

- Flaig, Walther.** Der Arlberg und die Klostertaler Alpen mit den Grenzgebieten des südlichen Bregenzer Waldes. Hochgebirgsführer. Wagner's Alpine Spezialführer Band 1. $5\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$: pp. 360: ill., maps. Innsbruck, 1929
- Hohenleitner, Dr. Siegfried.** Die Stubai Alpen. Wagner's Alpine Spezialführer, Band IV. Wagner'sche Universitätsbuchhandlung. $6 \times 4\frac{1}{4}$: pp. 205: ill., maps. Innsbruck, 1925
- Horn, Gunnar.** Franz Josef Land. Natural History, Discovery, Exploration and Hunting. Skrifter om Svalbard og Ishavet. No. 29. $10\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{7}{8}$: pp. 54: ill., map. Oslo, 1930
- Norges Svalbard- og Ishavs-undersøkelers Ekspedisjon til Sydøstgrønland med 'Veslemari,' sommeren 1932. In Norsk Geogr. Tidskr. 1933. $9\frac{5}{8} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$: pp. 409-27. Oslo, 1933.
- **and Orvin, Anders K.** Geology of Bear Island with special reference to the Coal Deposits, and with an account of the History of the Island. Skrifter om Svalbard og Ishavet. No. 15. $10\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$: pp. xi, 152: plates, ill., diag., map. Oslo, 1928
- Luncke, Bernhard.** Norges Svalbard-og Ishavs-undersøkelers Luftkartlegning i Eirik Raudes Land 1932. In Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift, Bind iv, Hefte 6. $9\frac{5}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{8}$: pp. 347-61: ill. Oslo 1933
- Martel, E. A.** Explorations de Cavernes. $8\frac{3}{8} \times 5$: pp. 7.
- Michelstown Cave. $8\frac{5}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$: pp. 101-105: map. Dublin, 1896
- Les Nouveaux Abimes. In La Géographie, Nov.-Dec. 1929. $9\frac{1}{2} \times 6$: pp. 8.
- Padirac. Historique et Description Sommaire. $8\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$: pp. 32: ill. Saint-Cere, 1929
- Le Puits de Padirac. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$: pp. 4: ill.
- Ernest Rupin, Spéologue. $9\frac{1}{2} \times 6$: pp. 8.
- Franz Schrader. Les Pyrénées. $8\frac{5}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$: pp. 32: plates. Chartres, 1925
- Speleology. In Report of 6th International Geographical Congress, London, 1895. $9\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$: pp. 6.
- Sur la Grotte d'Altamira et l'âge de ses Peintures. $9\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$: pp. 6: ill. n.d.
- Sainte-Croix, Lucien de.** E. A. Martel—Explorateur des Abimes et des Eaux Souterraines. Extrait de la Revue de l'Alliance Française, No. 53, Avril 1933. $9\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{8}$: pp. 16: portr., ill., map. Paris
- Saussure, de.** Armes, Généalogie et Alliances de la Maison de Saussure, Originée du Duché de Lorraine. A Lausanne, chez David Gentil, 1671. Réimprimé par les soins de Henri de Saussure—A Genève, chez Ivles-Gme Fick. $26 \times 17\frac{1}{2}$. 1889
- Sherwill, Markham.** A Brief Historical Sketch of the Valley of Chamouni, commencing with the foundation of the Priory in 1090, drawn up from original documents. $8\frac{5}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$: pp. 48. Paris, 1832
- Vogt, Thorolf.** Norges Svalbard- og Ishavs-undersøkelers Ekspedisjon til Sydøstgrønland med 'Heimen' sommeren 1931. In Norsk Geogr. Tidsskr. 1933. $9\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$: pp. 289-325: ill., maps. Oslo, 1933

CORRESPONDENCE.

*The Metric and Decimal Systems.**To the Editor of the ALPINE JOURNAL.*

SIR,—May I respectfully ask you to consider the possibility of quoting all heights, distances and weights in future numbers of the ALPINE JOURNAL in the metric system and eliminating British units completely? I raise this question feeling sure that there must be

many members of the Alpine Club who are sufficiently enlightened to realize that such a change would be for the better.

The ALPINE JOURNAL is of course primarily and fundamentally a 'record of mountain adventure,' but in describing our exploits we are of necessity forced to use certain units of height, etc., and it is here that every writer is concerned with 'scientific observation.'

At the present moment the JOURNAL is torn between two systems of units—the old-fashioned British and the up-to-date metric—which are not conveniently correlated, *i.e.* it is not easy to think rapidly from one system to the other. From an analysis of the articles in Nos. 248 and 249 (1934) I find that, excluding 'Expeditions,' 'Alpine Notes,' 'Reviews,' etc., there are 14 principal articles quoting heights either exclusively or predominantly in feet, compared with 6 in metres, while one author is at pains to give every height in both forms. At first sight it might appear from this that the metric system has gained ground during the last fifty years or so, as one might suppose that in earlier numbers the metre was rarely met with. But this is not the case. In Nos. 203–6 (1914) the ratio was 16 articles in feet to 5 in metres, while twenty years previously, in Nos. 123–6 (1894), the ratio was 13 to 4. It would thus appear that we are still as much divided between the two systems of units as we were forty years ago. This is not progressive; it is merely pandering to the habits of a country—our own—which in the matter of fundamental units of measurement is not distinguished for clear, logical thought.

Although all readers of the ALPINE JOURNAL must be aware of the advantages of the metric notation, I give below certain definite reasons for advocating the change, some being quite general, whilst others apply particularly to mountaineering.

Speaking generally :

The metric system is acknowledged universally to be the most logical system of measurement.

It is used in Great Britain for scientific work, and in other European countries for all measurement, both domestic and scientific.

Its use in this country is slowly extending beyond the bounds of pure science and may be accelerated by government action or foreign opinion.

Any acceleration which can be effected by societies publishing journals is to the common good in the sense that public opinion is educated in the right direction.

And with special reference to mountaineering :

The foot is too small a unit for the measurement of the heights of mountains as it involves the use of cumbrous 5-figure numbers, instead of 4 figures, as with the metre.

It is doubtful whether the height of any great peak can be determined within one foot; certainly not in the case of snow mountains which vary in height. It is thus incorrect to quote heights to 1 foot in 10,000 or 20,000 feet. The last figure in such a number is meaning-

less. Using the metre, we are at least nearer the truth in the last figure.

Very often horizontal distances are quoted as well as vertical; *e.g.* a party may be reported as having climbed 6500 feet in traversing horizontally a distance of 5 miles. This gives no indication of the angle of their ascent, except by laborious calculation, whereas 2000 metres in 8 kilometres is immediately elucidated as an angle of 1 in 4. It is often useful to compute the average angle of the ground in this way, and metric units make it possible with greater ease.

Although we find no difficulty in understanding heights, etc., when reading the continental Alpine journals, owing to the simplicity of their system, the reverse cannot hold true. Our fellow-alpinists across the Channel must find our feet, yards and miles a perpetual irritation when reading the *ALPINE JOURNAL*, and the rapid transitions from one set of units to the other certain evidence of the irrationality of the British.

Only two objections to the change occur to me. First, since maps of our own home mountains and those of the Empire are produced in feet, to quote from them in metres involves some work in conversion. This, however, could be undertaken by the individual writers submitting the articles, to avoid adding to the editorial labours.

To digress for a moment about maps. This is the age of widespread exploration in the Himalaya and other great ranges of the earth. Each exploring party makes its own map, some in metres and some in feet, and every time a map is printed in feet it makes it more difficult for the users of that map to adhere to the metric system in descriptions. This is a crime which should be wiped out at the source, and the Alpine Club can do a lot to stop it by giving every encouragement to all future British expeditions to map in metres. Ultimately, when civilization rejects the British system for good and all, the old maps will have to be reprinted in metres. The fewer that will require this treatment, the better for the next generation.

The second objection to the change is the very old one—that we as Britons are not ‘accustomed’ to the metric system. But I submit that if we of this Club are not, we have literally no excuse. The Alps, our oldest and nearest playground, the cradle of mountaineering and the very source of our tradition, are mapped from end to end in metric units. There is not one of us who could not easily forget Mont Blanc’s 15,782 feet, and refresh his memory with the familiar 4810 metres.

The *ALPINE JOURNAL* has been, since its inception, the model of mountaineering literature in the English tongue. Happily it still stands in that position to-day. But the world moves on in scientific matters, and it occurs to me that we should now scrap our old system of units for the convenience of all, and in doing so, show that the *JOURNAL* still holds the lead in intellectual advancement.

Other British publications will follow that lead ; of that there can be no doubt. Let us see that we do not have to follow theirs.

I am, etc.,

Crofts Bank, Thornton Hough, Cheshire.
January 5, 1935.

ANTHONY M. ROBINSON.

[We are in full sympathy with the progressive views of our correspondent, but, until the Empire and the U.S.A. can be persuaded to change their system, the JOURNAL must, we fear, continue to reckon heights and distances 'in fundamental units of measurement not distinguished for clear, logical thought' !

Perhaps our member will have noted that 'times' in *Expeditions* and *Alpine Notes* are given according to the twenty-four hour clock ?—*Editor, 'A.J.'*]

'A Superiority Complex?'

To the Editor of the ALPINE JOURNAL.

DEAR SIR,—Having read your article 'A Superiority Complex?' in the ALPINE JOURNAL, I should like to reply as a German, a guest in your country, who well understands the good qualities of the English people. I was always fond of meeting English climbers in Switzerland, and in my opinion the difference between the two nations is not so great that we could not understand one another, especially in Alpinism—our mutual liking leading us to the mountains. I hope I may be able to succeed in forming a better understanding between English and German mountaineers, perhaps more fairly than according to your article.

First, I have to admit that certain expressions in some German papers sound exaggerated as to German Alpinism, but nobody thinks of discrediting the British efforts—as you do the German. Many things written in German may at present sound exaggerated to an English ear. It is a difficult task for me to explain why everybody in Germany quotes nothing but 'Germany' and 'We Germans.' In England the word 'nationalism' is a term scarcely used, for nationalism has always been a matter of course in this happy country. After the war Germany nearly forgot what nationalism meant: she did not believe in her own strength and thought everything foreign better than her own efforts—foreign plays in the theatre, foreign films, foreign factories and a foreign Communism were the order of the day. Suddenly Germany found herself again, returned to the 'new' nationalism and, of course, went a little to the other extreme.

But indeed I am as proud of the success of the German mountaineers as you may be proud of the efforts of the English. Nobody wishes to belittle the deeds of Whymper and all the other English pioneers at a time when in Germany and Austria only a few people

swung the ice axe. But now more German climbers go to the mountains than English, and they are at least as good as the English. Moreover, climbing on the rocks has become a speciality of the people of Munich and Vienna, and I doubt whether climbers of other nations (apart from a few Italians; but Stoesser is a German) know these terribly difficult routes (1). The young generation of Austria and Germany goes to Switzerland as well. But nobody sees them except perhaps on the tops of the mountains. They do not live in the huts of the S.A.C.: they have their own tents and put them up in places where they are quite alone. Thus they unconsciously train for expeditions to foreign mountains. Lots of young people cycle every year to Switzerland. They are not idle, and I think they are successful. I should like to point out that the big walls of Fiescherhorn and Dent d'Hérens were ascended, not on 'foolish variations,' by a German climber, Welzenbach, who was a member of the Alpine Club and died on Nanga Parbat (2). I could add to the north faces of Ortler and Koenigsspitze, of Grosshorn and Gletscherhorn, etc., many more successes (3), but there is no sense in counting them; you would, of course, find other famous walls in Engadine and Oberland conquered by other nations. The difference between English and German mountaineers is the number of climbers on a good average. Nearly every young man in Munich goes at the week-end to the mountains: the Londoner, unfortunately, cannot do that. Where many people try, there is much success. And young German people with their small tents are as well prepared for the struggle with the eight-thousanders as any others. I regret your harsh words about the 'superhuman loads' which the porters had to carry for the Germans (4). Until now there was only friendship in the Himalaya and only efforts were taken into consideration. The effort on Mount Everest and Kangchenjunga was probably greater than the results of Schneider and Aschenbrenner on their highest 'peak' (5).

Finally, I want to ask why Mr. E. L. S. makes a difference between 'Austrians' and 'Germans.' The history of the Eastern Alps is only German—whether Austrian or Bavarian; they are the same tribe and have the same language, even the same dialect. And in the classic *Die Erschliessung der Ostalpen* one does not find any remark regarding whether the climber is a Reichs-German or an Austrian. The climbers both on this side or that of the frontier have felt always in unity with one another and will always do so (6).

The mountaineers are non-political.

Hoping I have not hurt the feelings of any Englishman,

I am,

Yours faithfully,

German Hospital, Dalston, E. 8.

HELMUTH MÜLLER.

January 12, 1935.

[We would reply to the different points raised by our correspondent and which we have ventured to number in his text:

(1) It is manifest that the intention of the writer of the *Mitteilungen* article is, under the cloak of nationalism, to belittle the mountaineering efforts of every nation save his own. Dr. Müller has misunderstood totally the attitude of 'A Superiority Complex?' towards German climbers. Any attempt at a comparison between German and British mountaineers has been avoided meticulously: in fact, the word 'British' does not occur at all. As to any discrediting of German overseas efforts, we would refer our correspondent to the opening paragraph of the article complained of. Our objections to certain recent *Alpine* performances are sufficiently and, we trust, courteously explained. That the proportion of South-German climbers is enormously larger than British is obvious. It is a question of geography, as also, until quite recently, of the absence of other pastimes or games in Germany.

(2) The Fiescherhorn climb was a variation (to the E.) of the original, 1926, Swiss route. The N. face of the Dent d'Hérens by the late Dr. Welzenbach, whom we cannot claim as a member of the Alpine Club, was equally a *direct* variant of the original 1923 route ('A.J.' 35, 210 *et seq.*). Both the Fiescherhorn and Dent d'Hérens expeditions, as accomplished by Dr. Welzenbach, being on faces completely and continuously raked by ice and stones, as opposed to the ribs and ridges traversed in the original climbs, come under the category of 'foolish variations.' We were tempted to employ a harsher term.

(3) The N. face of the Ortler, or rather the 'N.E. gully' (the N. face, if it exists at all, constitutes the ordinary route), is described in the C.A.I. *Guida* as follows:

'... an enormous couloir situated between threatening, rocky banks and under the constant menace of the immense overhanging sérac-bastion of the Upper Ortler Glacier. Only those persons desirous of uselessly exposing their lives would dream of an ascent by this funnel, swept continuously by stone and ice avalanches' (cf. 'A.J.' 43, 384).

The N., or rather N.E., face of the Königsspitze was climbed in 1881 and the expedition has been repeated several times. The 1930 route is a variation within a few hundred feet of the former; it consists in keeping *under* the great summit cornice all the way! We believe there yet lives *one* survivor of the original parties to accomplish this and the Ortler N.E. gully, two of the wickedest routes in the Alps.

The Grosshorn, N. face, was climbed by a Swiss party in 1921, which was wise enough to climb the very steep N.W. rib or edge: Dr. Welzenbach was not. The Gletscherhorn, N. face, was, of course, a new route, although adjacent to the 1911 route up the N. slope of the Gletscherjoch. To make the N. face still 'safer,' the party started from the Rottal in *rain*!

(4) Dr. Müller again misunderstands us: Himalayan porters carry loads which to the European mountaineer, amateur or professional, can be described as 'superhuman.' Nevertheless, see

'A.J.' 42, 202 *et seq.*, and the book *Kangchenjunga Adventure*, where the overloading of porters in 1930 is referred to.

(5) Again we must refer our correspondent to the opening paragraph. The ALPINE JOURNAL, together with British mountaineers generally, consider Herr Bauer's two attempts on Kangchenjunga as the greatest mountaineering efforts yet accomplished (see 'A.J.' 42, 202; 44, 24).

(6) The racial differences between Austrians and Germans form an ethnological question: for British parties it is as simple to differentiate between the nationality, manners, and mentality of the two first named as it would be to distinguish a Swiss party from either. If Germans and Austrians are of the same 'tribe,' why has it been necessary to close the Austrian frontiers to the former? To go further afield, it is like comparing a Serb, a Bulgar, or a Russian.

Unfortunately, the entry of nationalism and politics into mountaineering circles is one of the accomplished facts and curses of the present epoch.

That some 'neutrals' are in agreement with 'A Superiority Complex?' may be seen in the official organ of the Netherlands A.C., *De Berggids*, January, 1935, p. 2: . . . 'Why is it that English accounts of expeditions are always a renewed pleasure to read, whether they are about simple or first-class expeditions? One is forced into a comparison with most of the German literature, and the latter invariably comes out badly. The English have an entirely different conception of mountaineering, a conception that stands far from any sort of rivalry, that is simple, notable and straightforward. The German descriptions, in which difficulties are emphasized by hair-raising comparisons, in which awful weather is nearly always present, in which the wall of rock is always overhanging while the personal equation is continually fighting death, stimulate one into opposition and criticism. Through their simplicity of description and choice of words the English articles are more forcible in effect and expression than the German.

' . . . Read for instance what Colonel E. L. Strutt writes in "A Superiority Complex?" on an article in the *Mitteilungen* concerning the feats of modern German Alpinism wherein there are no traces of other nationalities to be found. Strutt demonstrates convincingly with facts how enormously exaggerated and misleading such statements are, and especially how much they lack fairness.'

With reference to a kindly comment in *Æ.A.Z.*, 1935, pp. 89-91, I must freely confess that in translating the *Mitteilungen* article, I used the strongest terms supplied by the dictionary. Perhaps my much respected critic, Dr. Paul von Kaltenegger, will acknowledge that he, on his part, sought out the *mildest* renderings in the selfsame dictionary.

That the relations between Austro-German and British mountaineers should continue on the same excellent plane is the earnest wish of 'Æ.A.Z.' and 'A.J.' alike.

In conclusion, we can assure Dr. Müller that no Briton's feelings will be hurt by his letter.

E. L. S.]

Rewards for Mountaineering Feats.

To the Editor of the ALPINE JOURNAL.

DEAR SIR,—A little while ago my attention was called to certain reports, which even appear to have found their way into the Press, to the effect that German official quarters or mountaineering organizations were promising monetary rewards to German mountaineers who performed special feats in the Alps (or other mountain ranges for that matter), notably for the first ascent of the north wall of the Grandes Jorasses by a German party. As these rumours seemed to be rather widespread, even amongst responsible mountaineering quarters in this country, I felt it my duty to make careful inquiries to find out what truth there was in them. As the result of my inquiries I am now happily in the position to inform you that there is no truth whatever in these reports and that neither the German Government nor the D.u.Oe.A.-V., nor any other mountaineering organization in Germany, have ever made such promises, and that such a procedure would indeed be looked upon by those responsible for the maintenance of German mountaineering as a grave violation of the spirit of true Alpinism. I have the assurance from Herr Paul Bauer, who at present holds a position of extreme responsibility in the German mountaineering world, that, if ever such tendencies came to his notice he would immediately put his foot down on them.

I thought this might interest you, and would be grateful if you could give it such publicity as you think fit to do in view of the gravity of the allegations.

I am, etc.,

A. H. VAN SCHERPENBERG.

DEUTSCHE BOTSCHAFT,
LONDON, S.W. 1.
February 7, 1935.

[We are very pleased to publish our member's interesting letter.—
Editor, A.J.]

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ALPINE CLUB.

A GENERAL MEETING of the Club was held in the Hall, 23 Savile Row, London, W. 1, on Tuesday, October 30, 1934, at 8.30 P.M., Sir John J. Withers, C.B.E., LL.D., M.P., *President*, in the Chair.

The following candidates were balloted for and elected Members of the Club, namely, Messrs. L. V. Bryant, E. S. G. de la Motte, Dr. Oskar A. N. Hug, Gerald E. H. Palmer, and F. C. Sharp.

The PRESIDENT referred to the deaths of the following Members, namely, H. C. Baker, elected 1891; The Rev. Canon H. Sinclair Brooke, elected 1907; F. N. Ellis, elected 1898; H. Foot, elected