

HIMALAYA.—A splendid attempt to climb Istor-o-nal ⁴ (24,271 ft.) in the Hindu Kush range was made during August, 1935, by Captain R. J. Lawder of the Chitral Scouts and Lieut. D. B. N. Hunt;⁵ R.E. Bad weather and exhaustion defeated the party within some 200 ft. of the top. It is hoped to publish a full account in the next number.

ACCIDENTS IN 1935.

FAR from showing any diminution, the Alpine accidents of 1935 appear to have been more frequent than in any previous year. To make even a brief detailed summary of these would require a complete volume of the JOURNAL. It will be sufficient to state that crass incompetence, complete ignorance or neglect of the first principles of mountaineering, are responsible for nine-tenths of the disasters. We cite a few contrasts, notably the ski accident near Saas Fee as one occurring to a thoroughly capable party and which appears to have been one of the unavoidable risks of winter mountaineering. We also briefly summarize the accidents on the Morgenhorn and Eiger as two flagrant examples of the neglect of every sane principle in the attempt to gain cheap notoriety by accomplishing mechanized variants to former routes.

In addition to these, fatal disasters occurred on the following mountains, as well as on many others not named individually—Bavaria and the Eastern Alps providing, as usual, the highest toll:

Corno Stella; Mont Néry; Brévent; Mt. Blanc; Aiguille Verte; Dames Anglaises; Dent du Midi (Cime de l'Est); Matterhorn, 3, of which 2 on the Z'mutt ridge; near Alpschelenhubel; Lauterbrunnen-Breithorn; Wildstrubel; Wendenstock; Grindelwald Eismeer, where an Englishman, Watkins, disappeared; Mönch (Kallifirn); Titlis; Tödi; Säntis; Tinzenhorn; Piz Bernina; Piz Palü (2); Punta Rasica, where of a party of nineteen Italians (including two women), no less than six persons died of exposure on the descent.¹

A Sexten guide, Andreas Piller, aged 69, after making repeated efforts to climb the *Zsigmondykamin* on the Kleine Zinne, fell and was killed. His companion escaped through the breaking of the rope.

Besides these accidents, all, unfortunately, attended with great loss of life, the Press reports numerous mishaps, especially in Bavaria or Styria, where injuries of a more or less serious nature were inflicted. A notable case occurred on the ice-nose of Piz Scerscen,

⁴ Cf. *A.J.* 42, 131-2.

⁵ We hear with very great regret of the death by drowning in Chitral on October 15 of this admirable young mountaineer and officer.

¹ The mere fact that nineteen persons were attempting *simultaneously* a mountain of such nature places the experience of the party completely out of court.



Photo, W. R. Rickmers.]

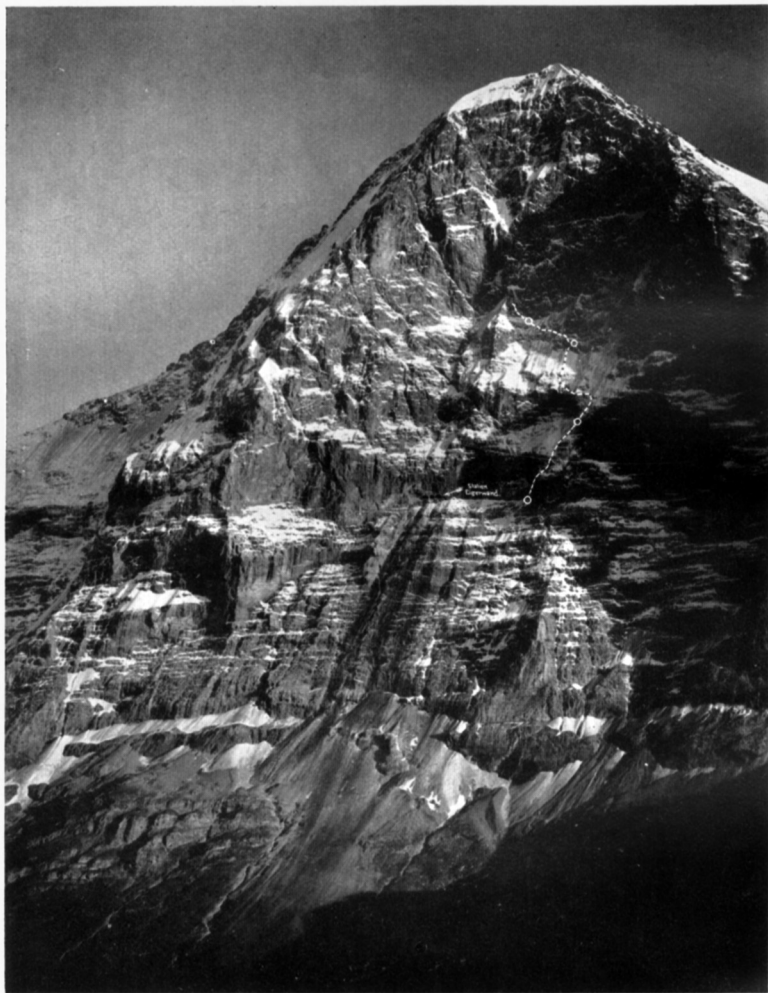
Wood through which the party ascended.



Photo, W. R. Rickmers.]

Tree against which v. Windheim was found.
SAAS FEE AVALANCHE.

[To face p. 374.



← Saturday,
12.00.
← Friday.

← Thursday
evening.

← Wednesday
evening.

Photo, Nikles.]

EIGER, N. FACE (EIGERWAND).
The scene of the 1935 accident.

where an incompetent party fell about 100 ft. vertically, the rope then hitching around an ice pinnacle and miraculously arresting the fall. Broken arms and ribs notwithstanding, the victims descended the valley, mounted their bicycles and proceeded towards their (north-easterly) home.

The Accident near Saas Fee.

(Statement of evidence taken on the spot.)

SAAS FEE, April 18, 1935.

Present: Landgerichtsrat Dr. Karl Haas, Duesseldorf; Advocate and Notary Dr. Paul Schellhorn, Hechingen.

THE 'Exkursion Brecht-Bergen'² (B.-B.) arrived at Saas Fee on Sunday night, April 14, 1935. The party numbered twenty-four. This excursion to Saas Fee was for advanced ski-runners with Alpine experience. Every member of the party fulfilled these conditions.

On Monday morning (April 15) they practised on the lower slopes, and in the afternoon climbed to the Plattje, 2578 m. The party followed the route marked on the official ski-map and found tracks to within a short distance of the top. During the morning some other party had been watched on this climb. On Tuesday a party of five men started for the Britannia hut, but returned at night, having seen no possibility of doing any tours.

At 10.00 on Wednesday, April 17, Alpine group-leader Bongarts started for the Plattje with eighteen members. A warmish atmosphere (*Föhn*) was coupled with light snowfall and a slight haze. They proceeded as on Monday. Visibility 150 m. (ca. 500 ft.) ahead. Marching order: Hopf, Milly Bau, Hetzel, Wolf, Thoma, Waldemar Bau, Nölken, Bongarts, Timm, Just, Hesse, Beck, Wiest, Hopfer, Bolten, Praetorius, Hilde von Windheim, Horst von Windheim.

Neither the leader nor any member of the party had been cautioned by anybody whatever, guides or natives.

When tacking up the slopes N.W. of the 'G' of Gaden-Alp, the vertical distance between first and last man was about 150 m., with varying distances between individuals. Some were nearer together, others had 40 or 50 m. between them. The avalanche broke at about 10.45 from the steep northern slopes of the Mittagshorn—that is to say, a distance of 1 km. (two-thirds of a mile) S.E. of the party. They heard the rumbling but did not see the avalanche itself, which fact prevented them from noting its direction. The leader drew attention to the noise, but imagined that the avalanche had fallen in some neighbouring valley. The noise stopped but began again after three-quarters of a minute, and was now much louder. A few seconds later the avalanche swept past the head of the party about 10 m. to their right. Those at the head were smothered in clouds of snow, and some were even knocked down by air pressure. The

² See *A.J.* 46, 293 sqq.

leader shouted a warning but, owing to the noise, was not heard by everybody. The avalanche overwhelmed the six members at the very end of the whole party. The emergency team of the B.-B. forming the advance guard found the following state of affairs :

Dr. Hopfer was buried $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 m. deep in the snow, without his ski, in a slanting position, his head pointing downhill. *Praetorius* showed one hand through the snow ; there was a ski on one foot. *Horst von Windheim* (without ski) was jammed against a tree, his right foot sharply bent. *Frau von Windheim* was lying on the snow about 30 m. lower down. She was already being assisted by the guide *Kalbermatten*, who had been practising near by. *Hildegard Wiest* was found against a tree on a level with *Herr von Windheim*. *Bolten* had also been swept off his feet, losing his ski, but was able to extricate himself.

With the exception of *Dr. Hopfer* all were brought out alive. *Hopfer* was found dead by *Kalbermatten* 5 hours later after much probing. His body showed no severe lesions. Just after 12.00 a local rescue party arrived with four wood-sleds and took down the four injured—the *Windheim* couple, *Praetorius* and *Frl. Wiest*. The local party consisted of eighteen or twenty men. First medical aid was given on the spot by the representative of the local doctor and three German doctors (winter-sports visitors). *Windheim* died at 15.30 in the consulting-room of the local doctor, and *Praetorius* at 22.30.

Leader *Bongarts* is an experienced mountaineer. This is his third season (at Easter) in the Valaisan Alps with the B.-B. He has done all the more important ski-tours of the region, among them seven peaks of over 4000 m. Although weather conditions were not of the very best, he saw no objection to this tour, especially as he had done the climb two days before. Moreover, the *Plattje* has always been considered safe at this time of the year. *Hopfer* and *Praetorius* also were experienced mountaineers. The guide *Oskar Kalbermatten* told *Bongarts* on the spot that he had never known of an avalanche in this place at this time. Under these circumstances one can hardly accuse anybody of negligence.

This statement was written down from the unanimous verbal testimony of the eye-witnesses and after having been read to them was signed by them in our presence :

DR. HAAS

DR. SCHELLHORN.

The witnesses : *Werner Bongarts*, *Hans Stefan Hopf*, *Milly Bau*, *Dr. Hetzel*, *Ludwig Wolf*, *Eberhard Thoma*, *Waldemar Bau*, *Anneliese Nölken*, *Leopold Timm*, *Hans Just*, *Kurt Hesse*, *Armin Beck*, *Peter Bolten*.

The parties of the 'Exkursion Brecht-Bergen' are not haphazard crowds brought together by advertisement. The E.B.-B. is a private corps of scouts founded twenty years ago—and still led—by Pro-

fessor Brecht-Bergen of Baden-Baden. It is divided into groups according to age and experience, and enterprises are undertaken according to the powers of these groups—that is to say, from a tramp through the Black Forest to a crossing of Lapland (with canoes) from the Polar Sea to the Baltic. Each group is under a group-leader, the product of many years of selection. The E.B.-B. is noted for discipline and comradeship. From the Professor's letter I quote this characteristic passage: 'They will carry on at Saas Fee not only in accordance with our team-spirit, but also at the express wish of the relatives who were present when our comrades were laid to rest in the mountain churchyard.'

W. R. RICKMERS.

The Accident on the Morgenhorn.

ON August 1, 1935, Herren Walter Stoesser and T. Seybold of Pforzheim left the Blümlisalp hut *en route* for the dangerous N. face of the Morgenhorn, 3629 m.³ During the preceding days they had accomplished what are described as 'new' routes on the Doldenhorn (W. arête), Blümlisalp horn and Balmhorn. The party, reaching the base of the face at 05.00, was observed throughout nearly the whole of their ascent by the hut-keeper by means of a powerful glass. The two climbers could be distinguished easily, since Stoesser was wearing a light-coloured suit, while Seybold was darkly clad.

At 10.30 the party, which was attempting a more direct variant on the N. face, attained the base of the great couloir and was then lost to sight against the rocks. At 13.00 they were observed in the hanging glacier above the rocks at a height of about 3400 m. Progress was very slow, some 60–70 ft. in the next 2 hrs. An avalanche broke beneath them about 14.00, whereupon the party turned back. The leader, Stoesser, was the first to go down, having passed Seybold. He was observed fixing a piton in a platform some 20 ft. below his companion, whereupon the latter descended three or four steps. At this moment a second avalanche broke away below the party. Both men remained motionless for some considerable time, Stoesser apparently stooping over a belay, while Seybold was leaning with one shoulder against the face. Then Seybold slipped down feet foremost; he had made no other movement and, without making any effort to hold, fell like a stone, dragging Stoesser in a great curve right over him. The belay piton was pulled out in the fall, fetching a great slice of névé away with it. Both men fell about 120 ft. on to an ice slope and then disappeared. The bodies have not been found.

It is surmised that Seybold might have been killed or injured, before slipping, by falling débris.

From *Allgemeine Bergsteiger Zeitung*.

[Herr Stoesser was among the most skilful and desperate climbers of the present age. His feats were numerous both in the Eastern as

³ See illustration facing p. 145.

well as Western Alps. Among the former were exploits on Civetta and Tofana di Rocces, for a repetition of which latter *eight* guides are stated to have been required at a cost of 1000 *lire* per guide!⁴ His greatest performance was the subjugation of the S.E. arête of Bietschhorn after many assaults.⁵ Stoesser was also a survivor of the N. face accident on the Matterhorn in 1933;⁶ he was about 34 years of age. Seybold had, we understand, but little mountain experience.—*R.I.P.*]

The Accident on the Eiger.

HERREN KARL NEHRINGER and Max Sedlmayr, both very young men and members of the 'Bayerland' Section of the D.u.Ö.E.A.V., took up their quarters at Alpiglen on August 13, 1935. From that date till August 19 they were busy with preparations and the reconnoitring of the Eiger, and on the 20th one of them made the ascent of the mountain by the ordinary route in order to dump food on the summit. This solitary ascent lasted from 07.00 until nightfall.

On Wednesday, August 21, both started in on the Eiger N. face, leaving at 03.00 from Wärgistalalp. That night they bivouacked somewhat below and to the W. of the rock-gallery of the Eigerwand station, and on the following day they bivouacked again higher up, repeating the selfsame tactics on Friday, August 23. During that night they experienced a severe thunderstorm. Saturday, August 24 was a rainy day and they moved a bit higher, pulling out to the E. towards the cleft leading to the northern buttress abutting against the summit-ridge, E. arête, of the mountain, the fourth bivouac being made at an early hour. On Sunday, August 25, little upwards progress was made, and observers remarked through clouds that the *fifth* bivouac was inaugurated at a height of about two-thirds of the wall. On the following day thick rain-clouds obscured any sight of the party, while streams of water swept the wall and fresh snow lay on the summit rocks. In Grindelwald it became obvious that a tragedy was imminent. Warning was sent to Munich that the 'ascent' had already lasted six days, that the weather had been terrible for the last three, and that help was required urgently. Two airmen were summoned and warned to stand by for a weather clearance.⁷

As the two adventurers had just scrambled from piton to piton, it was impossible at that time to send out a guides' rescue party. How far such an undertaking could be risked must depend on a most careful reconnaissance of the conditions prevailing on the mountain.

On Tuesday, August 27, the clouds dispersed, while observers, who had been ceaselessly endeavouring to spy the face since Sunday, once more tried to pick up the traces. The authorities ordered out

⁴ *A.J.* 46, 327.

⁵ *Ibid.* 44, 317-18; 45, 140-2.

⁶ *Ibid.* 45, 108.

⁷ A party of friends also arrived from Munich. Despite several attempts, no progress upwards or downwards (from the top) could be achieved.

the air pilot, Hörning, to inspect the face, but the resulting flight gave no information whatever; neither did high-power telescope observation obtain any better results.

From *Sport*.

Since that date the corpse of one of these two victims of their own folly has been identified, frozen, apparently lashed upright against the face and partially buried in snow. The airmen, who had risked their lives in a close-up flight against the face, were able to photograph the body and locality.

From the same excellent source we quote the following sentences :

‘ . . . It is a deeply to be regretted result that survivors of modern Eastern Alps’ technique should now inflict their evil demonstrations on Swiss peaks. . . . Even had the two Munich scramblers [“ Kletterfritzen ”] succeeded after their *sixth* bivouac in reaching the Eiger’s summit, according to our opinion even then no mountaineering deed had been achieved, merely a degradation inflicted on one of our great peaks, with the honoured traditions of mountaineering perverted into monkey tricks [“ Affenlarve ”].

‘ . . . It cannot sufficiently be stressed that such juggling with human life has no connection whatever with mountaineering. It is a German’s affair if he be compelled to exercise his modern psychology in “ direct ” ascents ; we have nothing to say if the survivors of the extreme rock-school spend a whole week of bivouacs in their battle plans . . . but let us hope that these . . . acrobats will find no imitators in Switzerland.

‘ . . . Nehringer and Sedlmayr with complete disregard of threatening weather, and with at least four bivouacs before them on the wall, set out on their glory-seeking exploit. They knew full well that the severity of the face required continuous mechanical aid, hammers and nails, methods happily not recognized in Switzerland as yet. That exceptionally strong party of 1932⁸ . . . after a deep study of the entire N. face determined on a start from the Hoheneis Glacier and a diagonal ascent to the top, but the two Munichers, refusing the line manifest to the meanest intelligence, deliberately chose, relying on their hammers and pitons, the direct approach from base to apex. . . . As soon as man, under the influence of his bodily and spiritual might, abandons the laws of safety for the urge to “ heroism,” then does that man forsake the grounds of true climbing, loses all right to count as a mountaineer, and is to be added sooner or later to that list of persons competing for a violent mountain death.

⁸ August 20, 1932, Herren Hans Lauper and Alfred Zürcher with Alexander Graven and Josef Knubel. The ascent of the N. face and descent to the Kl. Scheidegg were accomplished in one day.—*A.J.* 44, 318-19 ; 45, 53-61.

It is interesting to recall Dr. Lauper’s impressions of the route attempted with such fatal results in 1935 : ‘ . . . Our position afforded a good view of the upper part of the Eigerwand, but what we saw looked uninviting, nay even forbidding enough.’—*Ibid.* 60.

'May the events now occurring on the Eiger set no further lives in jeopardy, since these Munichers must have already paid the supreme penalty of folly and the strife for notoriety.'

[With which sentiments, while expressing sympathy for the relatives of the young victims, every British mountaineer will concur.—*Editor.*]

REVIEWS.

Climbing Days. By Dorothy Pilley (Mrs. I. A. Richards). Pp. 352; illustrated. London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd. 1935. Price 16s.

THIS book with its sixteen chapters and sixty-nine excellent photographs will appeal to all hill-walkers, rock-climbers, mountaineers and explorers of the uplands of the earth. It embraces every variety of mountain experience and covers a larger geographical area than, perhaps, any other book on mountaineering: to wit—Great Britain, the Alps, the Pyrenees, Corsica, the High Tatra, Canadian and American ranges, Japan and the Himalaya. The book is one which all of the fraternity will wish to possess and, when lent to the general reader, its appeal is such that the borrower may also become a buyer.

The first thing which anyone opening the book is likely to do, is to turn over the pages and have a look at the pictures. They have been chosen with expert help from very many sources. Many of them are of well-known mountains taken from unusual angles: many are of crevasses, corniches and other snow and ice formations, and are as good as they can be, while the photographs of human beings, male and female, dealing with seemingly impossible rock problems are as enticing as they are alarming. Some of the pictures are just happy valley views.

Turning to the text, the book is extremely well written, and though somewhere it is stated to have begun as a vehicle for the writer's thoughts, it is really vivid narrative from beginning to end. Any one who has climbed mountains makes the ascents with her: and, as already hinted, the fascination is conveyed to many who have never been among the mountains at all. Pleasantly interwoven with the narrative are the thoughts, criticisms and anecdotes of other climbs and climbers from the days of de Saussure to those of the Pinnacle Club and the Groupe de Haute Montagne.

The first hundred pages deal exclusively with British hills and rocks, Lakeland, Snowdonia and the Coolins. These the writer knows intimately, as she also knows the fraternity, male and female, who have *made* the beautiful thing that British rock-climbing is to-day; in its highest flights supremely difficult, but as safe as the best expert climbing of any *genre*, yet untarnished by 'ironmongery.' Purely Alpine readers may be excused if they skip a little here, but