Crossing a gap back into Coire Bhasteir we set our faces towards Sligachan. The worsening weather mattered little to us as we hurried over the miles of spongy cushions and leapt the pockets of peat for the last time. To these deer-forests we had already grown not accustomed only but reconciled. Tedious, as preambles, they prove by virtue of contrast somewhat pleasing conclusions to the mountain expeditions.

In the Isle of Skye the mountain views have a beauty of their own; the exquisite variety of form, the glow and play of colour, the girdle of waters, and the distant background of bristling peaks form an *ensemble* which no prudent man would try to describe until he had fully imbibed the influences of the scenery.

The climbing itself is immense; its excellence surpassed our expectations. All the manifest routes have, apparently, been accomplished, and the aspect of such as I saw in the distance struck me as remarkably fine; for exploring enterprise there is yet wide scope. Thus the island offers a rich and varied store to mountaineers of differing tastes and preferences. Of our party it was said that we 'worked hard.' It is possible we did; it is certain we enjoyed it. Our week in Skye will remain a delightful memory. It was the hope of each of us, as we bade them farewell, to be able ere long to say SALVETE to the Coolin.

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## AN ASCENT OF MOUNT HERMON.

BY G. W. LLOYD.

E. A. ALDRIDGE and I went this spring for a five weeks' tour in Palestine. There were two things we wanted to do, which apparently everyone out there seemed to think unusual, if not impossible: (1) to make a *walking* tour through the country, instead of riding or driving; (2) to make the ascent of Mount Hermon, which our Palestine friends informed us they did not think could be done so early in the year.

The first of our plans we did not quite carry out, as, owing to illness and lack of time, we had to ride the last three stages of our tour, but we did walk some 250 miles, and walking in Palestine is a very different thing from walking in Switzerland, owing to the intense heat and oppressiveness of the air, especially

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in the Jordan Valley and in the plain of the Dead Sea, the latter being 1300 ft. below the level of the Mediterranean, and said to be the lowest depression on the surface of the earth.

The second of our plans we did eventually accomplish.

Here perhaps I had better attempt to give a short description of Mount Hermon. Hermon, which has been called the Mt. Blanc of Syria, lies to the N. of Palestine proper, being actually in Syria, Damascus lying some 25 miles to the E. of it. The Arabic name for it is Jebel-esh-Sheik, which means 'mountain of the whitehaired'; it is more a chain than a peak, extending from N.E. to S.W. for a distance of 20 miles, its highest point being about 9050 ft. above the Mediterranean. The Bible names for it, as well as Hermon, are Shenir and Sirion, both meaning 'the Banner,' a fitting name for the great white standard it raises aloft over the whole land.

Mount Hermon, from a climbing point of view, presents no difficulties at all. In fact in summer the usual way the ascent is made is by riding. Nevertheless Mt. Hermon, I think, must have a fascination for all lovers of mountains both from its historical associations and from its 'noble and majestic appearance.' Well did Moses, 3000 years ago, describe it as 'that goodly mountain.'

'A remarkable fact about Hermon is that its white dome is visible from nearly every section of both eastern and western Palestine. Not only from Galilee but from many points in Samaria and Judæa as well, from Olivet and the Dead Sea (which is 120 miles distant), from Gilead and from Bashan, it is clearly seen and is looked up to as the great landmark of the country,' so says a writer in 'Picturesque Palestine.' We were unfortunate in only getting our first view of Hermon when N. of the Sea of Galilee, but when we did see it on that occasion some 35 miles away, covered with fresh snow and glistening in the sun, it presented a sight never to be forgotten.

When at Jerusalem we had made enquiries from a friend who had been up as to the best starting place for the ascent. We were told Shib'a on the S.W. or Medjel-esh-Shems on the S. were usual starting places for people intending to ride up; also Hasbeiya, a small town in the valley of the Hasbany River or Upper Jordan, which lies to the W. of Hermon, is a convenient place from which to make the ascent.

As, however, we had not time to go up the Hasbeiya Valley on the western side, we decided to make for Medjel-esh-Shems, and as that place is situated quite at the southern extremity of



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the mountain and a long distance from the top, we hoped to find a cave or sleeping place on the mountain somewhere above it where we could spend the night.

We were told to look out for bears, and one of our Palestine friends seriously advised us to take a man with a gun as a protection against them. We did afterwards actually see a bear that had been shot on Mount Hermon.

Before leaving Jerusalem on our walk northwards we had to engage a dragoman. Mr. Hughes, the most kind and obliging proprietor of Hughes' Hotel at Jerusalem, where we had been staying, provided us with a very efficient young man who accompanied us on horseback, armed with a revolver and a belt of cartridges, of which he was very proud. He rejoiced in the name of Jamil, which he informed us meant 'Beautiful,' and which he evidently thought a very appropriate name.

We left Jerusalem on April 6, and in due time, after a delightful tour through Palestine, we arrived on Wednesday, April 19, at Medjel-esh-Shems, *i.e.* 'The Watchtower of the Sun,' a Druse village 3700 ft. above the sea, on the southern slopes of Hermon, where we made enquiries as to the possibility of finding a sleeping place on the mountain. We found there was another village called Arny, much more conveniently placed to make the ascent from, about 6 hrs.' ride further on; so we set out for it accompanied by a Druse, who could talk a little English, as our guide. After a rather exciting ride over mountains, snow-fields and a raging torrent, we arrived at Arny just before dusk. Our guide got lodgings for us with a friend of his, by name Simon Mackoul, a Greek Christian, and we engaged his brother to act as our guide up the mountain for the next day. Our host spread mattresses for us on the floor of the guest room, and we had a very comfortable night.

Arny is a small village, 4500 ft., situated at the foot of the highest point of Mount Hermon on its eastern side. We were told that every winter for a considerable period it is completely buried in snow.

Last winter, which was the most severe one experienced out there for the last thirty years, our host told us that he had been shut up in his house, unable to get out, for fifty-four days, and that the snow had accumulated to a height of 4 metres above the roof of his house.

Next morning, April 20, we started at 5.15, accompanied by our Druse friend and our landlord's brother, the latter of

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*G. W. Lloyd, photo.* *Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.*

MT. HERMON.

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whom was armed with a small pickaxe, stuck in his belt, which was the nearest approach to an ice axe we could find. His dress was hardly what one is accustomed to for a mountain ascent. He wore the flowing robe of the country, he had no stockings, and on his bare feet were the usual native slippers with no nails in them, which as he attempted to walk up the hard snow slopes literally answered to their name.

Mount Hermon, as mentioned above, directly faces Arny, and as it was almost a cloudless morning we could without any difficulty trace our way up; the actual summit, however, cannot be seen from Arny, as it lies some little distance back behind the main ridge of the mountain.

On leaving the village we crossed a little stream (the infant Pharpar), and then gradually ascended by some bare fields and rough ground till we came to the foot of one of the shallow snow gullies or hollows which lie between the several rock ribs, which are a feature of this side of Hermon. We continued our ascent first by the snow, which was quite hard, and then by the rock rib to the right of it. We followed this rib practically to the top of the main ridge; it was not steep and there was no difficulty of any description to our upward progress. We had a short stop about half-way with a wonderful view of fleecy clouds far below us stretching away to the S.E. over the Hauran (the land of Bashan). We reached the summit just after 9, the first of us arriving there 20 min. before our guide. Baedeker says, 'Mt. Hermon culminates in three peaks; the northern and southern, about 500 paces apart, are each about 9050 ft. in height; the western about 100 ft. lower is separated from the others by a small valley, and is about 700 paces distant from them. On the S. peak are some ruins (called Kasr 'Antar), probably belonging to a temple which is mentioned by St. Jerome' (A.D. 300–400).

We stood on the S. peak. We could distinguish the scattered blocks of stone of the ruins mentioned above which were almost buried in snow. The view was disappointing owing to the haze; the great snowclad range of Lebanon stood out well, but we could barely distinguish the Mediterranean, which is only some 30 miles distant, and could see very little of the details of the country to the S. and to the E. A strong wind was blowing and it was very cold, so after a photograph had been taken of our party, we commenced the descent. As soon as we found a convenient rock to shelter us from the wind, we enjoyed, under the now genial rays of the sun, our first meal on the mountain. Hunger satisfied, we continued the descent by



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the snow gully to the right of our ridge, which reached a long way down towards the bottom of the mountain, and down which we enjoyed some moderate glissades. Next afternoon we were in Damascus, the most ancient city in the world.

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## DR. PACCARD'S LOST NARRATIVE: A NOTE.

By HENRY F. MONTAGNIER.

It is doubtful whether any chapter of the early history of mountain exploration has proved more attractive or more perplexing to students of Alpine literature than the conquest of Mont Blanc. The rival claims of Dr. Paccard and Jacques Balmat to the discovery of the route to the summit and the initiative of the expedition have been a matter of controversy for more than a century and a quarter. And, although a small library of books, pamphlets and magazine articles has been written about the subject during this long period, the question as to which of the two climbers played the leading rôle in their daring undertaking has not yet been satisfactorily settled.

It was asserted soon after the ascent that Dr. Paccard claimed far more than his due share of the credit for the successful expedition; that the route had been discovered by Balmat in the course of a perilous excursion alone above the snow-line, and that the doctor could never have reached the summit without the aid and encouragement of his more stalwart companion. An anonymous writer took up Dr. Paccard's defence in a brief note in the 'Journal de Lausanne' of February 24, 1787, and on May 12 the doctor published in the same journal two affidavits (each signed by Balmat in the presence of two witnesses), in which it is set forth that he, and not the guide, was the first to indicate the route and to lead the way to the summit, and that Balmat had accompanied him merely as a porter in the absence of the guide he usually employed, and had been duly paid for his services.

With the exception of a few passing allusions to his claims in letters in the 'Journal de Savoie' of Chambéry nearly forty years afterwards,* these two documents are the only printed statement made by Dr. Paccard with reference to his ascent that has thus far been brought to light. Unfortunately for his cause, however, they remained hidden in the pages of the obscure periodical in which they appeared for more than a century, and, when finally unearthed and published by Mr. Whymper in his guide to 'Chamonix and the

* See the two letters reprinted in *A. J.* vol. xxv. pp. 621–4, in which Dr. Paccard maintained, after thirty-seven and thirty-nine years, that he was the first to indicate the 'ancien passage' as a route to the summit.

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