

helped me, and the last part of the ridge was broad and easy, in fact it was not a ridge at all. I gained the rocky summit at 12.15 P.M. thence going a little way towards the snow summit¹⁵ which is 100 ft. higher. But the mist became very thick and I saw it was hopeless to think of going over it and down to the Ormont Valley. I did not trouble to go on to the summit in the fog, but started down at 12.35 and almost at once it began to snow very hard, large wet flakes. I had followed tracks up the last rock-face, making arrows in the snow patches that I came across, but now I soon lost my route, and, on reaching an arrow, could not remember whether the arrow pointed the direction of ascent or descent—it was in a horizontal snow band. I got a little flurried as there was only the one way down by the stanchions, and I could not see 10 yards. The rocks were wet and there was no ridge to follow. But in a few minutes I struck ground I recognised and reached the *mauvais pas*. It went easily enough, though I had to approach it by sitting down on a slab covered with slush. At 1.15 to 1.30 P.M. I got below the snow storm, could see, and took a short halt to recuperate. I got off the rocks at 2.25 without trouble, though they were wet and of a type easier to ascend than descend. I reached Anzeindaz at 3 and Gryon at 6.45 P.M. The lower part of the walk was delightful and I had my last happy meal under a tree in great comfort and contentment.

[We publish Mr. Hope's interesting paper with pleasure, but, at the same time, disassociate the JOURNAL from sharing the lamented writer's views or methods of solitary mountaineering.—*Editor*, 'A.J.']

THE FIRST TRAVERSE OF THE TWIN PEAKS OF MOUNT KENYA.

THE traverse of the Peaks of Mount Kenya was a project which had been occupying my mind for nearly two years—perhaps even before Wyn Harris and I had succeeded in making the ascent of the Twin Peaks in January 1929. The first ascent of the highest peak—Batian—had been made by Sir Halford Mackinder with the late César Ollier and Joseph Brocherel, who climbed the S.E. face of Nelion as far as the head of the S. ridge, and, failing to reach the summit of Nelion, traversed to the Diamond Glacier reaching the summit of Batian thereby.¹ Our route was also up the S.E. face of Nelion but we traversed the latter and crossed over to Batian.

¹⁵ *Sic*—Mr. Hope has omitted the name of the peak. It appears to be the Diablerets.—*Editor*.

¹ *A.J.* 20, 102–10.

The S. face had been attempted by Mr. Hausburg with the same guides²—but all the northern faces and ridges, together with the W. face, and the W. and S.W. ridges, were virgin ground. We had examined and attempted the N.E. face in January 1929, and in December I was able to reconnoitre the N. face and the W. ridge, which I had also examined from above the Tyndall Glacier, on its S. side. The hanging glaciers on the N. face forbade a direct attack. The W. ridge is the most beautiful thing on the mountain, and though it is of tremendous length, the eye is irresistibly drawn thither from the impossibilities of the neighbouring faces. It has its origin in a col between Point Piggott and the Main Peak, and rises in a series of great sweeps to a point where it meets the N.E. ridge; then it turns S. and runs to the summit of Batian.

Taking pack-ponies and a few natives, H. W. Tilman and I left Nanyuki³ towards the end of July 1930. The journey to our top camp was uneventful save for a meeting with rhino and elephant; the usual series of forest, bamboo, giant heath, moors, etc. Heavy rain, some trouble with the boys and impatience to reach the base of operations, made it less pleasant than it should have been. We found a delightful cave in which to make our top camp at the head of the Mackinder Valley, at the foot of the Peak. The natives went down to a lower camp with instructions to pay us periodic visits.

The weather cleared up and we started on our task immediately. My previous explorations had left me with a clear idea of the possibilities, and we were able to make for the best points from which to reconnoitre the various lines of approach. During the course of our reconnaissances we made the first ascents of Dutton Peak (about 16,100 ft.) and Point Peter; the latter is a short, though rather difficult climb. Dutton Peak is directly in front of the N. face, and commands an extremely fine view both of that face and of the W. ridge; and what we saw of these proved of vital importance later. From its summit we could see the hopelessness of trying to tackle the W. ridge from the Northey Glacier, or of gaining it from higher up the N. face. These were the last alternatives to attacking the W. ridge direct from the col.

Accordingly on July 31 we set out to reach the col. We left camp at 7 A.M. and crossed over a small ridge to the snout of the Joseph Glacier. We got on to its true right side by steps cut into hard ice, and up a small ice chimney. Quite difficult work led to the centre of the glacier, where a long ice cliff was turned on the right. Working back to the left we reached a large bergschrund at the foot of the steep ice couloir leading to the col. Cutting across this and up the couloir for a short distance, we took to the very rotten and rather difficult rocks on the right, reaching the summit of the col at 11.30.

² *A.J.* 20, 102–10.

³ A village at the western foot of Mt. Kenya.

We were met by a really wonderful view of the W. face. I think I have never seen anything so utterly appalling. Two hanging glaciers are its chief feature, and, with the exception of the summit rocks and a belt of ice-swept rocks below the upper hanging glacier, it offers the appearance of one vast ice wall. At its foot flows the Tyndall Glacier. There appears to be no possibility of reaching the col from this side. The first obstacle on the W. ridge is what I have named the *Petit Gendarme*; above it towers the *Grand Gendarme*, appearing to be the most formidable obstacle on the ridge. Our object in going to the col was to look for a way round the *Petit Gendarme* to the S. We could not see very far, but could perceive the start of a possible line of traverse. Having come up to the col at top speed, in order to be there before the mists came up, we did not feel fit to tackle the traverse—even to see what it looked like round the corner.

On the summit of the col we debated as to when we should attack the ridge. We had now enough data to justify the attempt; the weather too was quite good; also we had cut steps up to the col, and these would not last much more than a day. On the other hand we were barely acclimatized and would probably get fitter if we waited—we were yet hardly past the headache stage; also, if we were to ascend Point Piggott, we should be able to get a clear view of the traverse round the *Petit Gendarme*. Had we done so, I doubt whether we should have attempted it. As it was we decided to make the attempt on the morrow, though I confess I was somewhat daunted by the appearance of the ridge. Descending, we took the left bank of the Joseph Glacier owing to the danger of rock avalanches on the other side in the afternoon.

Camp was astir at 3 A.M. on August 1. Dawn found us at the Joseph Glacier. Our steps were intact and we made a rapid ascent of the glacier. Crossing the bergschrund, we cut steps diagonally up the couloir to a rib of rocks on the left. This took time, but, when we reached the col we were at a point very much closer to the start of the W. ridge than that which we had reached on the previous day. The intervening distance lay partly over a difficult cornice and might have taken us an hour or more. We reached the col just before 8. It was extremely narrow and as we sat on it our legs dangled over the Tyndall Glacier. We mounted immediately to a snow ledge at the start of our line of traverse, and looked round the corner. It was not good. The whole of the face was plastered with ice and snow, and steps had to be cut, either in thin ice or rather precariously balanced snow.

A rib of iced rock prevented our seeing more than a rope's length ahead. This rib was gained after some labour and we were confronted by the same prospect. So it went on—I forget how many times. Sometimes the ice was too thin for steps, and a large area had to be chipped away before hold could be found in the smooth slabs beneath; at others the snow was in a dangerous condition



Photo, E. E. Shipton.

Mt. Kenya, upper part of W. face, W. ridge to left.



Photo, E. E. Shipton.

Midget Peak from foot of Point John.



Photo, H. W. Tilman.

A glimpse of W. face from depression at base
of W. ridge.

and had to be cleared to the ice or rock beneath. It was all very exposed, though there was little danger from above. Once our way was quite blocked, and an iced chimney had to be climbed to a higher line of traverse. Several times retreat was suggested, but hope of better things round the next rib urged us on. Also I felt certain that if we were turned on this traverse we should never get past the *Petit Gendarme*. The last of these steps was the worst, and three attempts were made before we could round the last rib and reach a gully leading to a gap behind the Gendarme. The ice in the gully was difficult, sometimes only thinly covering an outcrop of rock. However we could at last see where we were, and, after difficult climbing reached the ridge behind the *Petit Gendarme*. It was 11.40. The mists were enveloping the Peaks and we had only a glimpse of what lay before us on the *Grand Gendarme*. However, having studied it well from below we knew all the features of the ridge. We made a very brief halt—enough to swallow a mouthful of chocolate and to consider our position. A suggested return across our traverse was turned down!

We started to climb on to the N. face of the *Grand Gendarme*. The rocks were warm and dry and our spirits rose accordingly. At this point too we were relieved of the burden of route-finding as only one line of ascent was possible. The rock was rotten and from time to time we were obliged to dislodge boulders in order to effect a passage. However it was a welcome change from the work we had previously been engaged in.

The initial traverse was not very difficult, but when we had to make our first upward movement the difficulties increased. A hard step led to a ledge directly below the summit of the *Grand Gendarme* and we were faced by two alternatives: a traverse to the left into a gully in the N. face, or a face climb to the main ridge above the *Grand Gendarme*. We found the former to be crowned by a small hanging glacier and so resorted to the latter. A crack was climbed to a small overhang which stopped us until Tilman wedged himself into the crack and gave me a shoulder. An exposed step on rotten rock then led to the ridge.

From here there was no alternative but to keep to the ridge and tackle the next four pinnacles direct. The first yielded quite easily, but led us to a second of a most formidable character. It overhung at the bottom and another shoulder was necessary before finger-holds could be reached. After a few strenuous movements lodgment was effected on the face of the pinnacle. The holds were minute and the rock almost vertical. The top of the pinnacle was reached only after severe climbing. It was the most difficult individual step on the climb.

Snow started falling lightly. It is difficult to know when the weather is about to turn really bad, as on Kenya a light fall of snow is the rule in the afternoon. Whatever is meant it is unpleasant and calculated to damp one's morale. The next two pinnacles yielded

without great difficulty and we reached the point of junction of the W. and N.E. ridges. We turned southwards and looked along the long and almost horizontal ridge leading to the summit, which I had always thought would prove to be the most trying part of the climb. We could not see far and a long series of pinnacles vanished into the mist a few hundred feet from us. A descent on either side of the ridge was quite out of the question, so there was nothing for it but to follow the arête. At first the climbing was rather easy and, for a moment, our anxiety about being able to reach the summit was relieved. This stretch did not last long and difficult ridge climbing on unsound rock faced us. Soon we found ourselves on the brink of a chasm, into which we were forced to rope down. Cutting along an icy crest we reached another pinnacle, and more difficult work followed. The rock here is of a hard columnar formation, resembling that on the ridge of the Grépon ; indeed the climbing is very similar. At length a final pinnacle was turned and we were faced by difficult ice below the summit of Batian. This simply had to 'go' and we attacked with great eagerness. The ice was hard and the positions awkward, but at last the summit rocks were grasped and we clambered, breathless, on to the top. The time was 4.20 p.m. Our only halt had been to swallow a mouthful of chocolate behind the *Petit Gendarme*.

The relief was very great. I was familiar with the route down and felt reasonably safe though much work remained to be accomplished, and at top speed. Very little halt could be allowed for meditation on our position and past efforts, and we had to begin the descent almost immediately. Before doing so, however, we each consumed a tin of beef essence. Mine was bad, which I did not notice until it had been half eaten. For this I was afterwards to suffer.

The rocks on the S. slope of Batian were plastered with ice and snow, but even so they were easy compared to what we had just been on, and we descended fairly quickly. What should have been an easy balancing movement round a corner into the Gate of the Mists was rendered extremely difficult by *verglas*. A disappointment was in store for us when we reached the Gate of the Mists. On previous occasions I had always found good snow there. On this occasion however, when time was of vital importance, we were met by hard ice demanding prolonged cutting. Moreover a huge cornice overhung the Diamond Glacier forcing us to keep well down on the slope overhanging the sheer wall of the N.E. face. It was rather a weary task, as we had to work at a high pressure. At length the rocks of Nelion were reached and we swung up to the summit at breathless speed. We hardly remarked our arrival at the top and sprang at once to the descent. Here again iced rocks hindered us, but again the climbing seemed comparatively easy, and we descended the gully in the upper part of the S.E. face in quick time. The respect due to the Peak however, returned sharply as a slip was checked by the

rope and an axe lost. With it came fatigue—or rather fatigue was then noticed—and the grim fight with height set in.

The traverse from the foot of the gully to the head of the S. ridge took time, as fingers had constantly to be thawed. Light had faded when we reached the *mauvais pas* but we found the rope slings left in January and December last year. Our rope was not quite long enough for the *rappel* and complications arose. Here it was that the effect of the tin of bad meat essence made itself felt.

The clouds departed and the moon came out. Shining on the surrounding snow and glaciers it produced a good light, which enabled us to move down slowly. The climb down the S.E. face in the uncertain moonlight will always remain in my memory as a combination of sublime impressions and grim reality. A bivouac was suggested, only to be vetoed, as a bitter wind started to blow up from the E. I managed to find the route down without mistake, but it was a slow and painful performance as I was feeling very sick and we were both extremely tired. The passing of the gendarme at the foot of the *rappel* gave a great deal of trouble, as every inch was iced and there was only one axe. The traverse across the lower face went more easily, but the following gully being choked with ice resisted fiercely. It was distinctly weary work arranging the frozen rope for a *rappel* at the foot of this, but at last we were welcomed by the hard-frozen Lewis Glacier—a relief only surpassed when, on the following morning, we reached camp and curled up in our sleeping-bags with a liberal supply of biscuits and cheese.

I think that snow- and ice-covered rocks are a permanent feature of all the S. faces and facets of the peaks of Mt. Kenya so long as the sun is N. of the Equator. Similarly one must expect the same conditions on the sides facing N. during those months when the sun is S. of the Equator. On the sunless faces a very low temperature is maintained, thus keeping the snow and ice firmly in position. With regard to the traverse described above, this fact is very important. An abundance of snow on the N. side might render the col at the foot of the ridge inaccessible; also I should be very sorry to encounter such conditions while on the N. slope of the *Grand Gendarme*. Again, a lack of snow *might* render the traverse on the S. face of the *Petit Gendarme* much more difficult—but this I cannot state for certain as we had little opportunity of examining the rocks thereabouts. I should say from what I know of the Peaks, that we did the climb under the best conditions likely to be found—except, perhaps, after a prolonged drought.

Two days were spent in mild exploration. The first on the Gregory Glacier, and the second on the W. ridge of the Mackinder Valley. I was again struck by the extraordinary silence of the Peaks. One rarely hears or sees rock-fall or ice avalanche at any time of day, though conditions at times appear very favourable for these. I can only suppose that it is owing to the maintenance of a low temperature throughout the day and the fact that, though there

are several outcrops of bad rock, the latter on the whole are very sound. The W. face is, however, sometimes very active and discharges huge ice avalanches every few minutes.

On August 5 we ascended to Flake Col and from there made the first ascent of Sendeyo, a peak of volcanic rock (the rocks on the main peaks are plutonic) about 15,800 ft. high. The ascent is not interesting except for the view, although the peak has a very fine appearance.

On August 6 we made a fairly early start for Point Piggott. Passing close under the snouts of the Joseph and César Glaciers we mounted moraines to the foot of the W. face. A small buttress is divided from the main peak by a cleft, up to which run two couloirs—one on the N. from the Barlow Glacier, and one on the S. We gained the cleft after some difficulty by way of the S. couloir and effected a lodgment on the face. Bearing left on fairly sound rock we reached an ice couloir. We tried a route on its (true) left wall behind a large sérac, but failed. Descending into the couloir, we then ascended on its left side for about 100 ft., and then cut steps across it. After this, the rocks, although bad, were easier and, reaching the summit-ridge, we worked along a knife-edged arête to the summit (about 16,350 ft.) which we reached at 12.30 P.M. Ours was the first ascent of the peak. The mists were late and Batian was still clear (usually a sign of bad weather on Kenya). We obtained a marvellous view of the W. face and ridge. Piggott is a ridge-like peak stretching from N. to S. along the Tyndall Glacier; the true summit lies at the N. end.

We took the same route down as far as the cleft and thence the N. couloir. About half-way down this we had to rope down some overhanging ice on to the head of the Barlow Glacier, down which we had to cut steps in hard ice for most of the way. We reached camp in a mild snow-storm, after a very good expedition.

The following day was again spent in mild exploration below, and on the 8th we made a complete tour of the Peaks—starting out to the W. and finishing up over the Lewis Glacier and Point Lenana; altogether a most delightful walk.

On the 9th we set out to attack Midget Peak, a sharp aiguille between the Darwin and Lewis Glaciers. I had often looked at it and had always been struck by its remarkable shape from all sides. It is a very long way from the site of our camp and we had to cross the high saddle of the Gregory-Lewis Glaciers, not reaching its foot till 9.15 A.M. We had decided before, that the only possible route was up a gully in its face, so we accordingly started the attempt there.

The gully had a lot of ice in it, and was much more difficult than it looked. We mounted it over two or three steps, and then climbed on column-like rocks to a conspicuous chimney, leading to a gap seen from the foot of Point John. We ascended the chimney and then scrambled to the left. A difficult step on bad rock led to a wide



Photo, E. E. Shipton.

Lower part of N. face.



Photo, E. E. Shipton.

Head of Joseph Glacier.
(Foot of couloir leading to depression on left centre.)

recess. Vertical cracks split one of the walls and, by their aid, a long and very difficult step led to a smaller cavity above. All this took a good deal of time. The climbing was rather similar to that on the Aiguilles Mummery and Ravanel.

Snow had now been falling lightly for some little time, but thinking it to be the usual afternoon fall beginning rather in advance, we continued the climb. An overhanging crack defeated us, as did a wall to the left. As a last resort I started a traverse to the left. Awkward work on an iced ledge led to a conspicuous crack. Ice rendered its ascent strenuous, but it was overcome and another sloping iced platform was reached on the W. side of the peak. Traversing further round to the N. we were confronted by two cracks. The first yielded without great difficulty, but the second, though smaller, was extremely awkward at the base and was only overcome after a tough struggle. After this easier climbing led to the summit blocks, which we reached at 1 P.M. This also was the first ascent of the peak. Snow now started to fall in earnest and we were driven off the summit at once.

All went well until the first man came off while crossing one of the sloping iced ledges, and lost consciousness in the fall—probably from the jerk of the rope. Considerable complications arose, and much time was wasted before we were reunited just above the ledge where the fall occurred. The rocks were now deep in snow, and climbing was rendered almost impossible by cold fingers and the snow. After crossing the ledge we roped down to the wide recess referred to above, and there consumed a bottle of Bovril. Then we continued down mostly by a series of *rappels*, climbing, however, where it was possible to save our scanty supply of rope-rings. After some eight or nine *rappels* in all, we reached the foot of the peak at 5 P.M.

The trudge up the Lewis Glacier in new snow was a penance no doubt deserved for continuing the climb in uncertain weather. But it had its compensations when we reached the foot of the long moraines of the Gregory Glacier and crawled into dry sleeping-bags in our tent.

The weather now seemed to have taken a turn for the worse and our food was running short. So when next visited by our porters we evacuated our camp and started on the return journey.

Lack of food rather spoilt for us the pleasure one usually takes in a return through trees and beautiful landscapes after the harsh ruggedness of the higher regions. So much the greater was the relish with which we set about our first civilized meal on attaining Nanyuki.

Note on an ascent of Mawenzi (Kilimanjaro).

During a visit to Kilimanjaro in March 1930, H. W. Tilman and I ascended Mawenzi (17,650 ft.). During the whole of our time on the mountain the weather had been very bad indeed, and an enormous

quantity of snow had fallen at the higher altitudes. Tired of inactivity, we left Pieter's hut (12,500 ft.) at 3.15 A.M. on March 9. On the saddle between Kibo and Mawenzi, where we arrived shortly after dawn, we had to await for a clearing in the mists in order to obtain a view of the foot of the peak. This occurred, but only gave us a brief and very imperfect view of our objective. We were therefore forced to start the climb somewhat blindly. After roping up we made one false start, but soon after established ourselves on the W. face. The entire mountain was covered in ice and our progress was very slow. The rock is bad. It is volcanic, resembling that found on Kibo and on the *lower* cliffs and peaks of Kenya. In good conditions I should imagine the climbing would not be difficult.

Higher up we entered a small gully. Great columns of ice decorated its sides and the work was rather intricate. About half way up the peak we entered a large couloir running N.W., by which, I believe, Mr. West made his ascent.⁴ Conditions were similar here and we could not keep to the surface of the couloir. The mists lifted, but the snow, which had been falling for some time, continued. Reaching the head of the couloir, we were in doubt as to which was the highest summit. With considerable difficulty we climbed one to the left, only to find that another to the right was higher—however I think the mistake gave us a 'first ascent.' Descending again, we climbed the highest peak, Weissmannspitze;⁵ which we reached at 3.30 P.M. We got quite a good view through the falling snow of Kibo and the multitude of lesser peaks of Mawenzi, all of which, I believe, are unclimbed. These should provide the rock climber with a great many tough problems—providing he has no objections to bad rocks. What had been difficult and laborious on the ascent was far easier on the descent and we reached the base of the rocks before dark.

We had previously made the ascent of Kibo (19,717 ft.), and had found the ascent quite devoid of interest for the mountaineer. A rope was neither used nor needed. The weather was very bad and from near the top we were wading knee- and waist-deep in snow. We struggled over four summits when, seeing nothing higher, retraced our steps. On the first summit we found a 'visitors' book.' I do not know if we reached the highest point as we were in thick mist and everything was buried in snow. There is very little difference in the heights of the peaks and in normal conditions they can all be visited in a very short time.

E. E. SHIPTON.

⁴ With Miss Macdonald (Mrs. Combe) and Major O. Lennox-Browne.—*A.J.* 40, 79.

⁵ Hans Meyer Spitze; the peak is, however, named as above on the German map.