix.

It was 2 p.m. There was no time to lose if we were
to reach shelter by nightfall. Snow was falling
heavily, and every centimetre of it increased the diffi-
culty of the descent. We hurried along the summit
ridge, and passed over the Swiss summit to the Zer-
matt route.

We were surprised to find that considerably more
snow had fallen on this side of the mountain than on
the Italian side; it was already lying several inches
deep, and was being added to every moment.

For a while we descended an easy snow-slope on
which the tracks of the former parties were faintly
discernible.
THE SPIRIT OF THE HILLS

The slope steepened gradually. To begin with we were able to move all together, but presently it became obvious that we could not continue thus in safety. The slope consisted of 6 to 8 inches of loose snow overlying ice. Rocks projected from it here and there, but not sufficiently to offer adequate belays for the rope. It was one of the most treacherous slopes I have ever descended.

We lost the track on this slope, and became a little anxious lest we should miss the fixed ropes which lead down the steeper rocks to the "Shoulder." After our sanguine expectations of an easy descent, the condition of the route came as a shock. We began to realise that, so far from reaching Zermatt in time for dinner, we must concentrate our energies on reaching the Solvay hut, which is only 1,500 feet below the summit.

Presently, Macphee's sharp eye discovered the first of the fixed ropes. It was buried beneath the powdery snow, and its position was only rendered visible by the iron stanchions to which it was attached.

My slowness on the fixed ropes of the Italian route had already delayed the party. I delayed it still further on these ropes, for, owing to my injured wrist, my right arm was by now almost useless when it came to hanging on a rope, and in particular an ice-encased rope. More than once I had to ask for a tight climbing rope. I shall not forget my companions' stoical equanimity in these trying circumstances, which in-
volved for them such a wastage of time and strength. They said nothing, but how they did think! I was an infernal nuisance.

At length we stood on the "Shoulder." Without pausing there, we began the descent of the east ridge and face. Even here we encountered disagreeable conditions of snow and ice, but presently we came out of the snowstorm and could see for a considerable distance ahead of us. The rocks were dry at this level, and we rattled down them at a greatly improved pace.

The Solvay hut is situated a few yards from the crest of the east ridge, and set beneath some steep rocks which shelter it from ricochetting stone-falls. We came on it unexpectedly, although Parry knew roughly where it was situated. Only mountaineers in distress or unable to get off the mountain by nightfall are supposed to use this hut. It has been up for some years, and has prevented many uncomfortable bivouacs and saved not a few lives. It did not save us from a bivouac, for the reason that we should not have left the Italian hut so late as 8.15 a.m. had it not been there. We were, however, confident when we left of reaching Zermatt the same day, but confidence is one thing and judgment another; to have left at such a late hour in doubtful weather would, in the absence of the Solvay hut, have been folly of the most elementary kind.

It was shelter for the night, but not inviting shelter. We were surprised when we arrived to find the outer
door open and one of the shutters swinging free. Inside we found a litter of sandwich papers, crusts of bread, eggshells, orange peel, pieces of putrid and putrefying meat, and so forth on the floor, benches, table and even bunks. It was obvious from this, and from notes in the visitors' book, that climbers with and without guides, who were neither in a distressed condition nor threatened with a bivouac, had used the hut. Worst of all, a tin labelled "Not Proviant" (emergency provisions) was empty, and the fuel-container less than half full of methylated spirit. Dr. Seiler of Zermatt told us later that some climbers deliberately use this hut in lieu of the hotel on the Hörnli, where accommodation has to be paid for. This, though reprehensible, is understandable. It is, however, not so easy to understand why the inability to pay for accommodation should be synonymous with uncleanliness. Some people who climb mountains appear to be devoid of all feeling of goodwill towards their fellows, as well as insensible to those higher principles of responsibility and honour which are a part of mountaineering. It is difficult to understand why such creatures climb; they are like swine transferred from a sty to some noble and cleanly apartment, bringing their filth with them.

A few minutes after we entered the hut a mist, which concealed the lower part of the mountain, parted revealing the Hörnli ridge and the large three-storied hotel, where the night is usually spent prior to
the ascent by the Swiss route. Owing, possibly, to some trick of the atmosphere, the latter appeared astonishingly close—so close that we were tempted to go on. Surely an hour's scramble would take us there? We knew it would not. The map was emphatic on this point. It told us that the hut was more than 3,000 feet beneath us. The route was a complicated one, and nightfall was due in an hour and a half, perhaps two hours. We decided to remain at the hut. It was the wisest decision. I believe that had we attempted to descend we should have been benighted on the face, and that, in view of the storm which developed later, our position would have been worse than merely unpleasant.

The moisture-laden sky seemed to press down upon the earth that evening. Darkness fell quickly, heavy, viscous and storm-charged. There was no wind at the level of the Solvay hut, but now and again desultory drifts of hail pattered on the roof. I remember standing outside the hut for a few minutes in a thick, oppressive twilight. No stone stirred, no avalanche fell. There was silence. No, from above came a faint undercurrent of sound, a sighing in the midst of slumber: wind beating about the summit of the Matterhorn.

Air, earth and sky were allies that evening. Secure in the singleness of their power, they made no haste to rage; neither did they bide their time.

The mountaineer is wont to invest the weather with
characteristics almost of a personal quality. The elements vent their spleen upon him like some vicious enemy, or smile upon him generously like a friend. Even when he bides in shelter and security, he often conceives some wilful human quality actuating it in its disappointing changes. Yet that evening I was not burdened with such fancies. Human strengths and frailties could not be attributed to anything so calculated and inevitable as the oncoming of a great snowstorm in the High Alps. As the sun and moon and stars go about their ways, did the storm gather about the Matterhorn.

We ate a frugal supper, then climbed to the upper bunk and rolled ourselves in blankets of which we had four each. I was neither cold nor warm, and as a result could not sleep. It had been a strenuous and exacting day; my wrist ached a little; my mind was alert and taut. I heard a marauding wind steal around the hut, fingering its timbers and its windows, so that they creaked and vibrated a little. Then came a smart drumming of hail on the roof, but this did not last long.

I slept, but later awoke. The wind was stronger. It no longer fingered the hut. It grasped it, pulled it and worried it, like some famished fox trying to break open a hen-coop.

I slept again. When I awoke daylight showed faintly in the window. It was snowing, and snowing hard; the best part of a foot had already fallen.

We breakfasted, tied on the rope and set off. There
was little wind in the immediate neighbourhood of the hut, but on the crest of the east ridge above it was blowing a blizzard. Snow was falling heavily. The rocks were laden with it, the mists, above and below, packed with it. It was powdery snow, and we sank in half-way to the knees.

The angle of the slabs immediately beneath the hut is steeper than the average angle of the east face. In good conditions, when free of snow, the slabs must be easy enough to climb. In the present instance, we grovelled and groped in loose floury snow. At the end of an hour we had descended about 50 feet. It was impossible to descend in such conditions, and we retired disconsolately to the hut.

We must wait—how long?

We reviewed our resources of food. We had with us an ounce or two of chocolate, a few dried prunes, some boiled sweets and peppermints, and a spoonful or two of honey. When we arrived at the hut we had been disgusted to find numerous bread-crusts scattered about. These crusts were now valuable. We gathered them from various shelves and corners of the hut. Some were months, even years, old; some merely a few weeks; one or two had been deposited during the last few days. Furthermore, at the bottom of a tin was half a biscuit and an ounce or so of maize. Then, on the floor in a dusty corner I discovered a piece of bacon, rectangular in shape, black in colour, of age unknown, and of size as large as the upper joint of a
man's thumb. This would flavour soup. Then there was a piece of butter, only slightly rancid. This would thicken soup. Lastly, we came on a slab of blackened and withered meat green with age. This, we decided unanimously, would make a perfect emergency ration. Altogether, there was sufficient food to last us several days, perhaps a week with extreme care. Only weather of an exceptional nature could detain us for a week, but the Matterhorn has a reputation for producing the exceptional. Almost as important as food was fuel. There was certainly not enough for a week, if we were to cook two soups a day. It was possible that an uncomfortable time lay ahead of us.

We remained in our blankets until evening. Snow fell without intermission. It was not easy to keep warm, and it was a relief to get up and make some soup.

Having converted snow to water over the spirit stove, we added some crusts which were crushed and chopped up into fragments. Next came a fragment or two of what I proudly claimed as my "discovery" (i.e. the piece of bacon). Macphee and Parry next contributed a shaving or two of chocolate, a spoonful of honey, one peppermint and three prunes. To this mixture I added a chunk of butter and a spoonful of maize, "to give it body," as I explained to my companions. This masterpiece of culinary dilettantism was raised to boiling-point, and afterwards distributed with scrupulous care so that each of us had a fair share
of crusts, a prune, and a piece of bacon. After we had finished eating, we returned to our blankets. We felt safer lying down.

The second night was colder than the first, and seemed unconscionably long. When we awoke, dawn was once more filling the window. We opened the ice-caked windows and door to a perfect morning. The sky overhead was unclouded, and a great sun was shouldering its way up through the mists that clung to Monte Rosa and the Mischabel. The air in the vicinity of the hut was calm, but on the crest of the east ridge, a few yards away, the wind was ruffling the snow and snatching it up in little spirals and vortexes. Higher, it was whirling the snow from the Furggen ridge in a furious tourbillon.

Over a foot of loose, powdery snow lay on the rocks. Snow had fallen as low as the Schwartzsee, and the east face presented an almost unbroken snow-slope. There was no power in the sun at first, but as it rose it waxed from red-heat to white-heat, and cast a flood of warmth through the brilliantly clear atmosphere.

For a few minutes after the full force of the sun struck it, the Matterhorn remained immobile, then, abruptly, it began to strain against its frosty bonds. A little tuft of snow not an ounce in weight poured off a neighbouring crag. Another followed, and another. The frosty coating on the hut window split into sections, which slid slowly down the glass.

From the threshold of the hut we could discern the
shadowed pastures and clustered chalets of Zermatt. Eastwards, like sunlight transmuted to a celestial substance, were the snows of Monte Rosa.

Breakfast was somehow not so delectable as supper the evening before. Possibly, the hope of eating a dinner in Zermatt that evening affected the reaction of our palates to "soup."

It was inadvisable to commence the descent until the sun had cleared some of the snow from the face of the mountain, and we decided to wait until midday.

Breakfast eaten, we basked in the sun. As we sat at our ease on the threshold of the hut, we were perturbed to see a party leave the hut on the Hörnli and begin to mount the slopes towards the east ridge. It occurred to us that our non-arrival at Zermatt had occasioned some anxiety and that a search-party was starting out. Alpine search-parties are expensive luxuries, and we had no desire to pay a thousand francs to be "rescued." It was with considerable relief that we saw the party return to the hut. Doubtless they were tourists, or mountaineers who had gone out to examine the condition of the mountain.

We did not altogether like the look of the weather. The sun was shining on the Matterhorn, but a smooth sickle-shaped cloud, poised on Monte Rosa, suggested unstable atmospheric conditions.

The sun worked with astonishing rapidity. By 9 a.m. streams of wet snow were swishing down the east face. By 11 a.m. the depth of snow had dwindled to
FROM THE SOLVAY HUT.
less than half, and all the larger and more dangerous avalanches had fallen.

We left soon after 11 a.m. Progress was slow. The snow was no longer fluffy and powdery, but heavy and sodden. Footholds were being disclosed as it melted, but we were forced to proceed with extreme caution and move one at a time. During the first hour we did not descend more than 500 feet.

The easiest route lies for the most part on the east face below the crest of the east ridge, but owing to the danger of avalanches and falling stones, it was essential to adhere as closely as possible to the ridge. For this reason, it was not until we were well below the old hut, which is now in a ruinous condition and disused, that we were able to move all together. The snow lessened in depth as we descended. Lower there was so little of it that here and there we could discern a well-defined track made by former parties.

We crossed the loose and disagreeable stone chute known as the “Great Stone Couloir,” and traversed round a corner to a zigzag path. There we released ourselves from the heavy, water-soaked rope; then strolled down to the Hörnli hotel.

It was 5 p.m. We halted half an hour for light refreshment, then descended to Zermatt. It was a sultry evening as we pounded downhill. The hushed forest held a threat of storm. The air was warm and sweet with the scents of the earth. Above, the Matterhorn gathered the clouds around it.
Of recent years there have been many expeditions to the highest peaks of the world. These expeditions have cost large sums of money and have resulted in the loss of not a few lives. To mention three disasters: in 1922 seven porters were swept to their deaths by an avalanche on the slopes of the North Col of Mount Everest; in 1924 Mallory and Irvine failed to return from an attempt to reach the summit of the same mountain; in 1934 four Europeans and six porters perished in a blizzard on Nanga Parbat. What is the good of it? ask some. Is it worth while? query others. Some people who question and query thus are animated by a genuine desire to gather information and instruction; others do not wish to understand and are actuated by a desire to exercise their powers of destructive criticism or to extol their “common sense” which, in many instances, is merely an aphorism for their ignorance. The force that drives man towards the summits of the highest hills is the same force that has raised him above the beasts. He is not put into this world merely to exist; he is put there to find love and happiness, to express and to
create. Some achieve happiness best by seeking out the wildest and most inaccessible corners of the earth, and there subjugating their bodies to discomfort and even to peril, in search of an ideal which goes by the simple word "discovery," discovery not only of physical objects but of themselves. To condemn another's ideals, however foolish they may seem at first sight, unless there is something inherently evil in them, is to stand yourself condemned of a retrograde narrow-mindedness.

An Alpine peak of whatever difficulty may be scaled by anyone possessing sufficient strength and skill, but the Himalayas, by virtue of their height, interpose a new factor. To climb them a man must, in addition to strength and skill, possess a body which is so constituted as to be able to exist in the rarefied atmosphere of high altitudes. But even these qualifications, necessary though they are to success, are not sufficient. In all work which involves a considerable output of physical and mental force, if it is to be performed successfully, a man must cultivate a mental attitude commensurate with such work and which is in phase and sympathy with it. It is essential to safety and success on the highest hills to approach them rightly. I would go so far as to say that it is unlikely that the strongest and most skilful mountaineers can reach the highest summits of the world unless they concentrate their whole mental force, as well as their physical energies, towards that end. That is the
strength, the power and the charm of the highest hills; they demand something much finer and greater than mere physical and technical ability. They are problems set, not for brutes or angels, but for ordinary thinking men, for mountaineers who can turn an inward and a contemplative eye upon the glories of the hills.

The highest hills demand the best that is within a man, and something more. They are gifts, but not gifts to be lightly given. They demand not only a striving but a purpose. To climb on them, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, is to put yourself in phase with the supreme forces of the universe.

Superstition is still rife among men. No doubt it is a necessary educative part of the evolutionary scheme, a pointing of the way and an establishing of comparisons, for purpose underlies all evolution, and when the side roads are blocked we can travel at a greater rate along the main road. An acceptance of luck and bad luck implies an acceptance of superstition. "Perhaps we will be lucky next time" is not an ideal approach to the highest hills, and to say after each failure that it was "bad luck" is to view the problem from a wrong angle. It slips out easily enough on a mountain, just as easily as anywhere else, that such and such an occurrence was a matter of luck, as though that occurrence was for some mysterious reason outside the evolutionary scheme of things. If the highest hills are approached rightly, they can be climbed. A happy party, physically and mentally in
KANGCHENJUNGA.
phase with the problem, will be welcomed and not rejected. This, I am convinced, is true, and truth is at the opposite pole to superstition, which is truth perverted to satisfy a negative force.

Many clouds of falsehood have been woven about the highest hills. Unfortunately, no pursuit has been so misinterpreted as has mountaineering. The harm done is very real, inasmuch as one effect is to present an entirely false picture to those who have yet to "discover" the hills, or who are ignorant of the motives underlying mountaineering. One evil result has been to presuppose a competitive aspect in mountaineering. That this does exist to some extent none will deny, but there are many to whom mountaineering is primarily a means of strengthening that happy relationship which exists, or should exist, between man and Nature. To the more ignorant and unthinking journalists the highest hills are nothing but "stunts" or "records," words utterly hateful and somehow suggestive of all that is low and vulgar in the present age.

Even worse is the "national" atmosphere surrounding them. One mountain has become a preserve for British mountaineers; two more are a preserve for German mountaineers. Harm may come to mountaineering as a whole if such a policy of national isolation is persisted in in the future. The highest hills should be free to all without "prior rights" or national prejudices to interpose doubts and jealousies between
men and a pursuit whose roots should be around goodwill and idealism.

Another thing that my own experiences on the highest hills have made me realise very forcibly is the wrongness of an approach in a conquering spirit. I have been guilty myself of this loose way of thinking, but the highest hills have taught me that a man cannot conquer Nature. Such a word as “conquest” to express his relationship with Nature breathes of egotism and smacks of a conscious superiority which in itself suggests a lack of affinity with Nature. Nature is not a thing apart, something to be stormed and conquered, it is a part of us, an all-prevailing beauty and magnificence in which we strive to realise ourselves, and in realising learn the true import of existence. The expedition that advertises itself as out to “conquer” one of the highest hills sets its seal on unsucces before ever it sails from Europe. By its own vanity must it fail.

To climb on the highest hills is to realise an akinship with Nature. Penalties and pain may attend such a realisation, but these make the eventual consummation all the more vital and joyful, for it is the immutable law of the universe that only through striving and suffering shall man learn to realise himself, to gain in awareness, to enlarge his moral stature, to discover truth and joy. With gasping lungs and failing strength a man may one day tread the highest point of earth, but he will tread it in no spirit of a conqueror, but humbly and thankfully, knowing that a power has been given to him
capable of animating him not only to the full extent of his natural strength, but far beyond that strength.

The greatness of mountaineering on the highest hills lies in the fact that no single man is capable of reaching a summit by his own efforts. It is this that segregates the greatest peaks of the world from peaks of lesser altitude as mental and physical problems. They demand much more than a personal approach. Young Maurice Wilson believed that, unversed as he was in mountaineering technique and in all the manifold problems inherent in the ascent of Everest, he could attempt that mountain alone. He believed that through faith, and faith alone, he could reach the summit. It is a magnificent philosophy, but an impractical one. On practical and humanistic grounds his forlorn attempt was open to severe criticism. It is not expedient to glorify such a wastage of life; yet, supposing that he was actuated by no sordid motives of publicity or material advancement, that in Everest he saw an ideal, a means of establishing through physical toil and suffering a joyous contact with universal forces, then, while deploring his action, I cannot withhold a feeling of admiration for his purpose. It was not mountaineering, yet it was magnificent. Call it madness, call it anything you like, but is there not an element of grandeur in the thought of this young man actuated, perhaps, by a flame of idealism, a desire to express something, to expand consciousness, to escape from fleshly shackles, to rise above
all earthly considerations, setting out alone to scale the world's highest mountain, which four elaborate expeditions of experienced mountaineers had already failed to climb? There is something magnificent in this thought, just as there is in the thought of Mallory and Irvine disappearing for ever into the clouds surrounding the final pyramid.

In our present stage of existence it would appear to be an immutable law that "God helps those who help themselves." Some may argue that faith and faith alone supplies all that is necessary. It may be that the practical values and achievements of occultism, as practised so successfully by Christ, have been lost sight of. Sometimes men such as Wilson, deemed mad by those who judge an action by the action itself and the results of it rather than the thoughts and motives that inspired it, try to achieve the "impossible." They die, and if failure and success are calculable in terms of life, death and concrete performance, they have failed. But only God knows whether they have really failed?

Perhaps, as regards the highest hills, it would be more intelligible to say that God not only helps those who help themselves, but helps those who help others; for the essential difference between their problems and most other mountain problems, is that whoever is eventually successful in reaching their summits will have achieved no more than their predecessors. The part taken by a summit party is but a minor part
THE WEDGE PEAK OF KANGCHENJUNGA.
of an endeavour which in some cases has occupied men for years. It is essential that the general public as a whole should realise this, otherwise much of the value of an expedition is lost.

Many mountaineers believe in a policy of isolation as regards their mountaineering. They think that it should be kept severely aloof from the knowledge of their fellow-men and that there is something vulgar in accounts of an expedition being published in newspapers. As already mentioned, it is possible for truth to be so distorted as to be virtually lost, but if it is realised how much a successful attempt to climb one of the highest hills depends on comradeship, goodwill, service, a sense of proportion in estimating values both in the present and in the past, and all those qualities which are so necessary in any community if it is to exist happily, then the highest hills can serve to inspire men, and one meaning, at least, of an expedition becomes plain. Publicity, therefore, of a nature which takes these matters into account, and is not merely concerned to promote sales through sensation-mongering, can be of great national and international value.

It is to be hoped that the highest hills will be ascended without use of oxygen apparatus, the use of which is inimical to the ideals of mountaineering, even taking into account expediency on the grounds of safety and success. To climb breathing oxygen, in order merely

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1 This does not mean to say that oxygen should not be used at high camps for therapeutical purposes.
to reach a summit, would be a dreadful anticlimax to the work of an expedition; it would, indeed, be in the nature of an insult to that work. If a mountain is climbed thus, the ascent will not be a genuine one from a mountaineering standpoint, and the mountain will still await a mountaineer who can, by his own unaided powers, overcome the problem set by Nature.

This is no place to discuss other than the broader aspects of the problems set by the highest hills. There is one thing that I have left to the last, not because it is least important (not one thing is more important than another in the problem, as all form part of a homogeneous whole), but because it is most worthy of being remembered.

Expeditions to the highest hills rely for the establishing of their camps, and in the transport of equipment, food and fuel, on the services of Sherpa and Bhotia porters. No words of mine can do justice to the courage, hardihood, willingness and cheerfulness of these men. Several have already died in the services of previous expeditions. Without them, success is impossible. They have proved themselves in skill, endurance and other qualities to be splendid mountaineers. They are capable of establishing a camp higher than any yet established and of climbing safely to the highest summits of the world. Would it not be a fitting culmination to the attempts to climb Mount Everest if these men were given the opportunity of standing alongside their employers on the summit?
CHAPTER VIII
DAWN

The hut-keeper roused us at 2 a.m., three hours before dawn. We pulled on our clothing automatically and without thought, yawning the while. We folded our blankets, a weary business, and brushed wisps of straw from our stockings before drawing on our boots. Then we straggled into the living-room, still yawning, where the hut-keeper was blowing a feeble fire into life. The atmosphere of the hut was stuffy yet cold, and we sat on a bench by a table without speaking and with a sense of futility heavy on our minds.

Breakfast at last: hunks of bread pasted with butter and honey, and huge mugs of scalding but weak tea. This we ate and drank, dutifully, mechanically.

We finished our repast, packed our rucksacks, lit our candle lantern, grasped our ice-axes and coil of rope and slouched out of the hut.

The night met us at the door, cold and starry and still. There was no cloud that we could see; the weather was good, and our eyes, after an all-embracing glance above and around, focused themselves on the yellow pool of light cast by the lantern.
We stepped forward, and the night closed about us. One moment we were in the hut, a little stuffy world of its own, the next moment the immutable universe claimed us.

It was cold, a motionless cold that slowly dissolved the sleep from our brains, and when it had done that stimulated us until we became conscious of various things. We noticed the cold, then the rough ground and the necessity for placing the feet carefully to avoid twisting the ankles or barking the shins; then, when we had become aware of matters affecting our comfort and our relationship with our immediate surroundings and problems, we heard a distant torrent and made out individual constellations among the trembling multitude of stars.

Suddenly I became aware of space, with a curious feeling that struck through me like a slight shiver come and gone in the same instant. Here was I, an atom, a product of some obscure process of creation and evolution. I was going to climb a mountain which was itself but a speck of matter inconceivably small when compared to that quivering universe of stars. Normally, we accept space as we accept life, and are seldom conscious of its implications. Sometimes in an intellectual, or pseudo-intellectual, way we talk glibly of Einstein and Jeans, but only as a mental exercise or to air our absurdly small knowledge. Normally, however, we accept our surroundings, and forget them and go about our ways of life. We cannot live as vision-
aries; we must maintain ourselves; live and love and prepare for death.

But on the hills at night the awful grandeur of space is brought home to a man; he stands like some countryman on a road leading towards a great city and is afraid, bewildered, appalled by what lies before him. Something vast and incalculable has become a presence, something no longer merely to be accepted and neglected, but a reality. There is no need to fear, when thought and vision can reach so far. We are not mere motes floating in an ocean, but an indestructible part of the ocean; our consciousness embraces all; we are at one with the universe. It is inconceivable that this relationship, this vision that pierces a million light-years at one glance, this consciousness that awakes to such sentience beneath the stars, should perish through the mere dissolution of a few pounds of flesh and bones. No man whose thought is not bonded to flesh alone can believe that it does. And even if he did believe in complete dissolution, he would know that his body would be reabsorbed into the cosmos. Who is to say that consciousness is not a part of every atom that revolves within us?

We trudged along the moraine, our nails grating and our ice-axes clinking on the stones. At our side the glacier faintly reflected the starlight, and now and then gave forth a faint creak or uttered a groan as it stirred uneasily on its rocky bed. Presently we trod
it and, roped together, began a methodical march towards our peak.

On the moraine we had marched in close order, but on the glacier we were spaced at longer intervals, this being dictated by prudence.

We trod hard frozen snow that sloped gently and smoothly before us. We tramped silently: there was no occasion to speak, and the only sounds were our breathing, the light dragging noise the rope made when it touched the snow, and the creaking of the snow beneath our feet.

The light came slowly and with incredible stealth. It was poured slowly, lingeringly and lovingly into the world, like the most precious of celestial liquids. First of all the snow we trod was revealed. We had seen it before, wan in the starlight, but now it took on a bolder tone. Objects hitherto unseen or only guessed at became visible: the gash of an open crevasse; little folds and dips in the snow. Very slowly the peaks separated themselves from the night. Against the stars they were merely irregular wedges of darkness, and lost in the darker regions of the sky; but light revealed them as solid and substantial. Their change from darkness to light, from two-dimensional outline to three-dimensional form and solidity, was extraordinarily subtle, an imperceptible yet regular rhythm of transmutation. In just such a way must God have given light to the world, not in an instant, but gradually and with ever-increasing power and
DAWN

love. And, that mankind shall not forget the miracle, a lesser miracle is performed daily, that, like some new truth, steals unsuspected on the world.

The sky filled with a slow rush of light; the stars quivered less lustrously, were enfeebled and presently swept away. Little by little the peaks were born again; little by little colour was renewed and gloriously strengthened. Ahead, a rocky buttress was moulded from the darkness, and on high a pale snow edge of surpassing delicacy gleamed like an unsheathed sword.

This sure heralding of day discovered a joyful echo in our hearts.

Doubt removed itself with darkness, and thought expanded with vision. We gained a new strength. The prospects of the day seemed no longer dull and formless, but could be estimated in another dimension of mental and physical delight. The air was cold, crisp and invigorating. The snow crust as it crumbled beneath our feet whispered of a day's adventuring.

The light increased unhurriedly yet steadily, until the peaks glowed with all the former lustre of the stars. Then, a long time it seemed, but it cannot have been more than a few minutes, there was a pause in dawn's progression, a pause akin to the pause near the end of a thunderstorm, when Nature gathers herself together for a final and supreme manifestation of her power, or the pause an experienced orator makes before some profound and stirring utterance.
Of a sudden the sun touched a peak: a still small
voice transmuted to golden light. Swiftly and dexter-
ously the nimble conjurer of dawn skimmed from east
to west along the ranges, and peak after peak testified
to his skill. With his passing there came a wind, the
gentlest breath of awakening day. A cold little
breath, it whispered along the snow, and was gone.
A trivial happening, but somehow a beginning, if
only because it broke a silence, the silence forged in
the night and wrought in the beauty of the dawn.
CHAPTER IX
DUSK

The hour of dusk is the best of all the twenty-four hours that go to make a single revolution of our world. Dawn may bring hope or hopelessness, for it is a period when thoughts of the future predominate. The mountaineer starting forth on a great climb wonders what the day will bring forth. Often he experiences a certain physical and mental tension, which results in his thoughts being superimposed on a background of doubt and even of fear. The hour of dusk sees him relaxed, physically and mentally. The problem is solved or unsolved; it has absorbed his nervous and his physical energy; it no longer obscures his vision; it is behind him; he is free to appreciate the quiet passing of the day, and be quietly absorbed into the beauty of its most gracious hour.

He glances back in retrospect at the birth, youth and maturity of the day. Life passes in much the same way. The things that loomed so large yield to the sweet persuasion of time. The stark, battle-mented towers are no longer crowded with concealed bowmen: they have grown old, creeper-covered and peaceful.
In the hour of dusk, the mountaineer knows a peace of mind and spirit. Maybe it finds him on the moraine by the glacier, separated only by easy ground from food and shelter, or maybe it finds him high up on some great climb, faced with a cold, uncomfortable bivouac and the threat of storm. His position may be even more precarious. I have found myself on seemingly interminable ice-slopes with night coming on and a storm raging. Danger loomed very near and real, yet for some queer reason the fading light, with its promise of a desperately uncomfortable, if not fatal, night, induced not so much a feeling of worry or fear as resignation. It has often seemed to me that when a man confronts Nature in her most magnificent and awe-inspiring forms and moods, there is little room in his brain for fear. A man who watched the dissolution of the world, knowing that he was about to be destroyed with it, would be unlikely to experience so superficial an emotion as fear; it would be out of place on so awe-inspiring and tremendous an occasion.

Dusk is the time of day when Nature is best attuned to the mind and spirit of man. It is a marriage between day and night, in which the beauties of both are manifested. In the dusk I often feel as though some invisible multitude is gathered around me whose will is peace.

It had been a long, hard day. Conditions during the descent had been bad; we had doubted our ability
to reach the glacier before nightfall, but somehow we had managed it, with time to spare.

We were tired as we trudged down the glacier, but in our rhythmic plodding through the snow, which was beginning to harden on the surface in the cold shadow, we lost, or forgot, our tiredness; we felt we could go on for ever, plod, plod, plodding. We did not speak, for speech seemed out of place after we had been tied together by a rope for eighteen hours, but once by common assent we halted to gaze for a minute on the great ridge on which we had spent so many hours. During our traverse it had been grey, cold and inhospitable, swept continually by a biting wind, but now it was afire with the last light of the sun. Our vision could sweep it from end to end in a fraction of a second: along its blades of snow and ice, its bold rock towers, its deep-cut, jagged gaps that had taken so long to pass, and thence flash in another fraction of a second to a planet that was already visible, shining steadfastly in the eastern sky where the night was already spreading its blue-green tide. It seemed scarcely possible that we had climbed so far or so high. Our vision might embrace at a glance the day's work, but it could scarcely convince our brains that we had visited the crest of the enormous massif of rock, snow and ice that now glowed high in the sky, so far removed from the grey glacier ice on which we stood.

For a minute we gazed, then continued trudging mechanically down the glacier. At length we passed
from its bare grit-ridden ice to a moraine along which a well-trodden path ran to the hut which was but half a mile distant.

It was getting dark; the sunset glow had passed from the highest summits, and stars were filling the sky. Now we had ceased to plod downhill, we both felt tired—more tired than before. But it was a pleasant tiredness, one that only a healthy body, in hard training, can experience. It seemed to wipe the anxieties we had experienced from our minds, leaving only a complete satisfaction in having carried through the climb we had set out to do. We untied the rope from our waists, and gathered it together in stiff, water-soaked coils, which one of us secured to his rucksack; then for a few moments we sat down, side by side, on a flat glacier-borne boulder. Still we did not speak, for there is nothing to be said when two men have shared a long, hard day on a high mountain.

It was dusk, and the air was still. Even the ridge along which we had scrambled no longer flaunted petulant banners of wind-driven snow. Not a solitary cloud was hung amid the stars, and an unstable, hanging glacier, which had discharged avalanches at intervals throughout the afternoon, was silent. The only sounds were an occasional slight thudding, crepitating noise from the glacier we had descended, and from afar off, below the distant termination of the same glacier, the roar of a torrent, borne to our ears in low, percussive waves.
Before us, the glacier swept away in a single curve between high mountains, and was lost to sight round a distant shoulder; beyond this, more guessed at than seen, was a deep valley.

All along the darker hillsides, in hollow and ravine, the dusk was gathering. It had long since obscured all minor details and merged them into a singleness of tone and outline. Thus the unencumbered eye was free to take in major forms. The world no longer fretted with a multiplicity of detail; it became a simple place, fit for simple men, and gained immeasurably in beauty and magnificence. We could see lines and forms that during the day were concealed to the vision by a prodigality of lights and shadows. Beauty was revealed like the noble countenance of a martyred saint amid the dark and evil visages of his torturers.

Through this simplicity in Nature, our thoughts were rendered simple. We no longer thought of the day's harsh details—of wind and cold, discomfort, doubt, difficulty and danger. We no longer saw in the day's climbing a succession of details and incidents strung together like ill-matched beads, but a single gem of incalculable worth. It was the product of all our adventurings that mattered, a single harmony of thought and action.

The dusk deepened, yet the atmosphere was charged with colours. The glacier crept away from our feet dim and ghostly like a winding-sheet, but against the strengthening galaxy of stars the great ridge we had
traversed reflected the after-glow of sunset palely, coldly, gloriously. Before, it had been a part of the world, a far, high, seemingly inaccessible part, but still a part; now it was not of the world at all but a trysting place where day and night made gentle love.

It was almost dark now. We must be going. We rose to our feet, heavily, languidly, wearily. From the stones beneath us came a wave of warmth; how pleasant to know that no cold and shiversome bivouac was ours for the night, and that food and shelter awaited us but a short distance off. We would sleep well and without dreams.

Our nailed boots grated sharply on the rocks of the moraine. The daylight had gone; the ridge we had traversed was a part of night; only the stars rendered it visible, and they were so many and so brilliant that its outline was clearly distinguishable against them. Soon it would be revealed by the moon; the sky was already glowing in the east.

As we set off down the path, the southern horizon gave a sudden quick and nervous flick: lightning over Italy. Perhaps the weather was breaking? From a corner in the path we saw the hut silhouetted darkly against the moonlit glacier beyond.
CHAPTER X

NIGHT

Darkness is not only the negation of light but is associated in the human mind with the negation of good. It is a cloak for evil and a barrier against truth. Its greatest virtue lies in the rest and peace it brings to mankind. Yet the evil that men associate with night is really nothing but a fantasy of the imagination. Tear down the flimsy and superficial structures which men build upon the natural order of things so that only that natural order is left, and darkness loses its terrors.

Darkness is as necessary as light. The ebbing and flowing of light satisfies man's craving for change and progression. Without it, his mental development would soon become stunted. To eliminate darkness would be to eliminate the greatest of Nature's negations; a world without darkness cannot readily be imagined.

Darkness is a link between life and death, between the seen and the unseen. It is a quality that stimulates thought and enquiry, and that indirectly renders visible the mysteries of space and the glory of the entities that exist therein.
Night brings man into closer touch with the infinite than day, because it is only at night that he can see the glories of the universe.

How many who read this have stood on a hill at night and marvelled at this glory; have been awestruck by its grandeur; have reached out through their vision to embrace it with their mind; have seen in it and felt through it a guiding and directing Power; have pondered on the meaning of space and on the purpose of life and death, creation and evolution?

Is it the result of chance? What is chance? How can anything be created, and how can anything happen, without intention?

Night changes the appearance and character of the hills. During the day they are seen to have three dimensions; at night they appear only to have two. The third dimension, thickness, sometimes seems transmuted from a dimension to a quality, which can be appreciated through another sense other than the visual sense. At night the hills are felt rather than seen; not felt through any bodily sense, but through some mental or intuitive sense. Possibly, science will eventually prove that all matter radiates some form of energy, which under certain conditions is perceptible to a human being.

The moon is night’s paradox. It is not a despoiler of night, but an ally; its light adds to the dignity of night.

The moon does not rise and set in a riot of colour-
CAMP-FIRE: CENTRAL HIMALAYAS.
ings, yet its beauty strikes deep into the hearts of men. Is this merely because through contrast we are permitted to view commonplace things from an angle which opens our eyes to their beauty, or is there a subtle quality in moonlight incapable of definition which brings us into conscious contact with forces as yet unexplained? Doubtless, if this could be explained, the meaning of beauty would be explained also.

Some who read this will know what it means to leave a heated, crowded Alpine hut and to go outside into the moonlight. The contrast is a supreme one.—One moment, noise in a small space; the next, peace and the lights of other worlds above moonlit peak, snowfield and glacier. I can recollect many visions of mountains in the moonlight. Most memorable of all was my first view of Nilkanta. Owing to monsoon mists this mountain, which is in the Garhwal Himalayas and one of the boldest peaks of its elevation in the world, was invisible when we first arrived at the pilgrim village of Badrinath. At sundown the clouds began to disperse, but when night fell Nilkanta was still mist-shrouded. We dined in the mess-tent and afterwards went outside. Somebody said: "Look!" We looked and saw Nilkanta. Its almost symmetrical peak of ice and rock, framed by the walls of a steep-sided valley, was full in the light of the rising moon. It was a sight I can never forget. The night was warm and the scent of the sun-soaked earth and
flowers came to us in soft, languorous waves, and from afar came the voice of the Alaknanda River. Simplicity was the keynote; the dark jaws of the valley enclosing with mathematical precision the matchless peak, which gleamed with a pale, cold fire at a seemingly immeasurable height above us. A vision built up of a few sweeping lines: yet a vision of such beauty and power as to be uncommunicable through the written word.

In the same way, the vision of the Alps or Himalayas seen from a distance by moonlight is one that is only intelligible in terms of personal experience. Dim foot-hill ranges, laced with black valleys of seemingly immeasurable depth; and beyond and above the snows, not so much a solid part of earth as moonlight, rendered visible in space through the intervention of some supernatural agency.

Strangest of all, a vision of Kangchenjunga from one of our high camps in 1930. All day long the furious and merciless west wind had torn the loose snow from the mountain, and the north ridge had smoked continuously with white writhing clouds. Night fell swiftly. All was still and silent, and the very snow around our camp seemed to shrink and creak in the grip of the cold. But high up on the ice-wreathed precipices of Kangchenjunga the wind raged. It could be heard, a low vibration that set the night shivering. The moon rose. It rose directly behind the north ridge, and its light shone through the clouds
of wind-borne snow. Kangchenjunga was invested with an aureole of light which leapt and danced like cold flames from an icy hell.

In contrast to this was a view from the highest camp on Kamet.

The monsoon was fast developing, and when the sun set it lit enormous masses of cumulus and nimbus clouds that extended across the whole width of the southern horizon, which were advancing in an unbroken phalanx from the distant plain of India.

Our camp was situated at a height of 23,300 feet, and there was nothing to obstruct our view to the south over ridge upon ridge of mountains, to the red tower of Nanda Devi, which was being slowly enveloped by the advancing tide of moisture-laden clouds.

We were not well acclimatised, and when night had extinguished the swift rush of gold on peak and cloud, we turned into our tents without much expectation of a good night's rest. Furthermore, the cold was intense, and even our double-layer eiderdown sleeping-bags were scarcely proof against it.

I for one slept badly, but a restless night was compensated to some degree by the dulling effects of altitude on the brain. I lay and watched a flick-flick of lightning on the tent, and strained my ears to catch a note of thunder that never arrived to fall on a profound silence. Then, later, I raised myself in my sleeping-bag and, pulling aside the ventilator flap at the back of the tent, gazed outside. I could see but a
small portion of the southern horizon, but what I did see was wonderful. The ranges of monsoon clouds in the south were alive with lightning. From every chasm of their depths, from every rolling billow and tower of their heights, it was bursting forth—sometimes in sinuous tongues that flickered sinuously from gulf to gulf, sometimes in sudden spurts and explosions, some of them feeble and half choked as though by the weight and pressure of vapour, and sometimes in immense fountains of mauve fire that leapt upwards with inconceivable rapidity, illuminating for an instant every misty crag, column, minaret, dome, cupula and spire.

It was as though the very world had gone to war, and was repulsing with might and main some celestial invader. Yet, though the forked streams of the electrical discharges were clearly discernible through the clear atmosphere, not a sound was audible.

It is a matter for regret to me that I was not in a fitter state to enjoy three nights on Mount Everest at 27,400 feet. I was too wearied and worn by altitude to care for beauty. Yet I have a faint recollection of an almost appalling wealth of stars that quivered and glittered with an electric blue through the thin, almost vapourless airs of the world’s roof.

And now as a contrast, for contrast is the keynote of creation, comes a night on the hills of the North-West Riding of Yorkshire.

I was nineteen years old at the time and already
accustomed to foolish escapades. I cycled from Bradford to Horton-in-Ribblesdale, and set off to accomplish the circuit of Penyghent, Great Whernside and Ingleborough.

It was a perfect June evening when I left Horton, but there was a decided nip in the air which augured a frost.

The limestone slopes were carpeted with pansies, and I climbed happily to the summit of Penyghent. There I watched a gaudy sunset, and as dusk was gathering, set off towards Whernside. I tramped leisurely over the moors, secure in the knowledge that the moon was, as I thought, due to rise soon after darkness.

 Darkness came, and with it stars. But no moon appeared. It did not rise at all that night. Either I, or my calendar, were wrong: I suspect the former. In pitch darkness I floundered through an interminable morass. Once the ground dipped suddenly before me, and beyond and below my toes came a deep and awesome booming, rushing sound. It was one of the pot-holes that are to be found in this district, probably Hull Pot.

In the feeble starlight tufts of grass resembled pools of water and vice versa. Wet to the hips, I reached Ribblesdale some miles north of Horton. I crossed the railway line and watched enviously a night express, in which men and women were sleeping in reasonable comfort, not wandering about a morass-filled, pot-
holed countryside all night like the uneasy spirits of the damned.

I set my teeth and set off along the valley road towards Whernside, which was faintly visible crouched low down on the northern horizon. But after a mile or two of dull plodding my teeth no longer gritted so firmly together, and a little voice, which I thought then was temptation, but which I know now to have been common sense, said: “Why bother about Whernside? Ingleborough is enough.” So I turned off the road and started to climb Ingleborough.

When I awoke it was dawn, and curlews were crying more dolefully than I have ever heard them cry, even on the Pennine moors. How I came to sit down and drop off to sleep I cannot for the life of me explain. One moment I was trudging up Ingleborough, and the next I was lying in a flat damp place beneath a large boulder, chilled to the bone and with my clothes white with frost. For all I knew I might have been the victim of some Rip van Winklesque episode. The world could easily have aged a score or two of years without affecting the great moors that swept away from me into a grey dawn filled with sad mists. Disconsolately I wended my way back to Horton and, after a vast breakfast, set off pedalling back to Bradford.

Enough! These are but a few of many well-remembered nights among the hills. Enough to show that even in the hours of darkness the hills exhibit many contrasts. They trick you, charm you, bewitch you.
I remember saying to myself, after my night walk on Penyghent and Ingleborough, "Never again!" I have said this on other occasions, but when I say it I know I am stating a falsehood; for even in the dark hours, when the positive quality of light is replaced by the negative quality of darkness, there is something that shines on a hill. What it is we can only guess.
CHAPTER XI

MUSIC

Music can be audible to the physical senses or audible only to the spiritual consciousness; it can spring in foul discord from the depths, or pour in delightful and inspiring harmony from the heights.

All beauty in Nature is translatable into music, and the hills bring music to those who listen, music of infinite variety and charm: line and form, cloud and mist, shadow and sunlight, flowers and trees, moon and stars, dawn and sunset, depth and distance and colour.

There is awful music, vibrant with incalculable forces: avalanche and thunder, mad orchestras of storm, shrilling, deafening, confusing; and gentle music: slow cadences, the stirring of flowers, birdsong, the rustling of heather, the soft tread of snowflakes, tree-top lullabies, the lapping of lakes, the lilt of running water.

The wind: seldom does an hour pass but we hear it; sometimes more felt than heard; sometimes strident and bullying; sometimes tiresome and wearying with its plaintive notes or brutal strumming. More often it bears a message of delight; it sings of distance and
purity; it deepens the inspiration of the lungs and strips the cobwebs from the mind; it sets the blood coursing mightily in the veins, so that a man is filled with strength, laughter and joy.

But the most sombre as well as the gayest music is born in water, varying in tempo from the bass of a glacier torrent to the treble of a brook. Glacier torrents, like great oceans, are imbued with a quality suggesting the inevitable and the eternal, but a hill brook is less concerned to postulate these as to reflect Nature's moods. Its ephemeral strength is drawn from the clouds, and its brief slumber from the sun; it is elfin, wayward and spirited, yet ever friendly and companionable. It is pleasant to rest near it and listen to its song as it hastens down some cwm or glen on its journey to the sea. There is a magic quality in its music: it is the music of the hills, of the grey weather-rimed crags, the slow seeping marsh and the bold heathery upland. It rises to a careless crescendo where the smooth lip of it, the questing surge of it, the gallop and dash of it, lift music to the sun; or falls to a muted chord as it pauses to repose itself in still pools where the shy sunbeams are held captive.

A mountain, by virtue of its height, remoteness and aloofness from familiar things, is a medium whereby beauty is interpreted and revealed. It quickens the perception and fires the imagination; it is a visible and tremendous expression of power and beauty; it touches
notes potentially vibrant with the etheric rhythm of the universe. This music of hills bears man gently upwards on waves of pure harmony, and brings him an immeasurable joy.

We are accustomed to measure consciously the quality of artificially produced music and the value we derive from it against technical and material standards. Natural music, by which I mean the etheric vibrations of Nature, whether it be audible to our outward ear or audible only to our inward ear, cannot be measured and estimated thus. The song of a nightingale is beyond legitimate criticism because it is unalterable. It may be liked or disliked by a human brain, but it is absolute. Man may seek to adapt art to his own temporary standards, but beauty is an immutable quality. This immutability in natural beauty serves as a foundation to sanity. Unconsciously we set our standards by Nature. To destroy Nature and cover the earth with man-made things—in other words, to eliminate our standard of beauty—would, in the present stage of our development at least, drag us swiftly to perdition.

It is the unchanging quality in mountains that makes them so valuable to men. The plain's appearance can be altered: it can be fenced in with fields, chopped into shapes dictated by ownership, intersected with roads, built upon with villages and towns. But the mountain cannot be altered so easily, and because the mountain is relatively immutable, man
A HILL STREAM.
sees in it a standard of power and beauty. The mountain is steadfast, and its message is always the same, whether it be audible or inaudible. It is a medium whereby beauty is manifested to men. There are many other mediums: everything felt, seen, heard, touched is a medium whereby beauty should take another breath in life’s race; for ugliness is an artificial thing constructed of vain imaginings, a dirty window through which to view beauty, distorting light and truth, and rendering void the very gifts that evolution seeks to bestow on man. The value of Nature to us is that it helps us onwards along a road complicated by many branchings and turnings, by providing a constant and a sure guide through its rhythm and harmony. The hills epitomise this universal rhythm, and their music brings man into touch with those forces whence springs happiness, and draws to the surface of his consciousness all that is great and noble.

A man burdened with care or sorrow may find peace on a hill. The sun, the moon, the stars will fill him with their music; he will hear the hill, not only in the wind, the stream, the avalanche and the thunder, but in finer and more delicate vibrations. He will discover that he is not a wandering solitary mote, but a part of a well-ordered and perfect scheme. He is a part of the hill and the hill is a part of him.
CHAPTER XII

FLOWERS

A flower is one of Nature's joyous expressions of an all-pervading cosmic power. It lifts a song to the sun, and brings to the face of the earth a complexion of youthfulness and vitality.

It not only lends beauty to any landscape, but provides a contrast between the many aspects of creation which, paradoxical though it may sound, is an essential complement of cosmic rhythm. To descend from the high mountains to the pasture lands is the most delicious experience that mountaineering can afford, for the soft beauty of the valley, where the flowers decorate the pastures in tender profusion, is an ideal contrast to the harsh glare of the snows. This contrast enables us to appreciate still more that perfection of rhythm which is not only the first condition of mountain-climbing, but of mountain scenery, inasmuch as mountain scenery is planned to fulfil a function of creation which is to harmonise a man's spirit with his surroundings.

A man who cannot see in a flower something more than a mere growth to be analysed in material terms is surely missing a part of life's adventure, in
that he cannot scale his own mountain of self-consciousness.

The flowers I see now with memory's eye bring a new light to the faded green of an upland recently abandoned by winter snow. Their carpet is a celestial one, breathing innocence and joy to a world overburdened with sophistication and sorrow. And here is an alp ablaze with crocuses, a pale fire as though all the stars in heaven had fallen to earth.

The peace of the hills is best sought in the company of flowers, in airs which soothe rather than stimulate the physical forces that bring the body into action, and are soft and warm enough to breed a lazy contentment which enables the mind to attune itself to beauty.

Some of my happiest mountain days have been spent among flowers. I have never known loneliness in such company.

I have discovered some quiet place, and there spent idle hours with naught but flowers around me. Then I have realised that the smallest flower in the smallest cranny of the precipice is as much a part of hill and dale as a whole range of peaks trodden by tall clouds.

So simple a thing is a flower that the humblest of men may sow and gather it, but the greatest of men cannot create it. Let us thank God for this.

There was a whipping wind on the pass, cold, snow-
charged and hurtful. We did not linger, but hurried down, glissading snow-slopes, slipping every minute farther from the wind’s clutch. Down through desolation: from storm to calm; from snow to rain; cold rain, then warm rain. Down to hastening rivulets of rain. Down to flowers: deep purple primulas, wet with the rain on ledges and in crannies of the rocks, delicately petalled, elusively perfumed, miracles of sun and earth and rain. A welcome sight for eyes bleared with snow and mist and naked rock.

And lower, a valley of flowers: Alpine, English and Himalayan flowers; primula, androsace, anemone and potentilla; banks of purple asters, glades of creamy peonies; forget-me-nots and blue poppies; marigolds by the stream; irises on the hillside; delphiniums; fritillaries; rosy cypripediums; yellow nomocharis; geraniums; crucifers; and dwarf rhododendrons.

We pitched our camp on a shelf among the flowers. The rain stopped. The soft monsoon mists parted, revealing unnamed and unclimbed peaks. A drift of sunlight lit a distant snow-slope. The air was sweet with rain and perfumed with flowers.

We strolled, and lounged, and lay at our ease among the flowers.

We decorated our hats with childish glee, and told each other that this was the most perfect valley in the world. There was laughter there and happiness; no
taint of human strife or misery. The flowers had discovered the secret of eternal youth.

We spent two nights and the whole of a day in the "Valley of Flowers." We should have spent a week or longer. It was necessary to go on, because we had planned to go on. That is the curse of our Western civilisation; we plan too much and we are too restless. Possibly it is as bad or worse to vegetate, doing nothing. Meditation alone is neither humanly destructive nor constructive, neither positive nor negative. Small wonder that reincarnation is believed in by so many in the East. It is the logical outcome of some Eastern philosophies: for if men are not sent into this world to advance themselves by experience of the positives and negatives of creation, for what else are they sent? If a man takes no interest in worldly affairs, it is only to be expected that he shall be sent back for further experience. It may be that the driving force behind travel, exploration and mountaineering springs from the first condition of earthly existence, which is to experience and to justify and render possible by experience our life, our presence and our progress on this planet.

To do this it is necessary to seek out contrasts, to discover as many colours as possible in life's pattern book. It is not wholly a matter of instinct to get the best out of life—it is a matter of education. Any pursuit which brings a man into contact with natural scenery is educative. One of the many things that
mountains teach is the importance of meditation, not as a whole-time cult, but as something to be indulged in when the spirit moves. Flowers are helpful to meditation. To spend an hour or two among them is to adventure on to a higher plane of thought and feeling. Their delicacy and beauty contrast nobly and oddly with human wretchedness and the forces of materialism with which men surround their lives. In mountaineering we often pass without a thought the flowers on the pasture. We are climbing only to satisfy our lower physical instincts. How much we miss!

I should like to camp in the "Valley of Flowers" for a month or longer with a friend.

I can picture it in my mind’s eye: our morning start for a new and unclimbed peak; a bivouac camp; a grand and strenuous day’s adventuring; a jog downhill—back to our camp among the flowers. Hard days, easy days, lazy days, days among the flowers. Days of monsoon rain and low mists on the pastures; and sudden breaks; pools of blue sky between banks of rolling cumulus, shafts of sunlight gleaming on the high snows, falling on the flowers below; slow shadows and sudden wayward lights.

In the evenings we would sit by a great log fire. Sometimes we would yarn of people and places far away; and sometimes sit without speaking, with no care in our hearts and no thought of the morrow or of what the morrow might bring on our minds; sit
THE VALLEY OF FLOWERS.
peacefully. And outside the circle of firelight the stars would look down on peaks still to be won, the rumble of glacier torrents would come to us from afar, and the air would be sweet with the scent of flowers.
CHAPTER XIII
UGLINESS

UGLINESS and beauty are qualities that cannot be defined save as effects or as abstract positives and negatives. Nothing in creation is ugly, and the only possible definition of ugliness from a human standpoint is that it is a quality that provokes feelings of misery, dislike or disgust in mankind. It is a matter of personal taste, education, environment and association. To a philosopher, a speck of soot in a Bradford chimney-stack can be as beautiful as an ice-fluted peak in the High Himalayas. It is what we have learned to associate with soot that jars so disagreeably upon our consciousness, and it is only the true philosopher and mystic who can render himself immune from all sensations of dislike in relation to concrete things.

In the present stage of our progress ugliness is necessary, as pointing the way to beauty, which is the motive power behind all creation. We cannot conceive a mountain without a plain or valley, any more than we can conceive beauty without ugliness or good without evil. Therefore ugliness has an educative value in our spiritual progression. It awakes man to
spiritual consciousness, and in doing so bears him another oar's length towards ultimate happiness.

Ugliness and beauty can only be stated in terms of human likes and dislikes, stated in their turn as averages. Even when thus stated, they still remain variables.

Seen on a sunny day, there is something ugly to most people in the sight of a slag-heap in a meadow near a pithead, but seen on a day when mist and smoke limit visibility and lend a mystery and remoteness to the scene, or when a wild sunset forms a background, this slag-heap becomes beautiful. There is something ugly in a slum, because of the misery, dirt and disease associated with it; yet there is beauty too, human beauty, and even architectural beauty; beauty lent to the sordid works of man by the mellowing and cleansing forces of the universe.

All creative and constructive thought which brings pleasure and happiness in its train possesses a quality of beauty, just as all destructive thought possesses a quality of ugliness, even though destruction is merely a shaping of ends, a transmuting of one force to another.

During this life, at least, our appreciation of beauty and ugliness is so inseparably associated with bodily feelings and functions that it is difficult and perplexing to steer a course through the tortuous and ever-changing channels of thought that exist in the estuary of knowledge.
The dawn light on the Weisshorn is a beautiful spectacle, but not to a man with a severe stomach ache. The prospect from the Solvay hut on the Matterhorn is superb, but not easily appreciated by anyone who is cold and half starved.

A few, by developing latent power in the right way, can rise to some extent above physical considerations; Eastern philosophers strive to sublimate their physical faculties in search of spiritual truth, and in doing so wonder why men should try to climb Mount Everest when it is so simple to levitate the spirit to the summit.

That physical and spiritual forces should exist in such close relationship in man when they are so essentially uncomplementary is, to my mind, the supreme miracle of creation. It is the infinite number of permutations and combinations, involved by the constant need to harmonise the physical and mental with the spiritual in relation to the complex forces of the universe, that affects our reactions to everything about us.

It is instinctive with man to investigate his relationship with the universe: he seeks truth, and on a mountain, when he is invigorated by physical exercise, pure air and the prospect before his eyes, his search is rewarded. Yet there are other occasions when the very forces that invigorate him and delight him conspire to render up beauty to ugliness and truth to falsehood.

A snowfield is beautiful in the dawn hour, but in
the afternoon when it glares through a blinding suffocating mist it seems ugly. Arid, sand-blasted peaks seem ugly in the full glare of the sun, but in the evening, when the desert is lapped by a golden light and full of long cool shadows, they are beautiful. Even a peak that is raised like a pudding above the earth is beautiful sometimes. Smoke-grimed moors in the lee of belching chimney-stacks are ugly on a drizzling November day, but become beautiful when lit by a May sun. Peaks of no light and colour, scrawled in a leaden sky, may be colourful and beautiful to-morrow.

There is no inherent ugliness in Nature. At the same time, ugliness is not only a word coined by man to set off beauty. The mental reaction which causes a man to denounce anything as ugly is akin to fear, which is the focusing-point of all negative emotion. Thus Kangchenjunga is threatening, terrible and ugly when your tent is pitched within range of its ice avalanches. For the same reason, men were afraid of mountains in the eighteenth century, and thought them ugly and raised by an inscrutable Providence solely to impede and endanger the progress of mankind. The type of mind that could sentence a man or woman to death or torture for a petty offence was not capable of appreciating beauty in Nature or the spirit of Infinite Love which emanates from the Prime Mover of the universe. There were exceptions of course, there always are, but apart from these an
appreciation of beauty in Nature was, for the most part, a mere cult in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Cruelty and beauty are utterly opposed, because beauty is a product of love and cruelty a product of fear. Cruelty breeds materialism, a materialist being one whose mode of thought is founded on the superficial aspect of things and not on an appreciation of the forces that created those things. Some of the best brains, in their own particular field, of to-day cannot glimpse the spiritual truths of creation. They must needs assess in purely intellectual values those things that their senses tell them exist, and ignore the Power that evolved them. Creation cannot be reduced to an algebraical formula. Nothing is more retrograde than the sort of intellectual materialism which narrows a man's outlook and beliefs to mere words and prejudices.

There is nothing remarkable in the present-day appreciation of natural beauty, and in particular of mountain beauty. Man's love of Nature was certain to develop directly he began to emancipate himself from the grosser forms of materialism. It was not chance that directed his eyes to the hills; for thousands of years he had accepted Nature as something hostile and incalculable. Now he sees himself no longer as being on this planet by sufferance, but as a living part of a living universe. This knowledge enables him to draw spiritual consolation and comfort from all natural beauty.
The love of hills is not a cult, doomed to flourish for a season and die; it is a part of the spiritual development taking place in the world to-day, by which man is raising himself from material slime to a firm footing on the peaks of his faith.

Never in the world’s history has he been able to face the future with a greater confidence. Let him first cast from him habits and tricks of thought that mediæval dogmatism and sectarianism seek to impose on him. Then, by developing his spiritual consciousness and vitality through the beauties of the universe, he will learn wisdom and discover truth.

One day it may no longer be necessary for men and women to climb hills in order to satisfy a craving for beauty, health and adventure. Who knows how universal powers may be utilised? Adventures may be spiritual as well as physical. But it is necessary, first of all, to build a sure foundation for a future edifice of thought. It is a simple enough one to construct. It is built from our glorious environment, from our adventures in it, our visions of it, our memories of it. The ideals of progress that we leave for our heirs to build upon are the products of our wisdom and experience, gained in part by some of us from our adventures upon the hills.
CHAPTER XIV

STORM

Wrathful weather invests the hills with majesty. Lowlands are usually deluged with rain and swept with wind from afar, but highlands manufacture their own weather. The wind and the thunder are not outside voices, but the voice of the mountain itself, an expression of the mountain's power. Like men, mountains can be quick or slow to anger; they rouse themselves in tempests or lightning strokes, or expend their rage slowly and deliberately in loads of snow. Not only do weather forces invest a hill with beauty and majesty, but they perpetuate these qualities. Grass and heather, snowfield and glacier, are permanent expressions of mountain anger and mountain glory. Compare a desert hill to a British hill. The former is beautiful in some respects, with its quick rushes of colour at dawn and sunset, but in many respects it is dead, a mere elevation uncommuning with heaven; remote but not mysterious; little more than a cinder in the sun's path. The latter is a gatherer and maker of rain and snow; it is soft in outline and alive with growing things; in its moods it is a part of earth and a part of cloud. Stand on it and know the
excellence of its rage. Brace yourself, lift your head and feel the rude press and shove of the wind: it shreds the mist, tears over the edges and pours thundering into the deep hollows. Fill your lungs with it and feel it cool and pure in the throat. Be drenched by the rain and take heart from the cold lash of it; be buffeted and rejoice in the buffeting. Rejoice, too, in the wiry spring of the heather and the harsh grit of the rocks beneath your feet. Laugh and count yourself fortunate to have discovered the hills. The world is yours when you tread a hill.

The British hills are accessible in all weathers. On a great peak enjoyment is all too often replaced by anxiety, and bad weather may result in a fight for existence. There are times when bad weather seems personal and deadly. It is directed against you, and you are made to realise your frailty. The mountain becomes terrible and hates you—your flesh and blood and warmth.

The wrath of Alpine peaks is often premeditated. They scrawl their intention on the sky, and only ignorant men or fools neglect the warning. But they are not always slow to anger. A calm summer day may terminate explosively in thunder and lightning, whilst the stealth of a winter blizzard is sometimes only equalled by the speed of its approach.

This capacity for anger in high mountains is a spur and a challenge to the mountaineer, for it is no fun to engage in combat with a passive giant. It is one
thing to penetrate the guard of an opponent and another to hit when there is no guard at all. High mountains can hit so swiftly and mercilessly that sometimes the mountaineer is hard put to it to survive their blows. Yet it is a fair contest. If it is a case of ultimate forfeit, a knock-out blow, the mountaineer cannot grumble. It is part of the game.

Graham Macphee and I climbed the couloir from the Fresnay Glacier to the Brèche des Dames Anglaises by moonlight. During the day stones from a crumbling patch of rock had swept down the narrow thread of snow one after the other, but when evening came frost had stilled the labouring rocks. It was a perfect night, unmarred by a single cloud and undisturbed by a breath of wind. From the Brèche we climbed the rocks of the Aiguille Blanche until the moonlight failed us. Then we bivouacked. For four or five hours we shivered, until dawn broke and it was possible to continue the ascent. It was the longest climb either of us had ever attempted—the ascent of Mont Blanc by the Pétéret ridge.

The conditions were good, and we hoped to reach the summit of Mont Blanc with plenty of time in hand. The light was increasing rapidly as we clambered up the west face of the Aiguille Blanche. We had assumed, and I think legitimately, that we were to enjoy good weather, but it was an evil dawn that met our
gaze when at length we reached the crest of the ridge. There were clouds at our feet, small white ones, that hugged the pastures of Courmayeur, and above us, at an immense altitude, was a tenuous and intangible ceiling of vapour, on the under-surface of which were laid lean, smooth, cheroot-shaped clouds, poised without perceptible movement.

The sun was rising with a diffused glare, against which were silhouetted the distant spire of the Matterhorn and the nearer and more massive Grand Combin.

The night had been cold, and we had shivered and kicked in our bivouac sack, but now the air seemed curiously warm and dead. There was no buoyancy in it. It was stale, and heavy with the threat of storm.

We had to make a choice, and it was a difficult one. We were already a long way up the Aiguille Blanche. If we retreated by our route of ascent, we should be exposed to falling stones in the couloir. If we went on to the Col de Pétetret, there might be time to traverse Mont Blanc, especially as we knew the upper slopes of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur to be in the right condition for fast climbing, but if the weather broke too early for this to be possible, we should have to force our way down to the Fresnay Glacier by the rocky buttress of which we knew nothing save that the bodies of Professor Balfour and his guide, Johann Petrus, were found at the foot of it many years previously. That was the problem, and it was not an easy one to
solve; of all great Alpine ridges the Pétérret is the most difficult to escape from in bad weather.

The storm gathered about us as we climbed over the Aiguille Blanche, an interminable mountain yet little more than a buttress of Mont Blanc. Mists formed below. They were nebulous wisps at first, scarcely visible against the wrinkled ice of the Brenva Glacier. But they gained quickly in size, and were borne upwards in eddies and whirls, which extended fingers into the couloirs and embraced the buttresses with tenuous arms. The weak sun vanished. The sky darkened. Light and shadow were merged. Peaks near and far showed pallidly. Above and below surged mist. As quickly as a cloudburst floods a plain, it engulfed us. A huge front of it whirled over the Aiguille Blanche. Distant objects grew dim, then vanished. Nearer objects were rendered indistinct and remote. We were no longer aware of our height; visually, we might have been scrambling on some Cumberland crag and not traversing a formidable Alpine peak, separated from safety by thousands of feet of complicated precipices and ice-slopes.

The Aiguille Blanche is a ruin of a mountain, composed of rocks arranged without regard for gravity or stability, many of them needing but a touch to send them smoking into the depths.

In our hurry we lost time. A narrow couloir, almost a chimney, filled with a tongue of ice and bounded on one side by an abrupt little wall, cost us
half an hour to traverse; and minutes were precious now.

It was snowing before we reached the summit ridge, little pellets that hissed down the rocks with a noise like baby serpents. Then came the wind. It drove the mist along with it, whirling it across the ridge and sending it writhing down on the lee-side in furious vortices.

The storm gathered force with a slow momentum as we hurried over the first summit. By the time we had traversed the second summit and were descending to the Col de Pétéret it was snowing heavily, and the wind was becoming increasingly colder and more violent.

We had previously considered the possibility of bivouacking on the Col de Pétéret, but when we stood in that depression we knew that Mont Blanc was in no mood to tolerate a bivouac. A gale was blowing. An endless sheet of snow was tearing through the gap. From above came the sound of the hurricane raging across the upper part of the ridge leading to Mont Blanc de Courmayeur, a sustained booming vibration like the deepest note of a cathedral organ.

With one accord we turned down the gently inclined snow-slopes that descend gently for a short distance, then break off in precipices of ice and rock that fall to the Fresnay Glacier.

At the commencement of our difficulties we halted to take stock of ourselves and our surroundings. We
were plastered with snow, and the rope was so caked and stiff with ice as to be almost unmanageable; it took us several minutes of fumbling with half-frozen fingers to readjust it.

From the snowfield we were on, the rock buttress, already mentioned, descends to the Fresnay Glacier. In its upper portion it is rounded and sheep-backed, but lower it is more broken, though considerably steeper. As far as we knew, no one had previously descended it, but as it seemed to provide a means of escape from a storm that was rapidly developing in fury, we decided to descend it, and rope down in the event of it proving very difficult or unclimbable. On paper, at least, this sounds a happy-go-lucky method of approaching a mountaineering problem, but at the time I think we were both confident in our ability to descend safely. Instinct must ever be the deciding factor in mountaineering; instinct founded on experience. How does a first-rate guide develop an almost uncanny knack of finding a route through an intricate ice-fall? He could not explain it himself if asked. It is the application of his past experience with ice-falls. If he can determine the nature of the unseen, it is because the configuration of the scene suggests it subconsciously. Many "instincts" are explainable thus.

If the buttress was possible to descend, it was certainly not easy. High up it was composed of rounded and ice-polished slabs, which offered no projection
THE PÉTÉRET RIDGE.
round which the rope could be hitched to secure the party. Very likely it was on these rocks that the accident occurred to Professor Balfour and Johann Petrus.

Presently, where the slabs steepened, we were forced for a few feet into the couloir which separates the buttress from the rocks of the Aiguille Blanche. This detour from the crest of the buttress involved us in danger from falling stones dislodged from the rickety crags of the Aiguille Blanche by the force of the wind. They were only small stones, but, together with fragments of ice, they whizzed like bullets down the icy channel, and it was with considerable thankfulness that we escaped out of harm's way on to the buttress.

The rocks above were slabby, but not steep; the rocks below were broken, but steep. Down we went, rope-length by rope-length, using our spare rope freely, both to facilitate and speed up the descent. There is, however, no section of the buttress that a competent rock-climber could not ascend without great difficulty.

It was an impressive descent. We were well sheltered from the wind, and only a dull and sustained roar from far above, and an occasional flying fragment of ice or gust of hail, told of the storm raging on Mont Blanc. On one hand were the grey, gaunt, stone-scarred precipices of the Aiguille Blanche; on the other hand a great escarpment of ice-cliffs, hundreds of feet high, separating the snowy plateau of the Col
de Pétéret from the Fresnay Glacier. As we neared the base of the buttress, a block of ice the size of a church tottered outwards from its parent cliff and fell with an appalling crash on to the Fresnay Glacier.

Of all Alpine scenes, I know of none to exceed in savagery, grandeur and sheer elemental force the upper basin of the Fresnay Glacier. The visible substance of destruction and death broods over this cirque of ice and rock. Dungeon-like precipices enclose the mountaineer, between which the ice writhes downwards like some tormented spirit on the brink of hell, struggling to escape from the dreadful consequences of its sins. A stone falls: the echoes are bandied harshly from precipice to precipice. An ice avalanche breaks loose: the precipices are filled with a thunderous cannonade, muffled, deep-noted, tremendous, as though Mont Blanc choked with half-suppressed wrath. And when the mists hang low and the deep voice of the storm speaks with a constant, sullen, menacing vibration, that does not boom and echo and die, but is a part of some constant unfailing power, the scene is appalling and magnificent beyond description.

Thankfully we reached the foot of the buttress, then crossed a marginal crevasse by a rickety snow-bridge on to the Fresnay Glacier. For some distance we were within range of ice-avalanches, and we hurried downwards as fast as we could.

It was a relief to have descended safely from the Col de Pétéret, but it was by no means certain that we
could reach the Gamba hut that day: the Fresnay Glacier is notoriously difficult to descend, and falls in one of the steepest and most difficult ice-falls in the Alps for many hundreds of feet.

Fortune favoured us. Just as we were resigned to spending the hour or two remaining of daylight in descending the ice-fall as far as possible, we came on a recently made track in the snow. It had been made that same day by Mr. Eustace Thomas and his guide, Josef Knubel, when prospecting a route to the Col de Pétetet. Joyfully we raced down it, dodging, zigzagging between shattered ice, jumping crevasses, balancing along edges, hurrying from beneath unstable towers and pinnacles. Darkness was gathering rapidly as we toiled up a loose little couloir to the Col Innominata. On the col, with easy ground separating us from the Gamba hut, we halted for a rest. It was our first rest for over twelve hours. We should have been worn out and exhausted, but my memory can only recall a strange exhilaration, mingled with a feeling in which the physical blended harmoniously with the mental, a feeling of absolute completeness. We had escaped. Behind us and above us as we stood in air almost without movement, Mont Blanc shuddered in the storm. It had sought to destroy us, but we had escaped. Life was good.

Lightning began to flicker behind the Brouillard ridge. Night and storm gathered about us as we stumbled down the ice and stones of the little Châtelet
Glacier. The lightning flamed more brilliantly. The cannonade of thunder boomed louder and louder. With extraordinary rapidity the storm swept down upon us. An icy shrapnel of hailstones smote us, from which we sought vainly to shelter our faces, and through this barrage mauve lightning burst in a blinding glare, accompanied by sharp explosions which roared and bellowed and crackled from peak to peak.

So near and dazzling was the lightning that we wondered if it would not be safer to abandon our ice-axes, the metal heads of which were a possible source of danger. Then we reflected that surely Mont Blanc would not be so ungenerous as to kill us now. We had endured as much anxiety, as much stress of mind and body that day, as mountaineers could be expected to endure. So we retained our grasp of our axes: Mont Blanc would not, could not, harm us now.

I do not remember feeling in the least bit tired. It was as though I was charged with the very power that was seeking equilibrium so boisterously on Mont Blanc. I was scarcely aware of my body. Time no longer existed for me. I could review the events of the day with a dispassionate detachment. In the course of thirty-six hours, Macphee and I had experienced the gamut of mountain scenery and mountain weather, as well as a kaleidoscope of mental stimulations and reactions. We had left Courmayeur on a
sultry morning and lounged along the Val Veni, feasting on bilberries; we had walked up to the Gamba hut, rested there, then crossed the Col Innominata and the Fresnay Glacier in the evening, and scaled the couloir to the Brèche des Dames Anglaises by moonlight; we had bivouacked and shivered, seen a lurid dawn and fought our way across the Aiguille Blanche in a storm, and descended to safety when it seemed we were fairly trapped. We had been comfortable and uncomfortable; we had sweated and shivered; we had been confident and doubtful; we had seen soft beauties and savage grandeurs; we had experienced all manner of mental stresses and had been forced into making vital decisions on which our very lives depended. These are only some of the things that a great climb like the Pétèret may entail. This is what mountaineering is: a fine measuring of life in the scales of death, a glorious union of physical, mental and spiritual forces. By his own powers alone, unaided by the interposition of anything mechanical, by his own discrimination, judgment and skill, the mountaineer is raised on the mountain. There is no feeling of lustful conquest, no applauding spectators. Mountaineering is not one of those pursuits the value of which can be estimated in terms of achievement; it is a happy union between man and the universe, a perfection of living and being.

Our entry into the Gamba hut was Mephistophelian. There was a blaze of lightning and a crash of
thunder and in we went. We were greeted with acclamation by the inmates. We had been seen traversing the Aiguille Blanche before mist concealed that peak; we had not been expected back that day, and here we were, melodramatically arriving in the midst of a terrific thunderstorm. Hands eager to assist us pulled our sodden clothing off our backs, undid our puttees, unlaced our boots. Hot drinks and food were prepared; that great guide and gentleman, Josef Knubel, bustled around ministering to our needs. Presently we climbed on to one of the bunks and wrapped the blankets about us.

Outside, the storm was increasing in fury. The glare of lightning, explosions of thunder, volleys of hail and snow beating like small shot on the walls of the hut, and a hurricane of wind, formed an appropriate lullaby; soon thought sank peacefully into an ocean of forgetfulness.

Sometimes more deadly, if less impressive, than the rude turbulence I have described, is a great fall of snow. There is something calculated and cruel in a snowstorm. It is subtle in its coming and destroys with cunning, sometimes weeks and months after it has beautifully yet treacherously robed the world. It is so strong it can clothe mountains, yet so weak that the first lick of the sun destroys it.

The oncoming of a snowstorm is less dramatic than a thunderstorm or tempest, but it is, nevertheless, im-
MONT BLANC: THE SOUTH SIDE.
pressive, and to anyone overtaken on a high mountain, far from help and shelter, more than impressive. I have often watched the oncoming of a snowstorm in winter. It gathers as a grey, formless haze, which spreads slowly and without fuss, like a liquid. Its advance is so stealthy that it does not suddenly and dramatically blot objects from sight; they sink gradually into it and vanish. It laps over the sky, dimming the sunlight little by little. It oppresses the world, seeming to deaden even sound, and uniting the genius of light and the dullard of shadow into a horrible mediocrity, a livid blankness that strikes a note neither of ugliness nor of beauty, but something in between, colourless, neutral, uninteresting.

Then, at last, snow begins to fall. A solitary flake floats leisurely down out of the grey void, followed by another and another; a swarm, then millions upon millions, falling deliberately and unhurriedly, settling on the ground with a light hissing sound like a pencil scrawling over paper.

The hill-lover should stand on some eminence and watch the slow evolution of the storm, the marvellous transmutation and interplay of the forces that order the going of our world.

But it is one thing to watch and admire in safety, assured of a safe retreat, and another to watch anxiously, knowing that a struggle for very life may ensue; for consciously or unconsciously men tend to measure the magnitude of mountains and mountain weather in
terms of life and death, in which the denominators are skill, strength and experience. A blizzard may destroy a tourist on Snowdon just as easily as it can destroy a mountaineer near the summit of Mount Everest. But whereas mountaineers learn to love Snowdon as a friendly hill, they also learn to regard Everest as an implacable mountain, for the reason that the conditions imposed by height and weather are different. A mountaineer's regard for a mountain is inevitably influenced by physical considerations, and it is he who gazes from afar, untroubled by these, who can most easily soliloquise on beauty at any given moment. Yet the memory of contact, vital, real and hardly won, with the forces of Nature is as important as the memory of a scene of beauty easily won, for memory has one crowning mercy: it separates beauty from pain as an anaesthetic severs consciousness from the surgeon's knife. Everest, the mountaineer remembers as good fun, and he longs to return and continue with his crusade. In memory, he cannot feel the bitter cold or experience the pains of altitude; he can only hear deep in his inmost consciousness the roar of the storm, and see with an inward eye the snow streaming ceaselessly from the final and inviolate pyramid.
CHAPTER XV

CALM

CALM is something more than the antithesis of storm. It is a jewel so prized by high mountains that it is displayed only on rare occasions. Fine days occur often, but a calm day is a rare event. It is as though the hills are fully conscious of their potentialities for change, and delight in swift and dazzling displays, but seldom allow themselves complete repose. I can remember few days of absolute calm, when not a breath of wind stirred and the sun shone steadfastly all day long from an unclouded sky. The calmest days in my recollection have been autumn and winter days. I have watched the tints deepen in the forest when day after day the world lay hushed in the arms of a profound calm, and in winter I have, on various occasions, rested on the summit of a mountain in a calm and amid a silence that lent swift wings to thought and vision.

Calm can be terrible. I was staying in Kent when the Messines Ridge was blown up. It was an absolutely still morning, and the leaves on the trees were without movement. But not quite. The continued
detonations of the exploding mines and the subsequent barrage caused them to quiver: whole trees quivered slightly and this movement was communicated to the leaves. I was only a boy at the time, but I have never forgotten the quivering and shivering of Nature that calm morning. Amid the peace of the Medway Valley there was something indescribably terrible in it; there was something menacing and evil in the very air one breathed, tainted as it was by the horrid sound of hateful death.

There is a calm, too, on a mountain in which fear and death have a footing—the calm that precedes storm. There is something almost nerve-racking in an absolute stillness, pregnant with the threat of an electrical storm. It gathers about the mountain with a sort of thick stuffiness like the stuffiness of an unventilated room. The air is filled with strange rushing and sometimes moaning sounds as the tension increases; it is a relief when the storm breaks.

On one occasion, I was bivouacking with a companion in the shelter of a boulder above the Brenva Glacier. It was a wonderfully still evening, but it was apparent that a storm was brewing. Darkness fell, and with it the stillness deepened.

The world was given over to a complete calm. Then light tufts of blue flame appeared on the sharp rock towers of the Pétéret ridge—brush electrical discharges, or St. Elmo's fires, as they are known to sea-
men. With extraordinary suddenness, the storm broke. A curtain of flame fell, and the stillness was rent by roar after roar of thunder. A deluge of hail descended, and thousands of tons of rocks, dislodged by it and by lightning from the Aiguille Blanche, added their quota to the inferno of sound.

But it is of calm synonymous with peace and rest that I would write. There is no calm so near the absolute than a winter calm. I have rested in peacefulness and warmth on the summits of many high peaks in midwinter, on days when not a fragment of mist disturbed the serenity of hazeless skies, and the view was limited only by the curvature of the earth. In summer, on the highest Alpine peaks, there is a faint undercurrent of sound from glacier torrents in the valleys, but in winter there is no sound. The ear strains itself, but there is nothing to be heard. There is silence, not an awful silence or a silence of foreboding, but a silence that is the perfect negation of noise, something absolute, something detached from all human emotion. Those who dwell in cities and who never experience silence, although they may imagine that they do, will be amazed at it. So profound is it that at first it seems to weigh heavily on the senses, but very soon it will be accepted, not as something extraordinary, but as something natural, compared to which all man-made sound is artificial.
A sound, when it is appropriate to the surroundings, is heard at its best when it breaks a silence. The note of a nightingale is dreadfully ineffective when broadcast out of a loud-speaker to a room full of talking, moving people, but heard on a still June evening from a Surrey woodland it is simply and effectively beautiful. Association and environment play a bigger part in our likes and dislikes than most of us suspect.

Calm and silence naturally go well together, but there is one sound which adds to the beauty of a calm day on the hills—the sound of running or lapping water. I can think of no more profound calm than that which sometimes invests the British hills during September. A rainy and perhaps blustering August has exhausted itself, and Nature has assumed the quiet tranquillity of the declining year. Sea and sky, and the hills linking them, are merged into a universal calmness. The sound of the hill-stream, or the lapping of the loch, adds to the calmness. It seems impossible that Nature can rouse herself from such a slumber.

It is habitual with the mountaineer to grumble at the weather; it is the prerogative of every Englishman to bemoan the fickleness of the British climate. Could the weather of the British hills be improved upon? Are we for ever making the best of a bad job, or is it that we are at heart proud of our climate and would not change it for any other? Surely, if calm days
were more frequent they would lose much of their charm; for the greatest charm of the hills is their changeability. To attain perfection, we must experience imperfection; only through storm can we know the beauty of calm.
CHAPTER XVI

REST

The hills are best experienced during moments of rest. Then the higher sensibilities are no longer enslaved by mental or physical concentration. Speed is at the opposite pole to rest. At the present stage of the world's moral progress, it tends to breed callousness, and is liable temporarily to impair the finer qualities which enable men to appreciate beauty and guide them towards good citizenship and good manners.

Undoubtedly the callousness engendered by speed is responsible for a large proportion of the road accidents of to-day. On occasion, I like speed. I own a fast motor-car, and sometimes drive it fast; but I know that when I do so I tend to experience a sensation of impatience akin to callousness which it is difficult sometimes to hold in check. I chafe if I am held up by a slower car in front of me; I long to pass it and get on. If a rabbit runs into the road I try to avoid it. Perhaps I am unable to do so and the rabbit is crushed. On I go, and in a few seconds the mangled body of the rabbit is far behind and forgotten. Yet, when I am seated in an armchair by a fireside or walking over the countryside, the thought of crushing
so beautiful and delicate an organism as a rabbit beneath the wheels of a motor-car appears singularly repulsive. I would not willingly shoot a rabbit for the sake of shooting a rabbit. I can still remember my horror when as a small boy I found a strangled rabbit in a snare I had set, twisted with agony and with its glazed eyes staring at me reproachfully. I have reason to suppose from what I have seen and experienced on the roads, that nine out of ten motorists are attacked to a greater or lesser extent by the same disease which attacks me when I drive fast.

When I drive up to North Wales I pass through the Vale of Llangollen. Do I appreciate the scenery of this beautiful valley? No. Yet, when I stop and switch off my engine, and need no longer concentrate on the driving, the effect is exactly as though I had stepped out of a dining workshop into a quiet meadow.

A little while ago I “ran-in” a new car. I was proceeding at a steady twenty-eight to thirty miles an hour along a narrow twisting road. I was keeping well to the left-hand side of it, and taking the corners at a considerably lesser speed. There were other motorists behind, and as often as possible I slowed down and waved them on. But it was not always possible to do this safely, owing to the nature of the road, and there were occasions when one had to remain behind me for a minute or so. What black looks, what momentary glares, I got when he or she
was able to pass. One woman even shook her fist at me. Now, if I had accidentally incommoded that woman on a pavement, would she have shaken her fist at me? Does she shake her fist at those in front of her in a queue? If she were climbing a mountain and found another party ahead of her, who were going more slowly than she was, so that she had to remain behind for some time owing to the nature of the climbing, would she shake her fist and hurl rude remarks at them? Of course not. It is the lust for speed or the germ of speed, or whatever negative quality is peculiar to speed, which turns a pleasant person into an unpleasant person.

Speed on a mountain cannot provoke such unpleasantness. It is not dependent on artificial mechanisms, for a man who imagines himself to be in charge of a machine is often only being a slave to it. Yet, to rush up and down a mountain, when it is done for no other motives than record-breaking or competition, justifies Ruskin’s scorn for mountaineers. It may be necessary on occasions to climb excessively quickly, for time and weather are exacting factors. It is pleasant on occasion, from a purely physical standpoint, to ascend several peaks in a day, as this promotes a sense of satisfaction and tiredness, and provides an interesting test of strength, stamina and skill. But to me it is not the best way of enjoying mountaineering. I feel for the inexperienced tourist who sets forth from Zermatt with a couple of guides to climb the Matter-
horn. Poor fellow, he little knows what is in store for him. He is rushed up and rushed down the peak. Even if the weather is fine and settled, he finds himself on the summit at a ridiculously early hour and back in Zermatt soon after midday. Any number of people must have been repelled by mountaineering to the outset owing to their having been introduced at it thus.

Youth demands a greater output of activity than middle age, but as the mountaineer gains in age and experience he finds that in order to enjoy himself it is no longer necessary for him to climb as many peaks as possible in a season of mountaineering. He learns that the joy of mountaineering lies as much in the contemplation of mountains as it does in the climbing of them. For this reason men do not tire of mountains. With experience, their devotion becomes more reasoned, less dependent on a tumultuous outpouring of physical energy. They are content to apportion a period of their holiday to rest and contemplation, and they find that their holiday loses nothing by this; instead it gains immeasurably. The pleasures of mountaineering are adjustable by age and experience; as the years progress they do not become greater or less, but different. The first leaping flames are withdrawn, but the fire burns steadfastly and, in effect, as hotly as before.

Rest, therefore, upon a hill and hear its simple tale of dawn, noon, evening and night. Choose a quiet
place where the long slopes lift out of the sea to the crags. Make your couch the heather and your ceiling the sky. Feel the wind on your cheek as gentle and as soft as a baby's lips. Hear the stream's quiet laughter where it slips over a rocky lip into some deep pool filled with slow shimmerings; and watch it spill its liquid mirror in bright fragments and bend a fairy bow to shoot the sun's silver arrows.

Know the hill beneath you as a king who bides his time and waits until the chattering of ministers is finished, then speaks a noble and a simple truth.

Rest, and presently the hill will speak, telling of ages against which man's span is as fleeting as the morning mists. It tells of an edifice, rude, primeval, elementary, crumbling, seething with internal fire and smoking to heaven; and next of a gradual cooling and settling, of slow and awful rendings, crashings and thunderings.

Then came the cold. The hill embraced a glacier, a grinding river that ate deeply into its heart; smoothing, polishing, rending with icy talons, conveying afar the fragments of a mighty degradation; then yielding to the sun, leaving naught but heaps and ridges of stones as evidence of its power.

The hill still yields to universal forces. Frost and sun rift its crags; water scores its sides; wind volleys upon it; snow cloaks it; mists twine about its head or lie in mournful folds about its knees; the sun bathes it from grey curlew-haunted dawn to golden dusk.
It is stable now, grown old and solid and respectable; forgotten are the fires and passion of its youth; it contemplates without a qualm its past unruly glory, secure in the knowledge of its present beauty. It is kindly to men. It likes to feel them clambering on its crags or trudging over its peat and heather. It dreams in peace, content in destiny and God.

Rest high up on the face of the crags, on a ledge accessible only by raising the body over steep rocks. A pleasant spot, concealed from prying eyes, yet commanding a view of earth and sky and dim distances. Rest among bilberries which have been ripened by sun and the warm west wind, with naught beneath but a grass-fringed edge, and distantly the scree's long grey chute lapped by the deep cold tarn, set like a tranquil eye in the furrowed countenance of the hill. Rest, until nerve and sinew, tautened by the upward struggle, relax, and the mind no longer seeks a solution for the body, but is free to rejoice in all that lies around.

Follow with the gaze the laggard rise of a distant hill: a mere outline dimly seen through breadths of light that bridge the depths like elfin roads; lifting at first from tussocked moorlands, scarcely conscious that it is a hill; steepening unhurriedly, not aspiring to the dominion of mere height, but seeking a fulfilment of creative beauty based on a progression exact and mathematical; up and up, serenely, like the brow of
some philosopher; then breaking into a rocky foam of startling crags, piled in wild disorder as though the sky had cracked and tumbled ruinously upon that spot.

See the clouds rise like steam from a foundered horse, or uphold Heaven with vaporous pillars. And in a moist and mossy place, a purple saxifrage, so small in size, so large in beauty.

Beauty cannot rival beauty; the sea, the sky, the clouds, the hills are beautiful; so is this little flower peeping from its cranny in the rocks.

Rest, until you are no longer conscious of hill or cloud or flower, but find in all a sum of beauty. Then sleep.

Second breakfast on an Alpine snowfield. This is a function dignified by tradition. It is also a rest. The sun is warm; food no longer seems dull and tasteless, something to be eaten for duty’s sake; speech and thought are no longer chained to a dull and unimaginative brain; the earth seems no longer passive and immobile, and the stars no more stare dully at us for our folly; the peak we tread is no more something to be “done” — it is awake and whispers of a grand day’s adventuring.

We eat, then watch the sun’s slow march. The snowfields are upborn on waves of light that reveal a thin, random tracery of crevasses and snowy shoulders shaped by the dexterous wind. The valleys are in
shadow, so that the world is like a man still nursed by sleep, but conscious also of sun and air and singing birds without his window.

Rest breeds silence. A man climbing a hill bears with him a burden of sound; his breath rushes from his throat; his heart thuds in his ears; his feet strike rocks or snow or ice; his very clothing dragging about his limbs produces small sounds. He is a kernel surrounded by a shell of sound. But when he halts and rests, he is relieved of this sound; his heart and lungs return to a normal rhythm, so that he is no longer conscious of their clamouring. Then he becomes aware of silence, a silence that steals upon him as a profound and elemental truth.

The summit rest is the most precious of rests. It is hardly won sometimes. Often it is not physically or mentally enjoyable, owing to cold, the threat of storm or the nagging hag of time.

The attainment of the summit is not the be-all or the end-all of mountaineering. It is simply a thread of gold in the day's designing. The summit should not be trodden as a soldier treads another's conquered city, but visited thankfully. Mountains are not fortresses; they were built for man's enjoyment, not for his vaingloriousness. The summit is his, but so are the stars, and all he sees and feels and hears. The summit is a throne for humble men; an eminence
set between earth and heaven that both may be en-
joyed—the one finite, the other infinite.

Without its days of rest, a mountaineering holiday
is like wine-bibbing with never a pause to appreciate
the wine. Once I spent a fortnight in a season of
unbroken weather climbing mountains every day. At
the end of it I felt like a man with a tropical fever. I
was jaded and ill-tempered, and had come almost to
dislike mountains and mountaineering. Some there
are whose energy exacts a continual toll on their en-
joyment, but to me there is no pleasure in mere toil
which has as its only object the "collecting" of sum-
mits. To me mountaineering is, and must ever remain,
pleasurable, and as I am by nature lazy, it follows that
an element of laziness must enter into my mountaine-
ering. To cram as many peaks as possible into a
mountaineering holiday is like dining off the hors-
d'œuvre with such greediness that hunger is ap-
peased before the fish. What follows merely satiates,
however excellent its quality.

For these reasons a rest-day during a mountaineer-
ing holiday should not be dictated merely by the need
for bodily rest and recuperation. It should be sought
deliberately, not forced upon the climber by weary-
ness. Such a day is precious as the complementary
negative to the joyous positive of a mountaineering
holiday.

The mountaineer who would rest and enjoy rest
should choose some quiet spot out of sight and hearing of his fellow-men—a warm and comfortable place beneath the pines on the edge of an alp. Let him rest there until his relaxed body seems almost a part of the turf beneath it. Yesterday his limbs were tense, pulling and levering him upwards with tireless assurance. To-day they are reposed. His lungs no longer greedily gulp in the air, but breathe gently and without effort. His heart no longer pounds against the ribs, but pulsates with a slow, imperceptible and assured rhythm. It is in moments when the rhythmic frequency of life is low that perception is most quickened. Climbing is finely physical, but the static beauties of Nature are the more easily perceived through inaction than through action. During rest a man is no longer dominated by fleshly requirements. He is able to appreciate to the utmost the tangible and intangible beauties about him. The warmth of the sun and the cool air from off the snows caress him as they never caress him in action. All the voices and scents of the earth are his. He hears the wind tripping along the pine-tops, the singing of birds, a little choir of voices from a neighbouring stream, the rumbling of a torrent and the slow talk of cattle-bells from a distant pasture.

Feel the heat of the sun. It shines from a sky unblemished by man’s exhalations. Here it is only water vapour that charges the atmosphere and gives rise to vast heaven-soaring clouds.
The sun is light, and light was God's first thought. Feel the cosmic force of it. Be carried by it from earth to stars; pass with it along the peaks on tiptoe with the dawn.

See the turf bright with flowers and the pine forest fitting the hillside with a sombre coat. And higher, a thin edge of snow—shining, remote. It might be light liquefied, then frozen by the coldness of the upper air. We trod it yesterday. Impossible? Could any human power or strength avail to reach that silvery edge where the clouds pace slowly? Yet—we trod it yesterday.

Our senses aid and abet thought. In moments of rest, when thought is not harried by the grosser physical sensations, when it need not concentrate on work, or plan and scheme ahead, when it is not concerned with the comfort or safety of the body, it can aspire to heights greater than any trodden by the body. When every sense vibrates as one in rhythm with beauty, thought takes wings and soars to unimagined heights. It brings tranquillity to body, mind and spirit. A man becomes as one with beauty, building his visions not with bricks and mortar, but with beauty's own materials manufactured from a universal rhythmic harmony.

Words are poor purveyors of beauty. Mine dim the very stars they seek to reveal. But if you have rested upon a hill, and have a love for hills, you will have known a moment when you stood between light
and darkness, on the threshold of the unknowable and untranslatable. You existed, not upon earth amid earthly dimensions, but on a plane distant and yet near to earthly beauty; you knew yourself to be a part of a living scheme of which the hills are a part.
CHAPTER XVII

HUMOUR

In case any of my readers should have doubt as to the nature and meaning of this chapter, I am designating it "Humour." In this I am adhering to a well-established practice. It will be recollected that certain Swiss and German newspapers, afflicted with similar doubts as to the intelligence of their readers, likewise label a portion of their reading matter; only they do not spell it "humour" but "humor."

This "humour" or "humor" is, as everyone knows, a laughter-provoking quality which arises either from the contemplation of a fellow-creature involved in some painful or ridiculous predicament, or from an incongruity in the natural or accepted order of things. It is not the cause but the effect which is humorous. There is, for instance, nothing excruciatingly funny in the sliding of a mass of wet snow from a house-top, but if the said mass of wet snow happens to alight on a stately top-hatted old gentleman who is walking along the pavement beneath, the effect is decidedly humorous, except of course to the old gentleman. This unfortunate humour, which is a product usually of some form of action, is the crudest form of
humour. Warfare, the hunting field and cross-Channel passages are excellent fertilisers.

Mountaineering is no different from any other pursuit, in that it has its moments of action, sometimes remarkably rapid action, and also of potential action. The reader is probably conversant with a drawing of an immensely fat man roped to a diminutive guide. Both are balancing along an edge of incredible sharpness. The guide remarks: “It is essential that Monsieur should not slip.” Or more statical the same immensely fat man inextricably wedged in a chimney, and like to remain there till Doomsday, while the little guide, wringing his hands in despair, wails, “Que faire? Mon Dieu! que faire?”

Whether or not an incident is considered humorous is largely a matter of individual taste, temperament and environment. Take, for instance, a case which relies upon incongruity for its humour. In the summer of 1934 it was reported at Zermatt that a German mountaineer, in an access of patriotic fervour, inspired no doubt by the contemplation of Swiss scenery, had formed the habit of screaming “Heil, Hitler” on the summit of every peak he climbed. To an Englishman this is distinctly funny to hear of in Zermatt, but it would not seem so funny on the summit of a mountain, and most mountaineers whose soliloquies were disturbed thus would be tempted to tip the author of the disturbance over the nearest precipice and laugh afterwards.
Humour in connection with mountains and mountaineering can be both simple and complex, involving as it does many shades of taste and feeling. In many respects, however, mountaineering humour is depressingly conventional.

During the nineteenth century its motif was, if contemporary literature is to be trusted, primarily fleas. Everyone was emphatic on the subject of fleas.

"Ah!" said old Sémiond, "as to fleas, I don't pretend to be different from anyone else—I have them." ¹

It would, however, be unfair to the Victorians to limit a statement regarding their humour entirely to fleas. Sir Leslie Stephen had a delightful eye for situation, incongruity and contrast, so much so that his remarks anent the summit of the Rothhorn deeply offended the didactic and pompous Professor Tyndall, surely the most humourless of all Victorian mountaineers.²

To our thinking, much Victorian humour was laboured and stilted, and drably and elaborately genteel. Was there an "Old Bill" to enliven the Indian Mutiny or the Crimean War, or a Winnie the Pooh in the Court of St. James's? Who cared for the philosophy of a Night Watchman? Was there a P. G. Wodehouse to make fun of the "idle rich" or a Heath Robinson to mock the progress of invention?

¹ Scrambles Amongst the Alps.
² "... the temperature was approximately (I had no thermometer) 212° (Fahrenheit). As for ozone, if any existed in the atmosphere, it was a greater fool than I take it for."
"We are not amused" is an epitaph of the age. Not until the turning of the century did men learn to laugh at themselves with any real sincerity.

From 1900 to 1914 was a golden age, a renaissance in humour. It is reflected in the mountaineering literature of that period. The excuses of science and exploration which the timid mountaineers of the Victorian age had to make to save themselves from open ridicule were suspended like withered corpses on the gibbet of truth. Even the Alpine Club, after fierce debate, decided that its members might decorate themselves if they so wished with a black button on which were engraved the letters "A.C."

Clubs are funny things—any woman will agree with that—and whatever the merits or demerits of the case, is it not a spur to the risible faculties to picture a considerable number of gentlemen, gathered together in heated, or it may have been solemn, conclave, to decide whether or not a gentlemanly mountaineer is acting as a gentlemanly mountaineer should act in advertising the fact to all and sundry that he is a member of the Alpine Club?

The effect of this epoch-making event was far-reaching. It had the effect of stimulating the mountaineering world into a fury of badge-wearing. All who set up badge-making businesses at that time must now be paying super-tax on their profits.

Nowadays the number of badges a man may wear on the mountains is limited only by the depth of his
purse, his carrying capacity and his acreage. No doubt many of the unexplained fatal accidents of recent years, such as sudden falls from mountain-sides and falls into crevasses, could be attributed to the impedance and weight of badges. It is well known that on a snow-bridge an ounce or two may make all the difference between safety and disaster.

Another word of warning is necessary. Metal badges attract lightning.

It is only fair to state that badges may be useful as well as dangerous. In ski-ing, badges are worn to weight the ski-er and thus facilitate his downward flight. The weight of metal carried has resulted in some remarkable successes.

Mountaineers are gregarious, argumentative creatures. Their gregariousness leads to clubs, and clubs lead to dinners and speeches, and their argumentativeness leads to committees and club journals, in which other club journals are adversely reviewed.

Contrast is at the root of humour, and it is only necessary to appreciate this to see the humour in, shall we say, the annual dinner of a mountaineering club.

Looking down the long line of rhythmically moving jaws surmounting the long line of stomachs, which have had already one course more than is good for them and have three courses more to assimilate, I see "A." He is immaculately clad in "tails," and round his neck are the insignia of something or other. On the
last occasion I saw him, a conspicuous rent in the seat of his climbing breeches was being rendered less conspicuous by a guide. And now he sits immaculately clad, clean in his person, an altogether goodly and even godly spectacle. It is incredible to think that those well-manicured hands, toying so delicately with knife and fork, should stoop to wrestle with a refractory sardine tin, or that well-filled stomach behind that gleaming insignia and well-laundered waistcoat should have wedged itself so desperately and so immovably in that chimney on the ——. Then there is "B." He is a meteorologist, and from some den radiates depressions and gale warnings. The devil of it is that he is getting more and more accurate. And as he always has more bad news than good, it follows that the weather is getting steadily worse. But I can remember one occasion when, elevated by the champagne-like quality of the Swiss mountain air, he completely forgot himself. He said the weather was going to be good. And it was not good; on the contrary, it was bad,damnably bad. It began with two electrical storms of exceptional severity, in the course of which I was stunned by lightning, and then settled down into an appalling hurricane and blizzard.

There was a sequel, which is worth relating as an example of humour in which contrast is the dominant note. Having escaped death, after battling for hours with lightning, blizzard and hurricane, and somehow or other forcing our way down to safety, we were
strolling down a frequented path by the side of a glacier, inwardly congratulating ourselves on being still alive, when we encountered a number of tourists in the charge of an old guide, who was leading his charges along with a slow, unhurried, rhythmical tramp, tramp, tramp, like a wise old hen with her brood of chicks. As we passed, one of the tourists eyed us inquisitively.

"I wonder where they have been?" he said to the old guide.

The old guide glanced at us with withering scorn; we were climbing without guides.

"I think," he said, "that they have made only the little tour on the glacier."

Personal fads and idiosyncrasies are often responsible for a humorous situation in mountaineering.

On Mount Everest in 1933 one member of the party evinced a constant desire for eggs. "What wouldn't I give for a few dozen eggs!" was his cry in the highest camps. Unfortunately no eggs were available to satisfy his craving, but when the expedition descended to its base camp eggs were to be had. They were Tibetan eggs, which means that their age, like that of a middle-aged lady, was unknown.

The expedition had some of these poached for breakfast: an important point to remember is that they were poached. The egg-craver was late for breakfast. The others seated themselves and began. Before long there was an exclamation, and an egg was
returned to a plate looking decidedly the worse for wear, and the plate pushed aside with a gesture of disgust.

Next moment the egg-craver appeared in the entrance to the mess-tent. His eye gleamed as it lit on the eggs that his companions were eating. He had thought of eggs, pined for eggs, pondered and dwelt on the subject of eggs for many eggless weeks, and here at last were eggs. With swift strides he reached an empty place opposite to which lay the plate with the remains of the egg already referred to upon it. He sat down and rubbed his hands together, he gloated over the mess before him. There was an expression on his face as of a mystic who sees an angel.

"Eggs!" he whispered. "Eggs! My favourite way too—scrambled!"

Mountains are no respecters of persons.

I once encountered in a Tirolese hut a stout, stern man to whom pomposity and dignity clung as tightly as a Sikkim leech. He was a Herr Direktor.

Next day I climbed a mountain. I saw from it a singular procession. First in it was a diminutive little guide who was tramping sedately along a broad and easy snow-ridge, puffing the while at a huge drooping pipe on the bowl of which was carved what I presumed to be the head of his favourite saint. In one hand he was holding the rope which connected him to his employer. The employer was, as the reader will have
guessed, no less a personage than the Herr Direktor. But it was a very different Herr Direktor from the one who had swelled with importance in the hut and spoken so loudly and pompously. It was a Herr Direktor no longer in the upright position that God intended Herr Direktors to assume, but a Herr Direktor who, from fear and giddiness on that snowy crest, was forced to adopt the positions and sinuosities analogous with those of a serpent.

This episode inevitably reminds me of a similar one in which it is necessary to exploit human weakness in combination with human ignorance in the cause of humour.

J. H. B. Bell and I had slept overnight in a notoriously expensive Alpine hotel, and were walking along a path not far from it next morning when we encountered a man who was edging along the path in a curious crab-like manner. At this point the path was narrow and there was a steep drop from it. As we passed he looked at us with a white face and murmured, "Schwindel! Schwindel! Furchtbare Schwindel!" My German was even more limited in those days than it is now, and my first thought was that he had been overcome by his bill!

Ignorance is responsible for much humour in mountaineering, as indeed it is in other pursuits. It is one of the immutable laws of economics that expeditions to distant mountain ranges must recoup themselves by lectures to the general public on their return. It is
another immutable law that many well-meaning people shall ask the members of expeditions any number of questions, and that the chairmen at such lectures, in a praiseworthy desire to be hospitable and put the lecturer at his ease, shall make all manner of extravagant statements, in which the words "brave" and "intrepid" occur with monotonous frequency.

On these occasions, old ladies are responsible for many delightful misstatements and *bons mots*. The leader of the 1933 Everest expedition was assailed by one who gushed up to him with these words:

"Oh, Mr. Rutledge, I have so enjoyed your lecture. It was so thrilling. You brave men [etc., etc.]. But when you talk of those awful altitudes, I can feel for you. I live at Crowborough."

Anything laughable is worth while. Mountaineering is a laughable matter. The idea that men should endure hardship, discomfort and danger for pleasure is distinctly laughable, and all the petty schisms, all the arguments and opinions that arise simply because some men enjoy climbing mountains for a few weeks every year are laughable too.

There is no doubt that we mountaineers take ourselves too seriously.

However, we must do something when we are not climbing mountains, and so we amuse ourselves in our gregarious way by clubbing together and eating dinners and reading papers and speechifying. And if we get bored, we vent our spleen on the "pot-hunting"
ski-ers, which is as logical as a footballer damning cricket, and the ski-ers reply with spirit, and call us prigs and snobs and so on. And so life goes on, and in a few months or years it is all buried and forgotten. But it was quite amusing while it lasted, and gave people something to think about. It was neither constructive nor destructive—just *pour passer le temps*; an obscure part of some obscure evolutionary process leading mankind we know not whither. And ages hence men will still argue and quarrel, and eat dinners and form clubs and committees, because it is human nature to do so when they are not climbing mountains. And they will laugh, as we laugh now, at themselves, at others and at life.
CHAPTER XVIII

FRIENDSHIP

To be tied to a man by a rope on a mountain is to be linked by something more than a piece of hemp. The rope cements a union of sympathy, understanding and safety. It joins two forces, that, like two dynamos, must be capable of producing a smooth, never-varying power-curve and of synchronising one with the other. They may differ in constructive detail, but must fulfil their prime essential, which is to contribute towards a common fund of power and to run in phase. That is the ideal underlying all human relationships. In its fulfilment lies the perfect mountain friendship. A common danger moulds a common thought; a common hardship discovers a common philosophy.

On a mountain a man discovers his strength and his weakness. He taps unsuspected reservoirs of spiritual force in his friends and in himself. He learns to face danger calmly, not only because it is in him to do so, but because of a mutual force of trust and friendship which is a more effective shield against doubt and difficulty than any single force.

A mountain has a capacity for revealing truth in human nature. Inhibitions are foreign to nature, for
nature is absolute and cares nothing for self-imposed limitations. Angles are smoothed away; queer little mental inhibitions cease to exist; friend opens his heart to friend. Love and loyalty are manifested between men on a mountain.

I first met Nima Tendrup at Darjeeling in 1930, when Professor Dyhrenfurth's expedition was about to set out for Kangchenjunga. I wanted a personal servant, and Nima was recommended by a local resident. I was told that he was honest and reliable and that he had been on all three Everest expeditions, on the last of which he was the servant of "Sandy" Irvine.

I interviewed him on the terrace of the Mount Everest Hotel. It was more of an inspection than an interview, as I could not speak Tibetan, Nepali or Urdu. Nima stood there rigidly at attention, and the first thing I noticed was that on his breast, gleaming as the result of the daily and loving care expended upon it, was the North-West Frontier Medal. His countenance was cast in a heavy mould. It had not the expression of a man of action, and was not indicative of a superabundance of grey matter, but there was an underlying strength of character which was amplified by a pair of unusually large candid brown eyes. He wore a soiled green wind-jacket, a relic of a former expedition, and a pair of brown breeches which were neither riding breeches nor plus fours, but something in between. His legs were encased in a pair of woollen stockings
that had been darned and darned again until they were almost all darns, and on his feet were a pair of ancient climbing boots. Lastly, he carried in his hand the inevitable Homburg hat, of which the Tibetans are so fond. In physique, he was heavy and looked doughy and out of training; I was not to know then that the "Old Soldier," as I came to know him, never looked in training. A solemn-faced fellow he was, with a permanent, slightly puzzled expression. It was natural solemnity, a lack of expression ingrained, perhaps, by military service. What his age was I do not know; I doubt if he knew himself. I should have said 35, and that is getting on for a Bhotia; they live hard and die young in Tibet.

For some days, prior to starting on our march to Kangchenjunga, he acted as my bearer. His experience was limited to expeditions, and he needed instruction. Also, he was lazy in an "old soldierly" way. Yet, it was a pleasure training him. He was never disrespectful. He did not take advantage of my ignorance of his language, and indeed displayed a remarkable talent for understanding the weird mixture of English and explanatory signs by means of which I expressed my wants.

A few days later we set off on our march to Kangchenjunga. To begin with, Nima proved himself the complete "old soldier." It was his way of testing his sahib to see if he could "get away with it" at the start. If he could, well and good; if not—well, at all
events there was no harm in trying. Thus worked his mind. There was a clear understanding and statement of policy within forty-eight hours. "Any more slackness and you cease to be my servant and become an ordinary coolie." From this time there grew up steadily a mutual esteem and regard. True, it was necessary to administer a gentle chiding, a little ginger now and then at regular intervals, but this never imperilled the original understanding.

Nima soon showed himself an adept in the art of travelling and of camping. He had an expert eye for a tent platform. Other members of the expedition might have to sleep at uncomfortable angles or on rough ground, but never his sahib.

I am untidy by nature, not at all an easy sahib to "do for." Nima shamed me by his tidiness. However scattered my possessions, everything was restored to its own place.

After dinner in the mess-tent at the end of a day's march, when I repaired to my tent, I found a candle lantern suspended from a hook in the tent ridge, my sleeping-bag laid out on the cork mattress, and my pillow arranged. Everything was just so. Then, when I had undressed and settled myself in my sleeping-bag, old Nima's face would appear in the entrance. He would look at me with a worried enquiring expression in his brown eyes, uncertain whether I wanted the tent flaps fastened or left unfastened. When this little point had been settled to our mutual satisfaction,
I would say, "Good night, Nima," and he would reply in a husky baritone, "Good night, Sahib," or sometimes "Good night, Sir."

He always awoke me gently in the morning. Possibly, like many Orientals, he believed that in sleep the spirit departs from the body, and that to recall it too suddenly is a shock to it. He would carefully un-tie the tent flaps and, pulling them apart, say, "Sahib! Sahib! Sahib!" gradually raising his voice. And so I would awake, and see framed in the entrance to the tent his broad, honest and smiling face. Then in would come a great paw, bearing with it a cup of steaming tea and a biscuit or two in the saucer. After this old Nima would start fiddling about, filling my canvas bucket with warm water and arranging the appropriate toilet articles on a packing-case. He was always acutely unhappy until I had vacated my tent and was having my breakfast, because he wanted to pack the tent, bedding and other of my belongings, so that he could get away early on the march, and take things easily without risking a late arrival at the end of the march. He was a stickler for routine, and anything that occurred outside the normal run of things was liable to flummox him.

I have said that he was honest, and so he was—with me. The 1930 Kangchenjunga expedition, being in the main a German expedition, had standardised most of its equipment and personal kit. I am careless as well as untidy, and I not infrequently broke or lost articles
with which I had been provided. They were invariably replaced. I never enquired where such replacements came from; it was scarcely politic. During the course of the expedition I broke several vacuum flasks; at the end of the expedition, I was almost the only member to possess an unbroken vacuum flask.

Nima was superstitious in regard to some things. Like most of the Darjeeling porters, he believed firmly in the existence of the Mi-go, the "Bad Manshi" (bad men) or, as some call them, the "Abominable Snowmen": those fearsome beings, white-skinned, hair-covered, gorilla-like, carnivorous, with an especial taste for yaks and human beings, who are reputed to haunt the snows and forests of the Eastern Himalayas.

I have only once seen Nima scared, and the Mi-go were indirectly to blame. George Wood-Johnson, the transport officer of the expedition, and I, accompanied by Nima, had gone a little way up the Yalung Valley to look for traces of a young American named Farmer, who had disappeared the previous year while making a solitary attempt to climb Kangchenjunga. We were resting after lunch on the slopes above the valley, when Nima, who had accompanied us, suddenly let out a frightened whisper of, "Bad Manshi, Sahib! Bad Manshi!" There was no mistaking the urgency of his tone.

We peered intently into the valley, and presently spotted something moving among some large boulders. It was something large and brown, but it was half con-
sealed by boulders, and we could not make it out. We gazed for a minute or two with the feelings of explorers who momentarily expect to encounter a dinosaur in the primeval jungle of a "Lost World." It was ridiculous. Common sense told us that no such beings as the Mi-go exist. But it is easier to scoff at superstition in the latitude of London than it is on the slopes of the Sikkim Himalayas. For a minute or two we watched, and nothing happened. Then, suddenly, out from behind a large boulder there moved majestically into the open a large yak.

Nima’s natural solemnity contrasted oddly with the cheerfulness of the Sherpas. There was nothing swashbuckling or loud about him, he went quietly on his way. He seldom, if ever, laughed, and there was nothing of the hail-fellow-well-met atmosphere about him.

He made few friends. Lewa, who was destined to be the sirdar on Kamet in 1931, on Everest in 1933 and on Nanga Parbat in 1934, was his most intimate friend. Why, I do not know, for they were two diametrically opposed types. Nima, placid, easy-going and good-natured. Lewa, forceful, tempestuous; a hard, domineering personality. Doubtless, it was a common bond of experience, forged on Everest and other mountains, that brought these men together.

There were no frills about the "Old Soldier." He was no dandy, but on one or two occasions he displayed a peculiar taste in apparel. An enforced
rest, due to a transport muddle, was utilised for the tailoring of some nether garments of a singular design. They were made of some white, stiff, calico-like material which gave forth an important rustling sound when their wearer walked, and they were a cross between plus fours and polo breeches. Everyone, Europeans and porters, laughed at them and passed uncomplimentary remarks on their appearance, but with unmoving countenance the "Old Soldier" trudged along until they were no longer white, but bedraggled and dirty and the important swish had gone from them. Then, like other daily wonders, they became a part of the expedition and were forgotten.

A fortnight after this tailoring feat, we were at grips with Kangchenjunga. Our route was a dangerous one. Day and night enormous ice-avalanches broke loose from hanging glaciers and thundered on to the glacier on which our camps were situated. We laboured up a broken wall of ice, several hundred feet high, cutting a staircase in living, moving ice that might at any moment collapse. It was a suicidal route. Hope diminished, but the work went on. The leader returned to the base camp, suffering from the effects of altitude. Before doing so, he sent the climbing party forward. No single member of that climbing party liked to be the first to waver: we were too inexperienced in Himalayan mountaineering. Also, it was an international expedition, and the leader had provided each nationality with a flag to
spur him on. Thus the attempt to climb Kangchenjunga became a “siege” and a “war,” in which safety and enjoyment were at a discount.

Below the point where the ice rose vertically was a traverse along a steeply sloping shelf, cut away beneath in an ice-cliff about 80 feet high. Steps had been cut and a rope fixed across this; the rope, however, did not extend the whole length of the shelf. One day snow fell heavily while we were working on the vertical section, and when we came to return, we found that the steps cut in the shelf were filled up and concealed. It was not easy to find them and, returning across the ropeless portion of the shelf, I slipped. It was only a slight slip of one foot, and by promptly driving the pick of my ice-axe into the ice beneath the snow, I was able to arrest the slip immediately. Nima was only a few yards away. Never shall I forget his startled “Sahib! Sahib!” It was the first time I saw him moved.

Two days later occurred the avalanche which nearly brought catastrophe to the whole climbing party. We had hoped to complete on that day the work of forcing a route over the ice-wall to the terrace above. Nima had set out with the rest of the porters who were carrying loads intended to be dumped on, or as near as possible to, the proposed site of the next camp. The party were on the slopes below the ice-wall when a portion of the latter fell. Masses of ice the size of sky-scrapers collapsed, and the avalanche
poured down the slope on which the ascending party was strung out. The climbers and porters escaped by running, all save one porter, "Satan" Chettan, who was caught and killed by the cataract of ice. I, who witnessed the disaster from the camp below, thought at first that the whole party had been wiped out, for they disappeared completely in the powdery snow displaced by the wind of the avalanche. As quickly as possible, and it was slow going in the soft snow at 20,000 feet, I toiled up to the scene of the disaster. The first survivors I came to were some porters. They were standing dazed and without movement by the debris of the avalanche, which was piled several feet high. All save one, for Nima was energetically probing with an ice-axe between the ice-blocks. I assumed that he was looking for a companion who had been overwhelmed, but I asked him what he was doing. He turned, and with an unhappy look on his broad countenance, blurted out, "Load, Sahib. I look for load." When he saw the avalanche coming he dropped his load and ran for his life. He escaped, but the load was engulfed by the cataract of ice-blocks. He was greatly concerned about this. He regarded the dropping and losing of his load as a dereliction of duty. Who were killed and who were alive did not matter; he had abandoned the load entrusted to him by the sahibs. Very likely he was temporarily unstrung by his terrible experience, for life had been measured from death by a matter of inches, but somehow
his action was typical of the man. He was a faithful servant.

We found Chettan, crushed and dead. His comrades carried him down, and he was buried in the snow near the camp. Nima and the rest of the men stood by the grave. A small quantity of rice was cooked, and each man scattered a little of this over the body. Presumably it was to nourish the spirit on its passage to paradise. I remember that the air was wonderfully still, that the mists were without movement, that no avalanche fell. There was a profound silence, through which the sun poured a warm light on the grave and on Kangchenjunga, that sublime and awful mountain.

Nima did good work on the Jonsong Peak, which we climbed later. Once, in the absence of a sirdar, he was put in charge of some porters. But he was not born to be a sirdar. He had no push, no swagger; he was not blessed with the quickness of mind and muscle necessary for such a task.

His was not an ambitious, covetous, domineering nature; it was essentially easy-going. Yet the men liked and respected him and took no liberties. Nima’s relief was obvious when he was relegated to the ranks. He did not like having to shout and bawl at people. Any access of physical or mental energy threw life out of gear. It was better to clump methodically along, with a pack on the back and no cares.

From our highest camp, the Jonsong Peak was suc-
cessfully climbed by Hoerlin and Schneider. Afterwards the climbing party descended to Camp I. The following day another party set out to climb the Jonsong Peak; I among them. It was hardly to be expected that Nima would be strong enough to carry a load up the mountain again. Not a bit of it; he was eager and willing to come. We established a higher camp than before, and after a chilly night set off for the summit. The wind was blowing hard from the west, whirling loose snow and ice particles across the rocks. Nima accompanied me, carrying my rucksack, containing food and a camera. He did not get very far. The hard work of the past few days had told on him; the searching wind and the stinging clouds of snow and ice put the finishing touch to his tiredness. I took the rucksack, sent him back to camp and continued alone to the summit. Even so, I had to order him to leave me. At first, he pretended not to understand, and when at last he obeyed he gave me a look not of relief but of reproach.

A fortnight or so later we were back in Darjeeling. I had taken my place in a motor-car that was to take me down to the plain, when Nima came forward and slipped a little cotton scarf over my shoulders, an emblem of greeting and friendship among Tibetan people.

Many who read accounts of Himalayan expeditions must wonder why the Sherpas of Nepal and the Bhotias of Tibet serve their European masters so faith-
fully and well. It cannot be altogether for a pecuniary reward. It is true they are paid, fed and equipped, and this in itself must be an incentive to some of these men, who have otherwise to labour at a lesser wage on tea plantations, or pick up a precarious living as rickshaw wallahs or odd-job men in Darjeeling. But the experiences of three expeditions have convinced me that there is another driving force. These men are adventurers at heart, and to such mountains mean more than mere prominences of rock, snow and ice.

I did not see Nima again for two years, but in 1931 he accompanied the expedition to Kamet. While preparations were being made for this he served me as my servant at Ranikhet. Here I used to sleep on the veranda of a bungalow in view of the snows, so that when I awoke in the morning the first thing my eyes saw was the dawn light on the peaks.

I remember once thus waking and seeing the "Old Soldier" standing motionless a few yards away. He was gazing steadfastly towards the Himalayas. What did he see there? Did he see God in those distant snows that were hung so pale and cold above the vast sweeps of sleeping forest? Was there revealed to him the abounding beneficence of a Divine Providence? I believe that he felt as the Hindu sage felt when he wrote, "As the dew is dried up by the morning sun, so are the sins of man by the sight of Himachal [the Himalayas]. In a thousand ages of the Gods I could not tell thee of the glories of Himachal."
The working of Nima's mind was sometimes a trifle obscure. When I wanted my dinner suit laid out, I simply said, "Black suit." One evening, however, after a vehement cry of "Black suit" towards the servants' quarters, the said black suit failed to materialise. I fumed over the delay and at the non-appearance of Nima, and eventually, after a rout round, discovered the necessary habiliments in the places where Nima was wont to secrete them. I had almost finished my toilet when, of a sudden, Nima appeared in the doorway. The light from the hurricane lamp he was carrying revealed a face shining from exertions. There was an expression in his eyes as of a battle hardly won in the face of well-nigh hopeless odds. He stepped forward and held aloft a large tin. "'Glaxo,' Sahib, 'Glaxo,'" he said. He was right. From some distant bungalow he had begged, purloined or in some way acquired a tin of "Glaxo."

During the march to Kamet, he blossomed forth once more into another and even more exotic pair of home-made breeches. This time they suggested those of a Zouave or an American baseball player.

On Kamet he did not climb higher than Camp III, 20,000 feet; for he was as slow in acclimatising to altitude as he was of speech and action, and our rapid ascent was altogether too much for him. I did not see him again until after the mountain had been climbed and we had descended to Camp II. There he greeted me with broad congratulatory smiles. He was as
A CAMP ON KANGCHENJUNGA.
pleased as anyone that success had been gained. He had acclimatised, and in the absence of Lewa, our sirdar, who was severely frost-bitten, he was sent up to Camp III in charge of some porters to bring down tents and equipment. This work he successfully accomplished, but directly he returned he relapsed from loud-voiced authority to his usual unobtrusive self.

Our men considered the success gained on Kamet to be worthy of celebration, and their spirituous potations at the first village we came to were on an exceedingly liberal scale.

The effect of alcohol upon a Sherpa or Bhotia porter is productive of excitement which, if directed into quarrelsome channels, is liable to lead to bloodshed. The "Old Soldier" was an outstanding exception. Alcohol only increased his natural solemnity, and when he was in his cups it was only his clumsiness that gave him away.

On one occasion only was he incapable of performing his duties as a servant. There was no one to bring me my morning cup of tea, no Nima Tendrup to answer my shout. Then, as I gazed out of my tent, I saw him. He was kneeling by a stream, and with his hands to his temples was holding his head in its cold waters. I learnt afterwards that not even he had been proof against the vitriolic quality of the liquor of the village nearest the camp.

Nima was my servant on the Mount Everest expedition of 1933. Doubt was expressed as to whether the
handicap of *anno Domini* would not prove too great. Also, he was an "old soldier," and as such was mistrusted. The work he did dispelled that mistrust, and I am glad to record that my confidence in him was justified. He was not capable of going higher than the North Col, 23,000 feet, but up to that height he worked loyally and well. From Darjeeling to the base camp, across the desolate plateau of Tibet and back again, my small affairs were managed with the same quiet efficiency as of yore. My "bokus" (box) was always packed just so; my slumbers were rendered more comfortable by the addition of another sleeping-bag to my bed, "scrounged" from heaven knows where; my usual idiosyncrasies were allowed for; my inevitable untidiness checked.

That was the last I have seen of Nima Tendrup, but I had a letter from R. L. Holdsworth, a member of the Kamet expedition, who was in the Nanga Parbat district shortly after the disaster which overtook the German expedition of 1934. He wrote: "I came across some of the surviving porters, and who should I see but the 'Old Soldier.' He had cheated death once more."

It may be that you who read these lines may go one day to Darjeeling. Possibly, you may hire a rickshaw. If among those drawing it there is a broad-shouldered, solemn-faced man with a brightly polished medal suspended from his breast, you may be quite

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1 Four Europeans and six porters lost their lives in a blizzard.
certain that it is Nima Tendrup, the "Old Soldier." You will know that you are being drawn along by one who has been on four expeditions to Everest, two expeditions to Kangchenjunga, and expeditions to Kamet, Nanga Parbat and other of the greatest peaks in the world. You will know that beneath that polished medal and its stained and dirty ribbon, and the ragged jacket to which it is pinned, beats a brave heart, endowed with qualities of faithfulness and loyalty; a heart which responds instinctively to the call of comradeship and adventure, that exists in close communion with the noblest aspects of nature, that strives in the cause of others, upwards and onwards, through sweat and weariness, through heat and cold, through hardship and peril. A man to admire, respect and love as a friend.
DEATH is often at the mountaineer's elbow. Mountains, like the sea, are inimical to life; man is only enabled to tread them because of his strength and agility and skill—and the directive power of his mind.

Life without danger would be like sucking at a juiceless orange; to some men it tastes the sweetest on the very brink of death. It is instinctive with man to weigh himself in the balance against death, not recklessly or foolishly, but confidently, in the certainty that his powers will enable him to balance the scales, until the time comes when fate, which has held the scales so long and patiently, tips them in favour of death.

Man is an enquirer, and it is natural that he should speculate as to the nature of death, whether he believes in spiritual survival or that life is mere fortuitous chance and that consciousness perishes with the body.

Simplicity is the keynote of happiness, and it is in the power of mountains to eliminate kaleidoscopic and harmful matter from the mind. Atmosphere and environment not only influence introspective thought,
but they cannot fail to affect problems of wider significance.

We read of the League of Nations delegates meeting day after day at Geneva in a stifling, super-heated atmosphere. Such ideals as they are striving for are worthy of a healthier setting. If they were to meet at some peaceful place in the mountains and breathe purer air, their problems would seem less vexing and more work would be accomplished. It is in men who lead clogged-up lives in the vitiated atmosphere of cities that the evil germs of war germinate.

I am a pacifist. The possibility of being gassed or bombed or shot appals me, not because I die as a result of the process, but because it is such an artificial and ridiculous ending. The possibility of falling from a mountain or dying in a storm does not appal me, because it is a natural ending in which I have a personal interest and responsibility. To me death, when it is associated with a manufactured or mechanical element, is more terrible than when it is associated with a pristine natural element. Possibly this is because we are put into the world by natural means and are presumed to leave it by natural means, so that any action of ours which sets that Divine intention or presupposition by the ears is contrary to the rhythmic evolution of our progress. It may be argued, of course, that all things are with God; in other words, that our thoughts and actions are evolutionary and inevitable in every detail once the wheels of life have
been set in motion, but this is a gloomy view to take of existence, implying, as it does, a lack of purpose. I prefer to accept the doctrine of self-determination, which is a more active and constructive doctrine, seeing that it assumes conscience to be the arbiter of our spiritual destiny. In matters such as these in which conclusive proof cannot be obtained, we are inevitably reduced to recording our own beliefs. I have bivouacked with a man who told me that he believes that at death consciousness as well as life ceases to exist. His view was that everything resulted from chance. When I saw Nature in all her splendour—the mountains above us, the star-strewn heaven above the mountains—I reflected, what a chance!

In my own case, my instinctive convictions favour survival. These may spring from hereditary tendencies, or they may be a product of an upbringing in which orthodox religion figured conspicuously, or they may be due to a fundamental instinct which tells me that only an all-seeing Providence, a Directive Power, could have evolved a universe which my mountaineering friend, already mentioned, prefers to ascribe to mere chance. I look forward, therefore, to death with interest, and wish at the same time that I could look backward beyond birth, if only to satisfy an interest in reincarnation which has always seemed to me a simple explanation, in part at least, of evolution.

Death is associated with physical pain and mental discomfort, and there are undoubtedly deaths which
are relatively pleasant and unpleasant. A certain personal taste and discrimination enter into this. The majority of people would, if they were given the choice between the two, prefer drowning to being burnt, but there are no doubt some whose mental and physical constitution reacts in favour of the latter. There may be those who would choose a Chinese torture in preference to an overdose of morphia.

There is no doubt that to most people an ideal death is one that strikes instantaneously and without warning, but, failing that, there are a number of easy deaths, and death by falling on a mountain is one of them. All those who have fallen and lived to describe their sensations are unanimous on one point—they experienced no pain. And all who fell a considerable distance and expected to be killed experienced a feeling of detachment which was intermingled in some cases with sensations of petty annoyance and even of speculative interest. Their past life did not pass in review before their eyes—that is only a figment of a novelist's imagination—but their sense of time was frequently distorted or eliminated. Edward Whymper, however, in describing a fall of nearly 200 feet on the Matterhorn, wrote: "Like persons who have been rescued from drowning, I remember that the recollection of a multitude of things rushed through my head, many of them trivialities and absurdities, which had been forgotten long before; and, more remarkable, this bounding through space did not feel disagreeable."
But I think that in no very great distance more, consciousness as well as sensation would have been lost, and upon that I base my belief, improbable as it seems, that death by a fall from a great height is as painless an end as can be experienced."

I will pass now to a personal experience.

One morning in August 1923, E. E. Roberts and I, who were spending a climbing holiday in the Dolomites, set out from the inn on the Sella Pass to ascend the Gröhmannspitze, one of the peaks of the Langkofel group.

We trudged up dew-soaked pastures in a dense mist, but presently, when we were reflecting despondently on the impossibility of finding a route which was unfamiliar to us, a sudden light broke through, and a few minutes later we had risen above the mist and could gaze over its level, sunlit surface.

A deep and narrow gap separates the Gröhmannspitze from its neighbour, the Fünffingerspitze. This we reached by means of a scree slope and a crumbling gully, then scrambled up easy broken rocks to a wide terrace. This, as it afterwards transpired, we should have followed for some distance before recommencing the ascent, but we were tempted directly upwards by a gully which appeared to lead without difficulty to a point far up on the summit ridge of our peak.

For a time we progressed without much difficulty up steep but not very difficult rocks. Presently, how-
ever, we were forced by an unclimbable wall into the
bed of the gully which was patently a natural chute
for falling stones. Up this we mounted slowly and
with increasing difficulty, until the gully, which
narrowed gradually, ended in an overhanging pitch,
fully 150 feet high and clearly unassailable. It was
a fearsome impasse, covered in black slime from
which water-drops fell beyond us into space.

We looked to the right. There the gully wall was
scarcely less formidable. We looked to the left. There
the rocks were vertical, or nearly so, but they were
rougger and seemed to afford just sufficient holds to
render an attempt justifiable. A climb of less than
100 feet would, we estimated, bring us to the long-
desired summit ridge.

A few feet above the bed of the gully was a ledge a
yard wide, which afforded a secure resting-place for
the second man. Above this ledge was a large bulge
of rock, which had to be avoided on the right. Roberts
was well placed, and in a position to support me as I
struggled up the initial few feet. Then it was neces-
sary to step horizontally to the left on to the bulge.
I did not like the look of it, and was afraid of
dislodging it—it must have weighed a ton or more—
on to Roberts, so as well as I could I supported myself
on firm handholds, in order to take my weight off my
feet. In this manner, I edged across it without
disturbing it, until it was possible to climb directly
upwards.
The rocks were as steep as Dolomite rocks can be, and only their firmness and roughness made them possible to climb. The final 20 feet to the ridge were the most difficult, for in this section the holds were smaller—indeed, mere wrinkles and protuberances on which it was possible to get no more than toe-tips and finger-tips. It was not a place to linger over; it was best climbed quickly or not at all.

At last I grasped satisfying holds on the crest of the ridge. A lusty haul and I sprawled, panting, over the top. I remember that the sun welcomed me there and that behind and below was the deeply shadowed gully from which I had emerged, with a thin tongue of ice in its jaws, writhing downwards into the mist-sea which was slowly creeping up the mountain. It was a gloomy, dungeon-like place, and Roberts's voice came up from it echoing, hollow and remote.

The ridge was wide and sheep-backed, but steep. There was no hitch for the rope that I could see and, as it was essential to secure the rope in order to bring up Roberts, I scrambled some distance up it, searching for one. But for several minutes I searched in vain—the slabby nature of the rocks afforded no projection large enough to accommodate a rope-loop.

Presently I heard Roberts's voice again. He was wondering what I was doing and why I was being so long; he was anxious to escape from the chill gully and join me in the sun.

At length I discovered a thin leaf of rock, around
which the rope could be wedged. It was not a good belay—some might euphemistically have described it as an "Alpine Club belay"—and it was by no means certain whether the rope would stay put; but it was the only belay available, and it would have to serve. It was then that I made a blunder which all but cost me my life—one which serves to illustrate how necessary scrupulous attention to detail is in mountaineering.

We were attached to the ends of a 100-foot length of rope. In ascending to the belay, I ran out some 60 to 70 feet of this, leaving 20 feet to spare, allowing for waist-loops. The correct procedure in rock-climbing is for the leader to belay the rope as close as possible to his waist, and then take in the second man's rope over his shoulder, round his body or directly round a rock. Thus, he cannot be pulled from his stance in the event of the second man falling. In the present instance, however, I took in the rope until I felt Roberts, and then belayed it by passing it round the flake. This meant that 20 feet of slack rope were between my waist and the belay, and that the belay was virtually useless to both of us.

I braced myself as firmly as I could on the slabs of the ridge and, taking in Roberts's rope over one shoulder, called down to him to come on.

There was a faint acknowledgment, and the rope slackened as he began to ascend. Slowly it came in, about 10 feet of it, then there was a pause—he was
traversing horizontally, as I had done, across the bulge. He was invisible to me, and all I had to do was to give the rope an occasional flick to make sure it was not catching on the rough rocks. Meanwhile my eyes strayed outwards over the level mist-sea that lapped in cotton-wool-like waves against the preci-pices beneath and stretched as far as the eye could see, pierced here and there by groups of peaks or isolated summits that rose from it like some strange mid-aerial archipelago. Close at hand were the bold pinnacles of the Fünffingerspitze and the complicated buttresses of the Langkofel, and more distantly the square-topped Sella massif with its attendant yellow towers. Of fields, villages and forests there was nothing to be seen; they were beneath the mist, which lay without visible movement, denying the world below the rich blue sky and the sun, which invested peak and mist with light and colour and poured its warmth upon me. It was a perfect morning, a morning on which to enjoy the beauty of creation, a morning on which to realise to the full the supreme joy of health and life. . . . A sudden startled shout, a frightful crash of falling rocks, a convulsive leap and jerk of every nerve and muscle, an instinctive bracing of every bone of my whole body to receive a shock. A few instants before, the rope had lain idly against the rock or slid gently upwards as I took it in. Now, like a sleeping snake stirred by a stick, it sprang into furious activity. It whipped, as though alive, across
the rocks to the right, and I realised in the fraction of a second that it took to do so that Roberts was not directly beneath me and that the strain would come sideways as well as downwards; it tightened in my hands and tore cruelly through them, it tugged at my shoulder and body, tugged irresistibly, and snatched me from my holds as casually and easily as a man brushes an insect from his cheek. In another moment I was sliding down the slabs, at first on my side, then on my back, driving my heels, elbows, forearms and palms of my hands against the rocks in an endeavour to stop myself. For 10 or 12 feet I slid thus, then shot over the edge of the precipice.

I remember no jerk, but I found myself hanging on the rope a few feet below the crest of the ridge. I turned, snatched at the rocks and clawed my way back to the ridge. I had fallen altogether about 20 feet, and the rope, which was a comparatively new one, had held.

I had scarcely regained the ridge when I heard Roberts's voice. He was safe and sound. He had stepped on the overhang, and it had collapsed beneath his weight. The ton or so of dislodged rock had struck the ledge or fallen beyond it, and bounded down the gully with a crash which was heard at the inn on the Sella Pass over a mile away. Roberts had been prevented from following the rocks down the gully by falling on to the ledge. I had been stopped by the rope, which had jammed immovably behind the leaf of rock where I had placed it.
After this, I took in the rope directly around the leaf of rock, a method I should have adopted in the first place, and was presently joined by Roberts without further misadventure. As neither of us was seriously hurt, though I had cut my hands and skinned my elbows and another portion of my anatomy, we decided to complete the climb and revenge ourselves on the Gröhmannspitze for its inhospitable reception, which reception, incidentally, was due to our unskilful route-finding and my carelessness.

So much for events. I will now describe in detail my feelings from the moment when danger intervened to the moment when I found myself oscillating on the rope against the face of the precipice.

When I heard Roberts's shout and the crash of falling rocks, my body, as already described, instinctively braced itself to receive a shock. The shock came; I was unable to resist it, and found myself on my back sliding and bumping helplessly down the slabs of the ridge. Now, one half of my brain must have known subconsciously that 20 feet of slack rope separated me from the belay, but if it did know this, it was singularly reticent on the subject, and it was the other half that took charge, and this told me that I had been secured close to the belay, that the rope had come off and that I was certain to be killed. In view of my subsequent sensations, the certainty which existed in my mind that nothing could stop me falling and that I was to be killed, is interesting and important.
Nevertheless, even though I had assumed thus early that I was as good as dead, I made desperate attempts to stop myself, as I have already described. During the time that I was doing this, a curious rigidity or tension gripped my whole mental and physical being. So great was this tension that it swamped all pain and fear, and rendered me insensible to bumps and blows. It was an overwhelming sensation, and quite outside my experience. It was as though all life's forces were in process of undergoing some fundamental evolutionary change, the change called death, which is normally beyond imagination and outside the range of ordinary human force or power. Think of the force required to knit an atom, and the equal and opposite force required to split that atom. What an experience for that atom to have such vast forces concentrated on its evolution—the supreme power of the universe concentrated to one end. I was the atom on the Gröhmannspitze, and I felt that power which alone can separate spirit from body—death. I know now that death is not to be feared, it is a supreme experience, the climax, not the anti-climax, of life.

For how long I experienced this crescendo of power I cannot say. Time no longer existed as time; it was replaced by a sequence of events from which time as a quantity or quality in terms of human consciousness no longer existed. Then, suddenly, this feeling was superseded by a feeling of complete indifference and
detachment, indifference to what happened to my body, detachment from what was happening or likely to happen to that body. I seemed to stand aside from my body. I was not falling, for the reason that I was not in a dimension where it was possible to fall. I, that is my consciousness, was apart from my body, and not in the least concerned with what was befalling it. My body was in the process of being injured, crushed and pulped, and my consciousness was not associated with these physical injuries, and was completely uninterested in them. Had the tenant already departed in anticipation of the wreck that was to follow? Had the assumption of death—when my slide was not checked by the rope I assumed death as certain—resulted in a partial dissolution of the spiritual and physical? Was it merely a mental effect due to a sudden and intense nervous strain? It is not within my province to discuss that which only death can prove; yet to me this experience was a convincing one; it convinced me that consciousness survives beyond the grave.

Had I died and passed on to another plane, I might have carried one memory with me. As I shot down the slabs and out over the edge of the sheer precipice, I saw stretched before me and below me the far-reaching, level, sunlit ocean of cloud, out of which we had climbed; I seemed to be diving straight into it. Above these clouds the sky was unclouded, a deep, profound blue from which the sun shone with dazzling
radiance. I should have taken with me a memory that a king might have envied.

Then I found myself hanging on the rope. The fact that I can remember no shock, and that I was not stunned, for my head received no blow, is interesting, as it bears out what I have already written on the feeling of detachment that was a feature of the fall. It was as though I was brutally dragged back to earth and earthly sensations. Simultaneously with the realisation that I had not been killed, that something had arrested my fall, came fear. It was a curious, paradoxical thing to happen. During the fall I was not afraid, and now the fall had been stopped I was desperately afraid. I clutched and clawed at the rocks, and gained a footing and a handhold. I paused for a moment to try to still the thumping of my heart and the clamour of my lungs, which had been squeezed in by the pressure of the rope. Then I climbed, somehow or other, up to the ridge.

This experience taught me that death by falling from a mountain is not to be feared. There is something terrible as well as incongruous in the thought of dying at the hands of a fellow-man. Possibly most people do not care very much how they die, so long as it is not a painful process; probably I would not care very much myself when it came to the point. But in cold blood, the thought of being killed, even instantaneously killed, by a mass of metal shaped by men's
hands and hurled through the air by explosives prepared by men, is inconceivably horrible.

Death on a mountain can be accepted as part of the scheme of things. It may be argued that death, however it comes, is part of the scheme of things, but this presupposes an absence of self-determination in the human race. A man does not deliberately gamble his life away on a mountain unless he wants to, whereas in war he takes other men's lives and deliberately exposes his own to the risk of death. He is both a murderer and a potential suicide.

Death is inevitably associated with personal loss, and the grief resulting from such loss is readily understandable, but why it should be necessary to parade and exploit such grief to an accompaniment of dingy black and dismal music is beyond my comprehension. If music accompanies my passing, I would prefer Mendelssohn's "Spring Song" to Mendelssohn's "Funeral March," and champagne is not a bad substitute for frock-coats and black armlets.

As a contrast to the doleful panoply of a Western burial there comes to me the memory of Chettan's death on Kangchenjunga. Chettan was a Sherpa porter: a tough nut, a hardy adventurer, a hero of many Himalayan expeditions. He was not a big man, but he was magnificently built, and his sharply pointed ears and his stiff straight hair that stuck straight out of his head, as though it was charged with electricity, suggested his nickname—"Satan." I can
see him now starting out from camp, with a huge load on his back and swinging uphill with effortless strides, propelled by legs that might have been made of steel.

An hour later he was dead; killed instantly; crushed and broken by one of Kangchenjunga’s ice-avalanches. He was carried down to the camp by his comrades; he who had set out so confidently, so purposefully, but an hour before. I saw him return. The pitiful remains, so broken and shattered, seemed merely the husk of all that went to the making of the man. Through death the shell had been broken, but that fire, that energy, that humorous devilment, that strength and courage, all that was Chettan, had gone elsewhere. Where? How could it have died?

I remember thinking what a pity it was that such a perfect physical machine should have been smashed. Yet there was nothing terrible or incongruous in death itself. It was a passing of day into night. Light does not end eternally because darkness comes. One day, one night, is but a phase in progression. So with life and death. Our existence on earth is dependent on the unity of the physical, mental and spiritual, just as water is dependent for its existence on the unity of oxygen and hydrogen, and can by electrolysis be reduced to its former constituents, neither of which bears any visible or tangible resemblance to water. With such a simple example of unity and dissolution before us, why should we doubt death?

We buried Chettan in the snow. As I stood by his
grave beneath those awful, ice-clad precipices of Kangchenjunga death seemed to me a simple matter; something neither important nor unimportant, but absolute. And simple; too simple to understand.

Death on a mountain is not frightening or appalling. Personal loss is one thing; fear of death another. I suppose if I were a philosopher I should care nothing for the place or manner of my death. As I am not, I must confess I would prefer to die amid natural surroundings. When I am on a hill it seems to me that my consciousness, the very essence of spirit, expands to blend with the universe. It is in such moments of spiritual exaltation that we lose all fear, and understand how by this simple process we call death, the spirit discovers that unity with a Divine love for which it craves.

All words, a poor medium for expressing beliefs. On what are beliefs founded? Not on the writings of others, not even on the writings of the Testaments, for man was never intended to accept without personal proof the written or the spoken word. Belief goes deeper. It is the child of a perfect unity between the visible and the invisible, conceived in the womb of conscience. It grows and strengthens in different ways. Many, like myself, discover in Nature the best medium for that development; for Nature answers in the simplest and most direct manner those puzzling questions which become all the more puzzling when surrounded by creeds and dogmas, not of our own
seeking but imposed upon us from infancy. The young men and women of to-day are seeking in Nature a solution to life's problems. To them a sectarian religion has become a duty to be evaded, and there is something wrong about a religion when it becomes a duty. Religion has still to escape from the pomps, dogmas and tyrannies of a past age. The future happiness and peace of man lie not with a concrete and remote God, worshipped by plan and ritual, but in a fuller appreciation of a God seen through the beauties of the universe. It does not lie with some who teach, but with all who teach. It is not a matter of segregation and sectarianism, but of a universal appreciation, a perfect understanding and affinity between man and his Maker. It is for this reason that men love Nature and turn their eyes upwards to the hills.
CHAPTER XX

THE PHYSICAL

Mountaineering provides one more proof of the intimate association of the physical with the mental in the human make-up. It is a comparatively simple matter to segregate the physical from the mental in terms of work done, but no man has yet explained what produces the force which animates the body, where this force originates or what it is. Generally speaking, a balance of power may be said to exist between the physical and the mental. In this connection a certain individual can in normal conditions do so much work. It is when the conditions are abnormal that this has been proved time and again not to hold good. Many examples are on record of ordinary weak men performing the most astounding feats of endurance, and the explanation has been that mental reserves have been called upon. This, perhaps, is a loose way of putting it, and the more logical explanation would appear to be that when called on imperatively a man is able consciously or subconsciously to transmute his mental or nervous energy into physical energy, or to use that energy in such a way that for all purposes it becomes physical
energy. I have seen and experienced too many instances of this to doubt that something of the sort must occur. In its occurrence lies the secret of success on the highest and most exacting mountain climbs, and there is no doubt that only through a joyful mental approach to such a task, by which I mean an immeasurable pleasure in the task, does the task become possible to a man. It is this power of transmuting mental energy to physical energy through the conscious application of the will-power that has raised man above the beasts.

There is one quality which is common to both physical and mental energy, and that is rhythm. It is only through rhythm that the body can give of its best on a mountain. Nothing is less conducive to success and safety in mountaineering than a body forced unrhythmically uphill. Jerky movements, sudden spurts of speed, gasping lungs, frequent halts, a variable output of energy, denote a lack of rhythm. On this score alone, a strong and otherwise skilful man may fail when put to the test.

Rhythm does not imply slowness. At the same time, there are very few mountaineers who can move both quickly and rhythmically, because the quicker the movements the more difficult it is to make them rhythmical.

Himalayan mountaineers are often asked as to what training is best for high-altitude mountaineering. The majority of questioners usually expect an answer
which includes abstinence from smoking and alcohol allied to a rigorous physical training. It is entirely fallacious to suppose that work in which the first requirements are the right mentality, stamina, rhythm and skill, is to be greatly assisted thus. Over-indulgence in abstinence, if I may be Irish for a moment, breeds a bigotry of thought which is liable to affect adversely anything to which that thought may be applied or directed. If a man cannot drink moderately, or if even moderate drinking affects his health, let him abstain, but abstinence merely to satisfy some obscure inhibition or Puritanical craving is as much a moral vice as over-indulgence, and all too often produces an unhappy and morbid type of mind which is productive of more evil than good. Moderation in all things is the only training worth while for mountaineering, allied to which is a deliberate cultivation of rhythm and breath-control. Mountaineering—and in particular Himalayan mountaineering—should never be anything but a pleasure; it should never become a duty.

Many mistake mountaineering for an athletic sport. Naturally a man must possess a reasonably fit and active body, but a fit and active body is not necessarily an athletic body. To be able to run a hundred yards, a mile or ten miles in good time does not in the least qualify a man physically to climb a mountain, apart from any question of skill or experience. In this I can speak with some authority, because I am myself an
incredibly inefficient athlete. The only prize I won in my life for an athletic event was for throwing a cricket ball.

A man needs to be fit within limits. If he cannot hold his breath for half a minute or his pulse-rate is abnormally high, it is probably safe to say that he is unlikely to be as good at a high altitude as a man who is normal in both these respects. But within limits there are no medical tests that doctors can devise which are of use in determining the fitness or unfitness of candidates for an Everest expedition, for the simple reason that no doctor, though some imagine they can do so, can probe a man’s mind or estimate in any way its probable reactions under stress of circumstances. There is only one man who has ever understood the relationship of mind and matter, and He lived 1935 years ago. The nature of the “miracles” He achieved is only just beginning to be realised.

There is another curious fallacy which colours many people’s conception of what a mountaineer should be. It is, that to be a successful mountaineer he must be both broad and brawny, and plentifully endowed with those knotted muscles which photograph so beautifully for the advertisements of correspondence courses in physical culture. It has often seemed to me that, as regards mountaineering, if photographs which depict victims before and after a course of physical culture were reversed, they would fit the case better. Developing muscles may result in an increase
of physical strength as regards activities such as boxing, wrestling and weight-lifting, but mountaineering does not involve punching a mountain, lifting it or wrestling with it, and the physical-culture product affords more often than not a pitiable spectacle on a difficult climb. Mountaineering is not a competitive sport in which men compete against one another. It is a pursuit which should involve nothing more competitive than a happy relationship between man and mountain. All that matters is that a man should be sufficiently fit in mind and body to enable him to enjoy that relationship.

Human strife is not fostered by those who rejoice in Nature, in beauty, in the open air, and in the physical well-being, the mental stimulation and the spiritual joy that contact with Nature brings. Wars are not manufactured on a hillside, they are manufactured amid the reek of cities. They are the product of mass suggestion, evolved amid the clangour of machinery, in the stuffiness of offices and council chambers, in streets and alleyways, amid dirt and disease.

Human happiness and peace are dependent first and last on healthful minds and healthful bodies. Anything that brings health in its train, that extends a man's vision, is a nail in the coffin of war. It is impossible for anyone of normal intelligence to look down from a hill on to a cityful plain without realising, firstly, how beautiful and how noble is our world and, secondly, how foolish it is not to live peaceably and
happily in it. It is a simple matter to make out a "logical" case for war, but "logic" is too often at loggerheads with instinct and conscience. Conscience declares war to be both foolish and wrong, and that a happy solution must be sought for human differences. It rejects, in part at least, the brutal evolutionary creed that only through unhappiness can man gain happiness. Surely unhappiness is not an intention of God, but is the result of man's own power of self-determination? The inexorable law of positives and negatives which obtains on this plane cannot be overlooked, but why must man endure so much misery to gain only a little happiness? That is the call that now goes up from the world; it is a call to God. Are we to assume free will or a Divine Intention? Or both? Progress in terms of the mental and the material has of recent years taken a leap forward, in excess of any single leap it has ever previously taken. It is a leap into the unknown, and our civilisation cries out aloud for a guiding hand. A new interpretation of ancient philosophies is needed, something simpler and less involved, something non-secular, non-dogmatic, non-ritualistic, in which the prime motive power is a love of Nature.

I believe that through physical and mental contact with the beauty of the universe about us a solution can be found for the difficulties now plaguing the world. The open-air movement now taking place all over Europe has immense possibilities for good.
There are difficulties, some of which are reflected in mountaineering. It is natural that some of the bad old instincts, particularly national instincts, should be carried to the hills, for man cannot shake off his prejudices and inhibitions in a day. Flags fly from the tent-poles of Himalayan expeditions, pitiful and absurd symbols of nationalism. If Mount Everest is climbed in 1936, it will be hailed as a great triumph for British mountaineers. Articles will appear in the British Press extolling the "British pluck," the "British bulldog spirit." We have lost the Poles but we have gained the highest summit in the world, many will cry, conveniently forgetful of the fact that no foreign expedition has ever received political permission to approach Mount Everest.

Nationalism is reactionary and deplorable in such a pursuit as mountaineering. British mountaineers rightly decry it in connection with recent developments in continental mountaineering, but they should remember that they themselves have helped to foster it by roping off Mount Everest for British mountaineers. Mountains should be accessible to mountaineers of all nationalities. Mountaineering is so essentially free in itself that no political bias or prejudice should be allowed to interfere with it. The brotherhood of mountaineers must ever symbolise the brotherhood of nations.

I do not think that some aspects of mountaineering which are causing concern to those who have the interests of mountaineering at heart need be taken too
seriously. I refer to its aspects of human competition. The spoiling of mountains for commercial gain is another matter. Here national pride is a force for good. It is good that the English Lake District should be protected from vandalism, because it is a part of England's glory. The pride in such a possession is a worthy feeling—it is the pride which tramples heavy-footed on the aspirations and ideals of others that is the unworthy motif in nationalism.

Competitive mountaineering inevitably breeds a callousness of outlook which is opposed to the best interests of mountaineering. Nature is outraged when an atmosphere of feverish human competition is introduced into her sanctuaries.

The fact that one man is physically stronger than another counts for little on a mountain. Endurance is the most important quality, and this is usually dependent on the power-weight ratio; in other words, the greater the power a man can put forward in relation to his weight the better. I have no statistics or figures available, but I should imagine that on the average a light man is capable of more energy over a long period per pound weight than a heavy man. I may be wrong, but this has always been my impression as regards those who climb mountains. According to the Royal Air Force Central Medical Board, every member of the 1933 Everest expedition, with one exception, was under average weight, and this exception was taken seriously ill. A classic instance of the
heaviest and strongest man being the first to collapse during the course of an arduous expedition is that of Petty-Officer Evans, whose incapacity to stand continual strain and prolonged hardship was one of the causes of disaster to Scott’s party on their return from the South Pole. Lightness and lissomness are of greater value in mountaineering than heaviness and muscular strength. A reasonably sound constitution is required for major expeditions on the highest mountains of the world, but if experience, skill, mentality and a naturally light body are taken into consideration, then the residual amount of strength necessary for climbing at the highest altitudes is relatively little.

I am glad to have had this opportunity of disillusioning those who associate mountaineering with burliness and physical strength, for there is probably no active pursuit where these qualities are less necessary. Lissomness is important, because in mountaineering probably more muscles are actively employed than in any other pursuit. The boxer, the wrestler and the weight-lifter develop certain muscles which are more handicapping than useful in other branches of human activity. The mountaineer, during the course of a long day’s climbing, has to use so many muscles in so many different ways that his body perforce remains lissom. No course of physical culture is equal in effect to a few hours’ climbing. It is true, of course, that some muscles are developed more than others. The
sinews of a guide who is used to keeping his "Herr" on a "tight rope" evoke the admiration.

It is a matter of opinion, experience and skill which branch of mountaineering is the most exacting physically. Most British mountaineers prefer rock-climbing to ice work, and find it less tiring. Many Alpine mountaineers find snow and ice work less fatiguing than rock-climbing. My own feeling is that while I like snow and ice work, I find that height for height a slope requiring continuous step-cutting is more exacting physically than steep and difficult rocks. Step-cutting is a knack, but it also entails a continuous output of energy. Here, if anywhere, rhythm is of vital importance. In a long bout of step-cutting rhythm enables the output of energy to be as smooth as it is continuous. The same applies in a lesser degree to rock-climbing. The man who is clumsy or inexperienced invariably uses more energy than is necessary. A great rock-climber such as Josef Knubel will climb the Mummery Crack on the Grépon speedily yet comfortably, placidly puffing at his pipe, whilst less skilful climbers, such as I, gasp and toil and sweat. Rhythm is allied to skill—it is skill. To see a pair of first-rate guides well used to climbing together on difficult ground is to realise how little mountaineering depends on strength and energy. "Hurry slowly" is the maxim of the mountaineer. It is better to go slowly and to keep on going than to go fast and rest at intervals. There are some who can go fast all the time; they are
the Olympians of mountaineering. The skilful mountaineer lounges uphill; his speed is such that he enjoys the scenery and the climbing all the time. Immediately he ceases to enjoy either he is going too fast.

It is fallacious to suppose that the legs do all the work in walking. In walking uphill they are merely levers actuated by the body. Once allow them to take charge and do all the work, and they soon tire themselves. Napoleon's dictum that an army marches on its stomach is nearer literal truth than he supposed, for it is the lower part of the body that directs the distribution of weight and the movements of the leg. An Alpine guide appears almost to slouch along on the level, because he walks not only with his legs but with his body. It is only habit and tradition that have made marching of the military type accepted as a standard of deportment. Amid all the physical drill that soldiers are "put through," the one thing that would enable them to move quickly over long distances without fatigue is untaught. It would be slovenly to slouch along, with feet scarcely clear of the ground instead of being lifted to an unnecessary height for the sake of discipline and smartness. Probably one of the reasons why the British army outdistanced the Germans in the retreat from Mons was due to the fact that the ruthless machinery of discipline and tradition had been unable to destroy the natural power of walking in our men to the same extent as it had in the Germans.
There are two sides to the physical in mountaineering—the doing and the experiencing; the former is the climbing, the latter the physical results that accrue from that climbing and from the exposure of the body to the existing conditions. Nothing is more miserable in mountaineering than to feel unfit on a mountain. The very healthfulness of the mountain brings healthfulness to men, but to be unhealthful on a mountain is to experience real unhappiness. Such unhealthfulness may be due merely to lack of fitness or to conditions such as exist at a high altitude, and the mind, knowing that the body is suffering temporarily, does not burden itself with doubt and is able to rejoice in the thought of future fitness. But when the body is unhealthy from other causes, mountaineering becomes a miserable business. Such unhealthfulness results in a harsh dissonance, which reacts on both body and mind. It needs a brave spirit to rise superior to such a disability.

It is a very different tale when the body is fit and nerves and muscles are able to answer the demands made upon them. This is to know a great joy. To be unfit, weary, worn out, uncertain of yourself and of the work you are doing, is to know wretchedness. For these reasons a man should only attempt that of which he is capable. It is necessary on occasions for a mountaineer to drive himself beyond the limits of pleasure and of skill, but to choose to do so deliberately is an abuse of all that is best in mountaineering. Such a misuse of experience, skill and strength is often in-
dicative of the competitive instinct. Some pit themselves against a mountain, and avow that their intention is to conquer it, to humble it, to set their feet upon it. They succeed in their climb, but what do they gain? Little of memory or experience. And frequently the mountain kills them; for Nature dislikes those who approach her in this manner.

There are degrees of tiredness in mountaineering. Tiredness that results from an unhealthy or unfit body is very different from that which results from a fit body subjected to a hard and long day on the mountain, which has not, however, overtaxed its strength. Such tiredness results in a sensation of happiness, goodwill and satisfaction with life. It is a mental bath; one of health's perfect reactions. It brings a man into closer touch with the hills than mere vitality, for is it not during moments of tiredness, when he is able to relax and rest, that the mountaineer realises the true greatness of the hills and their value to him? There are many physical senses through which a man is able to appreciate beauty: hearing, smelling, seeing, tasting, feeling. Are these physical or mental? Are they the strings or the notes? Whatever they are, it is through them that the beauty of the hills is made apparent.
CHAPTER XXI

THE MENTAL

In no pursuit is the control exercised by the mind over the body more in evidence than in mountaineering, for safety and success depend on a staunch alliance between the mental and the physical processes. There are occasions when the allies fall out. Ill-health is the most common instance of dissonance between mind and body; yet a healthy man, or at least a man who is not obviously unhealthy, sometimes experiences moments of mental inertia. "Black-outs" are well known in flying, and have probably accounted for the death of a number of expert pilots. For a second or a fraction of a second, the mind loses control of the body. This abrupt hiatus between mind and body sometimes occurs on a mountain. Most mountaineers who read this will recollect experiencing at one time or another in their lives a momentary slipping of the clutch between the mental and physical processes. Almost invariably the mind instantly regains control of the body, but there are occasions when it does not, and it may be that accidents have occurred thus.

The mind can play queer tricks when subjected to suggestion or strong emotion. Fatigue of body reacts
upon it in puzzling ways. The tired-out mountaineer sometimes imagines the strangest things, and is tricked by the eye into seeing non-existent objects, or by the ear into hearing non-existent sounds. The phenomena of tiredness can be very strange; it is even possible for two or more persons to be similarly deluded. A friend and I once experienced an exceptionally hard day of nineteen hours, during which only one short halt was possible. After a long struggle with adverse circumstances we reached comparative safety, worn out by our exertions and the mental stresses they had involved. We were descending a glacier when we were considerably puzzled to notice a greenish phosphorescent glow which appeared to emanate from our boots. It was an interesting example of a collective hallucination, if hallucination it was.

Many instances have been described of optical illusions and hallucinations of tired men, and some will be found within the pages of the *Alpine Journal*. Experiences, such as Shackleton’s, when he and his party were crossing the mountains of South Georgia are by no means uncommon. I imagined myself to be accompanied by another when climbing alone at 28,000 feet on Mount Everest. It is impossible to relegate such phenomena to the mental dust-bin. Some will assume without preamble a spirit presence, and will explain that under the stress of emotion or tiredness the mind becomes receptive of psychic phenomena; others will aver that such an experience is
essentially a mental-cum-physical experience. Neither they, nor I, nor anyone, understand the origin of thought or thought forms, and no dogmatic opinion of any kind as to the origin of such phenomena is permissible. All that can be said is that certain phenomena occur as the result of certain conditions. On such matters it is better to keep an open mind. Yet they come within the scope of this chapter; for whatever they are, it is the mind that records them.

From a mental point of view mountaineering offers a temporary freedom of thought from the petty restrictions often imposed on thought by an environment of bricks and mortar, and acts as a mental stimulus and tonic.

Some think of mountains as beautiful and others as ugly; some as a necessary part in the scheme of creation, others as unnecessary and even unsightly. Some fear and hate mountains, some love them; some are born with a love of mountains, others discover that love later. To each man his own opinion, his own sorrow, his own happiness. It is impossible to reduce to any level, high or low, the thoughts of others in regard to the hills. It is better simply to like or dislike, love or hate, than to seek a motive for such positive or negative instincts. It is sufficient to say that if you love the hills you will be happy when you are among them, and if you dislike or fear them you will be unhappy when you are among them.

In the eighteenth century mountains were disliked
and feared, and in the eighteenth century men endured physical torture at the hands of the law, and justice was too often only another name for tyranny and fear. Men lived dirtily and grossly, though there were some who discerned a principle of love and goodwill in the nobler and more beautiful aspects of the universe. In the twentieth century many still live ignobly and dirtily. Misery is rife. Men are tortured, murdered and exiled in the causes of political expediency and "patriotism." Yet, to judge by the trend of literature alone there are many more people than existed in the eighteenth century who take a happier view of life, who see in their surroundings something finer than mere mass, height, depth, breadth and substance, who can discern beauty even in apparent ugliness. The world progresses. The love men have for hills is one measure of its progress.

It is interesting to mark the stages mountaineering has undergone as regards the Alps, which are the cradle of the art. There was the inquisitive or exploration stage, in which, after countless centuries of taking the hills for granted, men set out to explore them, and at the same time conquer their own superstitions and fears. Then came the scientific age, in which men tried to persuade themselves that the only interest they had for mountains was a scientific one, and in which pseudo-scientists sought to disguise and protect their love for mountaineering from the ridicule
of their fellow-men with scientific excuses. It took the courage of men like John Ball, Mr. Justice Wills and Sir Leslie Stephen to emancipate mountaineering from science and reveal it to the world as a pursuit offering scope for the exercise and development of physical and mental qualities. Slowly but surely the old falsehoods and inhibitions were eliminated. Men began to realise that the mountains were worth while for their own sake, and that to adventure upon them needed no scientific excuse: the poets had realised this long before. Mountaineering as mountaineering laboured along, constantly tripping up on the draggled skirts of Victorianism. But once started it was not to be suppressed; once men perceived in the hills something more than inanimate matter they were eager that others should share in their joyous discovery. Yet, to begin with, mountaineering was indulged in for the most part only by the professional and leisured classes; time, money and the facilities for quick and cheap travel were lacking for others. For these reasons it gained a reputation for exclusiveness and even snobbishness; a reputation that exists to this day, not entirely without justification.

During the early years of this century the flame burned brighter and brighter. Then came the World War.

Since that carnage European civilisation has been striving to better itself materially and culturally. It has been sadly handicapped in many ways, and has
been left an evil legacy of fear; not, alas, a fear that is likely to prevent a repetition of the carnage, but one likely to accelerate it, for when fear exists hate and strife are natural concomitants. Anything which inspires fear between men, whether it be rearmament, a rupture of the social or economic order or a dictatorship rule, is certain to result in strife of some kind. Freedom is the antidote to fear. The teachings of the universe are of value in this respect, for though each object is subject to universal laws of motivity, it does not suffer from any conscious restriction, and is to all intents and purposes free to pursue the path that Providence ordains, which is the path exactly suited to it. Man, having been given the Divine power of self-determination, has perforce to steer his own course, and as there are many other men, it follows that he is constantly colliding and impinging on his fellow-men. A study of universal forces is of value in teaching him how to avoid unnecessary collisions, because the working of natural forces is not inconsistent with self-determination in mankind, and there is no reason why men should not live together in amity, provided they seek by every means in their power to eliminate the drunken pilot of fear who involves them in such disastrous collisions.

It is hardly logical to suppose that the social and economic system, as we know it in the West, can be altered in a night, but it will be altered. It may be that in terms of mechanical progress the world will
become retrogressive; though there seems no reason why a harnessing of natural forces should be inimical to progression. But so long as it progresses in terms of thought, that is all that really counts. So long as happiness is fundamentally dependent on love, and existence demands nothing more than food, shelter and warmth, progression must continue as part of the natural order of things.

Simplicity is the keynote of happiness, and when this fundamental fact is grasped, a great deal of what seems to us essential because we are used to it can be eliminated, and with it much human unhappiness. Failing a readjustment of material values, a temporary wrecking of our so-called civilisation is the only solution. When ruin, pestilence and famine have wiped out the centres of civilisation, have destroyed everything that is in the strictest sense unnecessary to human existence and human happiness, man will discover what are the basic essentials of life. This is a drastic solution, but failing a readjustment of human values, it appears to be the only way to happiness. The question arises, Can man adjust himself to the conditions imposed on him by the superficialities of his artificially created civilisation? If so, well and good; he will have achieved something extraordinarily difficult. If not, no compromise can be permanently satisfactory. The best thing that can happen is a war, pestilence and famine of such dimensions that the present order of things is destroyed, and those who
are left of the world's population set to work to build something better out of the ruins.

All this may seem far removed from men's mental attitude towards the hills, but in point of fact it is intimately associated with it. The hills not only take men away from a complex mode of existence, but they teach them that to be happy it is only necessary to have food, shelter and warmth. They bring them face to face with realities, and in doing so inculcate a valuable lesson in the association of simplicity and happiness.

For these reasons any development that tends to bring people into close touch with the natural order of things is of value to mankind, inasmuch as it helps them to gain in a sense of proportion. It is impossible for any thinking man to look down from a hill on to a crowded plain and not ponder over the relative importance of things. To take a simple view is to take a wider view. Whatever our beliefs, whatever our creeds from which we seek to extract happiness when we live on the plain, we find that things that have puzzled us are made clear when we stand on a hill. On a hill we are content to be content.
ON THE ADLERHORN.
CHAPTER XXII

THE SPIRITUAL

Men who love hills find in them something more than a medium whereby they are able to express themselves in terms of their physical force and mental consciousness; for hills not only possess a power of drawing out the best within a man, but of interpreting his inmost thoughts in terms of an even deeper awareness, which attunes him to forces outside the mental plane, inasmuch as they are not explainable in terms of pure thought. We may try to analye a beautiful view, to some extent we may describe it, yet there is some quality in it which defies analysis. There is some quality in a hill which defies analysis. Call it the spirit of the hill, call it anything you like, but no one has yet explained why it is hills have a power over men, why artists and poets find in them fit subjects for their artistry and poetry.

This of course applies to all beauty and all ugliness, all good and all evil. We can only assess the results. Where the root rests and why we react as we do, we cannot even conjecture. The hills bring happiness. Why? Through a rejuvenated metabolism? Through muscular exercise and development?
Through a rest from care and all the vexing things of ordinary existence? It is not a complete explanation. Even in physical things our knowledge is very limited. No one knows what a human nerve is, or how the brain works; electricity has still to be explained. Who are we, then, to dogmatise on any physical or mental phenomenon when our knowledge is so pitifully limited? Who am I that I should even write on a subject of which I know nothing? I can only write of what I feel, and to me what I feel is infinitely more important than what I think, because what I feel is what I am and what I think is merely a superficial means by which I endeavour to express what I feel—a task beyond all wit or understanding.

If, therefore, I am confronted with a view of Mont Blanc at dawn, seen from the Jura hills, I experience a variety of strange sensations. I may experience physical reactions in the same way that an inspiring piece of prose, poetry or music reacts on some peoples tear-ducts, blood circulation or respiratory system. No one can tell me why I experience these sensations, nor can they tell me why I should experience a certain set of sensations whilst someone else experiences a completely different set of sensations or perhaps no sensations at all. Explain this and one of the major problems of the universe will have been solved. We should know what beauty is.

Some try to explain human emotions as being due to certain wave motion and radiation. Everything,
they say, radiates energy in some form or other, and this impinges through the senses on to the brain, which in its turn reflects this energy in the form of nervous reactions. If this is indeed so, then it is easy to go one step further and say that different shapes, combinations of shapes and colours radiate different waves. Thus Mont Blanc at dawn radiates its own particular wave, which is dependent on the exact circumstances of that particular dawn for its frequency, wave-length, amplitude, etc., for its effects on a particular person. In the same way that particular person is dependent on all manner of things for his "reception" of Mont Blanc at dawn. It is manifestly impossible for Mont Blanc at dawn to have any effect whatever upon him if he is blind; whilst a violent stomach-ache will cause the receiving valves to howl and cause the set to oscillate violently and unsympathetically.

It is an amusing idea to toy with, and should be especially acceptable to those people who like to explain things that puzzle them in material terms and then magnificently pass on to another problem worthy of their intellect. But supposing this theory were correct, even these folk would find it a trifle difficult to go one step further and explain exactly what the wave in question is composed of and how it came to be there at all.

Every avenue of thought on any and every subject leads to the conception of a central and supreme point
from which all positive energy must emanate, a point of a pure Intelligence which men call God. Therefore, my hypothesis is that any emotion inspired by beauty which has good as its motif is one inspired directly by God, whereas an emotion which has its roots in evil is due to some interplay of self-determining human forces, which being a gift of God are not directly controllable by Him, impinging on a particular person or persons. The sole arbiter between good and evil is conscience.

These hypothetical speculations— they are nothing more—suggest that the benefit men derive from the hills other than physical benefit cannot be explained, and this dry-as-dust argument merely ends where it began. Sometimes on a hill it is better to feel than to think. As regards happiness, thought can achieve nothing that faith cannot achieve more easily. On a hill we are led time and again through beauty, and our reactions to beauty, towards the conception of God. To have faith in the unseen is not a cowardly way of evading the practical issues of life, as some would have us believe—it is, surely, the obvious and logical way of grasping their meaning. It is better to be happy than unhappy, other things being equal, and if a man is happy in a belief, does it matter what he believes? It is better for him, and those he comes into contact with, if he is happy in idolatry than if he is unhappy in the true faith, whatever that may be. A fool's paradise is preferable to a wise man's hell.
It is also not evading the issue to believe in the survival of the spirit. My own experiences on and off the hills have convinced me in a survival of intelligence. Lacking such a belief, the whole conception of evolution falls to the ground. It is not credible that any creative power could create merely to destroy, or could cause misery to some and happiness to others—through no direct effect of self-determination—merely as a passing whim. No faith in survival implies no faith in God, which to any thinking person implies unhappiness or at least a lack of happiness. Science teaches us that matter is indestructible. This in itself suggests survival in some form. From a purely selfish point of view it gives me something more than pleasure to stand on a hill with a wide horizon before my eyes and say, "Here am I. One day life, as I think of it here, must pass from me. My body, which was drawn from the earth, will become again a part of earth; its atoms will contribute to this beauty now before my eyes. These very eyes, marvellous though their workmanship is, shall crumble to dust, these arms that have pulled, these legs that have propelled, this heart and ungs and brain that have taken me to this summit that I may enjoy the beauties and glories of creation, will be no longer what they are. I shall have no further use for them. The house has fallen to pieces, but the tenant has merely gone elsewhere. None of this beauty can be lost. These hills that lie before me, this sky above me, this distance in which
my vision seeks repose, this hill I have scaled, have become a part of memory and experience—a part of me. Time, space, death, matter nothing when I can gaze into the infinite, when I can mingle so agreeably with the cosmos. There is nothing to fear. Because I lack understanding, I may be overawed by the grandeur and glory of it. I may know physical fear on the precipice or ice-slope. But I know that ultimately there is no fear, only love—the love of God.
CHAPTER XXIII

THE THREADS

No one is expected to agree with the opinions and sentiments expressed in this volume, which has been written solely for my own amusement and profit, because experience has taught me that no two men think alike on the meaning of the hills. If, however, I have opened up avenues of thought, which may result in some, who have yet to "discover" the hills, being bitten with the desire to go and see for themselves "what it is all about" and why "this fellow writes like he does about them," I shall be well content, because it is my firm conviction that the peace and happiness of mankind lie, not only in a development of natural resources and an amassing of superficial comforts through the exploiting of inventive genius, but in an appreciation of beauty, particularly natural beauty.

There are many pursuits in which one quality is developed at the expense of another. Some tend to develop brawn rather than brain; others develop mental agility but are liable to lead to a neglect of physical health. The hills have a capacity for welding into a harmonious whole the physical, mental and
spiritual qualities of man; they have also the power to reveal the fundamental and simplest things from a welter of things that do not matter yet loom large at low levels.

The value of the hills can in one respect be focused to a central point—happiness. Their beauty enables those who love them to discover happiness. People discover happiness in many and diverse ways—some do on a hill. Why do hills inspire happiness?

I have tried in this volume to describe a little of the happiness I have gained through my wanderings upon them: adventure, friends, healthful exercise, an intriguing technique, beautiful surroundings, memories.

Mountaineering is a happy pursuit, because it provides through climbing and contemplation a union of the physical and mental qualities. Apart from the obvious benefits of healthy exercise and mental rest from the perplexing problems that arise from our ordinary vocations, it exercises the brain by demanding of it constant analysis, care and watchfulness, and brings a peace of being that comes as a mental and spiritual bath after the hurly-burly of town life.

Mountaineering provides not only a holiday from our usual surroundings, and even from our usual selves, but develops natural faculties, which artificial surroundings and the exigencies of civilisation tend to thwart rather than stimulate.
Some seek the hills for rest and recreation; some regard them merely as offering scope for their physical energies; some know that to be among them is an essential condition of existence. It is impossible, therefore, to generalise on a subject so complex, and one which involves so many ramifications in its modes of approach. All that matters is happiness, and in this gift the hills are unstinting to all, whatever the mode of approach.

Memory is the best measure of happiness. The hills endure in memory. They bring a bright and sudden colour to the drab slate of doubt and discontent; they shine in a single illuminating ray through the involved dogmas—religious, political and psychological—with which men are apt to surround the real issues of life.

Those who love Nature never cease to hear her song: the song of the high, wild and lonely places is ever in the ears of the mountaineer, the beauty and rhythm of the universe ever on the borderline of his consciousness. Beauty lives eternally in memory; once seen, once known, it is immutable, an experience gained by the spirit in its progression.

The perfect hill memory is one in which time is vanquished and the mountaineer is enabled to see again some scene of marvellous beauty or hear again the voice of a friend in one of those instant and vital visions that flash unchallenged through the mind.
Memory is most easily wooed during moments of inaction and meditation. Some people tend to associate meditation with an impractical outlook on life. In this hurrying Western world, with its slavery to time, men get more than their fair share of action. A positive is impossible, on this plane of existence, without a negative, and action can only be visualised as an opposite to inaction. Therefore inaction is necessary in the scheme of things. We experience it when sleeping, but this is not the same thing as conscious inaction. A negative must be aware of its complementary positive if it is to appreciate its function.

To relax the body and, at the same time, detach thought from the affairs of the present and apply it to any place that memory suggests, or to attune it to spiritual forces outside the range of physical perception, is to enjoy a mental and spiritual bath. In the East the value of meditation and of training the mind to eliminate extraneous and unessential thought has long been recognised. As a mental tonic, the value of only half an hour a day spent thus is immense. The hills teach the value of meditation.

The mountaineer benefits, not only from healthful exercise, but from the mental relaxation that mountain-eering affords. When he returns from his holiday he discovers in memory something as healthful as the holiday itself to sustain him for many months of city life.
Time may weary limbs and muscles, but it can never weary a man for the hills—not if he has a feeling for them other than the mere desire to climb them. The hill-lover does not ask to climb hills so much as to be among hills. In youth he is something of a slave to his physical energy, but as time progresses he learns to strike a balance between energy and affection. He becomes less of a fanatic in terms of the physical and more of a philosopher. And as age creeps upon him the love he has for hills cancels any vain regrets he might have entertained for the loss of his physical strength.

Only time can prove to me whether I am right or wrong; but I feel that if I live to be old I shall not chafe against my physical limitations. I shall only ask for sufficient strength to hobble to the hills. I may have to content myself with the valley, whence I can gaze upwards at the heights; yet the pines will smell as they always smelt, the flowers will be as fresh and colourful as before, and the stream will sing the same song. In age I look to be born again; vision shall carry me where limbs cannot, and memory shall be my guide.

Generalisations are impossible as regards men’s feeling towards the hills; yet I believe that natural beauty will be more deeply appreciated in the future. It may even be that we are on the brink of undreamt-of discoveries in regard to our relationship with universal forces and the relationship of the body, mind and spirit.
The world, the sea, the earth, the hills stand out as fundamental facts, subject to evolutionary changes, but in a very different way from those that order the progress of men. That so complicated an experiment as the creation and evolution of self-determining man should be tried out in an environment relatively almost mutationless is the supreme miracle of the universe. That it was a necessary experiment and one rendered possible by a Purpose we must assume, and having assumed, use our gift of self-determination as best we can. And this tells us to seek an inspiration and a solace for our self-made muddles in the simplicity and quietude of Nature, where our thoughts, wearied of seeking solutions to problems that are rendered all the more vexing by the difficulties with which we invest them and our neglect of the fundamental factors inherent in them, are able to cease their twistings and turnings and abide peacefully and harmoniously with those forces of creation which we know to be present but cannot visualise.

And so from the hills we return refreshed in body, in mind and in spirit, to grapple anew with life's problems. For a while we have lived simply, wisely and happily; we have made good friends; we have adventured well. The hills have taught us to be content in our faith and in the love of God who created them.

The End