

The expeditions of the Duke of the Abruzzi⁵ and of Dr. Humphreys are of course in a class of their own, but from a purely mountaineering point of view I think that this Polish climb is about the best thing that has been yet done on Ruwenzori. Difficult routes have hardly yet begun to be made on these mountains, although the ascent of the north face of Baker⁶ by Tilman and Shipton was likewise a fine achievement. The discovery of the two new lakes is also a matter of considerable interest and raises, maybe, a new problem in the glaciology of Ruwenzori. As I have been associated with these three Poles in their work on the refugee camps before the expedition, which was but a small stretch of well earned leave, and have learned something of the misery which the war has brought to their country, the success of their climb gives to me as it will do to all mountaineers a measure of real pleasure. Here will be a great memory for three climbers to take back to Poland and share again perhaps in their beloved Tatra.

THE WORDSWORTHS AND SWITZERLAND

By ARNOLD LUNN

SOMEWHERE between Grindelwald and Lauterbrunnen, a young Englishman was writing a letter to his sister. He was twenty years of age, and the date was September 14, 1790. 'My partiality to Switzerland, excited by its natural charms, induced me to hope that the manners of the inhabitants are amiable; but at the same time I cannot help contrasting them with those of the French, and as far as I have had the opportunity to observe, they lose much by the comparison. We not only found the French a much less imposing people, but that politeness diffused through the lowest ranks has an air so engaging that you could scarce attribute it to any other cause but real benevolence. During the time which was near a month that we were in France, we had not once to complain of the slightest deficiency of courtesy in any person, much less of any positive rudeness. We had also perpetual occasion to observe that cheerfulness and sprightliness, for which the French have always been remarkable, but I must remind you that we crossed it at a time when the whole nation was mad with joy in consequence of the revolution.'

Every revolution, as the great Basle historian Burckhardt remarks, 'opens with the brilliant farce of hope,' and the French Revolution was no exception to this rule. Many of those who insisted, contrary to all accepted canons of taste, in discovering beauty in mountain scenery were intimately associated with the beginnings of the French Revolution, a fact which forms part of Chateaubriand's general indictment against the mountain cult. Rousseau, the father of the French Revolution, was also one of the first to set up the mountains (which incidentally he detested) as objects for worship. Madame Roland and

⁵ A.J. 23. 386 sqq. ⁶ A.J. 44 *loc. cit.*

Chénier who perished in the revolution, which they had welcomed, had a genuine love of Switzerland. Ramond de Carbonnières, pioneer of the Pyrenees, was yet another revolutionary whose enthusiasm was cooled by closer contacts with the fury which he had helped to unchain. He was luckier than Madame Roland, for he escaped with a term of imprisonment.

Wordsworth returned to France in 1791 and associated with the Girondists.

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive

And to be young was very heaven.

Particularly if, as an Englishman, you could always return to your native country when the tempo of revolution was a little too quick for your tastes. In later life, Wordsworth contrived to believe that he had seriously considered throwing in his lot with the revolutionaries, particularly with his friends the Girondists, who suffered in the first great purge, and for whose benefit Wordsworth might have emended the famous line and rewritten it as

‘Hard was it in that dawn to keep alive.’

But nothing was further from Wordsworth’s thoughts than to run any real risk. He was not a coward, but like many a man with far less claim to genius, he believed himself to be the trustee for something infinitely important to mankind, his unwritten masterpieces. Many years later he was returning with his wife and sister to England when the ship struck on the sands. ‘My brother,’ wrote Dorothy Wordsworth, ‘thinking it would be impossible to save his wife and me, had stripped off his coat to be ready to swim,’ an episode which aggravates our difficulty in taking Wordsworth very seriously when he writes of himself during the Revolution :

Yet would I at this time with willing heart

Have undertaken for a cause so great

Service however dangerous.

He deceived himself but he did not deceive his sister. She loved her brother, but she loved him with the ruthless realism of the woman. ‘William is in France,’ she wrote to a friend, . . . ‘as we hear daily accounts of insurrections and broils, I cannot be too easy, though I think he is wise enough to get out of the way of danger.’

Moreover the Higher Powers, anxious to secure Wordsworth’s unwritten work for humanity, took a hand in the game :

I thankfully acknowledge

Forced by the gracious providence of Heaven

To England I returned . . .

But for this timely intervention

Doubtless I should have then made common cause

With some who perished ; haply perished too

A poor mistaken and bewildered offering,

Should to the breast of Nature have gone back,

With all my resolutions, all my hopes,

A poet only to myself, to men

Useless.

His faith in the Revolution which even Robespierre could not destroy, and which had revived after Robespierre's fall, was finally extinguished by the invasion of Switzerland.

On January 28, 1798, the Revolutionary armies of France crossed the Swiss frontier to 'liberate' Vaud from the rule of Berne. On March 5 Berne fell and with Berne the old Confederation. 'France is not wealthy enough,' the Swiss were told, 'to liberate Europe gratuitously.' Twenty-four million francs in specie and securities were accordingly sent from Berne to Paris. The museums were looted and even the bears from the bear pit helped to pay the debt of Switzerland to her 'liberators.' The subjugation of Switzerland profoundly shocked many who, until then, had supported the French Revolution. Switzerland was the symbol of freedom, the country in which a peasant democracy had inflicted the first defeat on feudalism. Wordsworth and Coleridge, who till then supported the Revolution, gave vent to their indignation in odes which are too well known to be quoted.

II

Wordsworth's Lakeland poetry ranks among the most inspired poetry in mountain literature, but his two long visits to the Alps, the first in 1790, and the second in 1820, were productive of a great quantity of uninteresting verse. His mountain epithets are either commonplace as, for instance :

From dew-sprinkled grass to heights guarded with snow,
or plain silly as in his apostrophe to the Staubbach :

this bold, this bright, this sky-born waterfall !

Wordsworth, however wrote one, if only one, magnificent Alpine poem, his description of the Simplon Pass :

The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blast of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent, at every turn
Winds thwarting winds bewildered and forlorn.
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light . . .

Tennyson, according to Mlle Engel, told Douglas Freshfield that in his view Wordsworth had never written anything finer than these lines.

III

Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron are represented in all Alpine anthologies, and rightly, but a far more gifted interpreter of mountain scenery than these, Dorothy Wordsworth, is all but unknown to mountain lovers. In the course of a lecture to a mountaineering club I asked if any of those present had read Dorothy Wordsworth's

Journal of a Tour on the Continent (1820). None of those present even knew of the existence of this masterpiece of mountain literature. The late Professor E. de Selincourt's scholarly edition (Macmillan) was not sent to the ALPINE JOURNAL for review and the book is not, as yet, in the Alpine Club Library. No extracts from this journal are quoted in my own Alpine anthology, or in R. L. G. Irving's or in Spender's, and the erudite Mlle Engel contents herself with two bleak and factual references to the journal in her detailed study of English and French Alpine literature.

Dorothy Wordsworth had a passionate love for mountains, and she studied them with the intensity of a lover sensitive to the subtlest changes of mood and expression. Here is a passage from her description of the valley between Interlaken and Zweilütschinen :

'Many a streamlet crossed our way, after tumbling down the hills—sometimes clear as the springs of our Westmorland mountains ; but the instant they touched the glacier river of the valley their pure spirit was lost, annihilated by its angry waters. I have seen a muddy and a transparent streamlet, at a few yards' distance hurrying down the same steep : in one instance the two joined at the bottom, travelled side by side in the same track, remaining distinct though joined together, as if each were jealous of its own character. Yielding to mild necessity, they slowly blended, ere both, in turbulent disrespect, were swallowed up by the master torrent.'

Rare indeed are those whose descriptive writing combines vision and accuracy and charm. The passage I have quoted evokes not a generalised impression of mountain torrents but a precise picture of the contrast between different manifestations of hill streams. Dorothy's passionate delight in mountain beauty was partly the cause and partly the consequence of her accuracy of observation. There is not a page of her journal which does not exemplify the great saying of Leonardo da Vinci : *L'amore di qualunque cosa è figliulo d'essa cognitione. L'amore è tanto piu fervente, quanto la cognitione è piu certa.*

And because every line that she wrote about mountains was the result of accurate observation, the reader always feels that she is describing not mountains in general but mountains in particular. 'One star differeth from another in glory,' and every sunset is different, but how difficult it is to differentiate a particular sunset from other sunsets. Here is Dorothy Wordsworth's description of sunset at Grindelwald :

'The sunshine had long deserted the valley, and was quitting the summits of the mountains behind the village ; but red hues, dark as the red of rubies, settled in the clouds, and lingered there after the mountains had lost all but their cold whiteness and the black hue of the crags. The gloomy grandeur of this spectacle harmonised with the melancholy of the vale ; yet it was *heavenly* glory that hung over those cold mountains.'

And here is another passage, written at Meiringen :

'We reached the Inn at a little after seven o'clock. The sky became

very gloomy ; frequent claps of thunder with vivid lightning ; and, in the night, heavy rain. While I lay on my bed, the terrible solitudes of the Wetterhorn were revealed to me by fits—its black chasms, and snowy, dark grey summits. All night, and all day, and for ever, the Vale of Meiringen is sounding with torrents.

‘ August 13th, Sunday, Meiringen. Rain over and the storm past away. Long before the sunshine had touched the top of any other mountain, the snow upon the Wetterhorn shone like silver, and its grey adamantine towers appeared in a soft splendour all their own. I looked in vain for the rosy tints of morning of which I had so often heard ; but they could not have been more beautiful than the silvery brightness.’

Equally charming are her pen pictures of the people whom she met on her travels :

‘ We pursued our way towards the greater Scheidegg . . . Further on, in a very shady and deep part of the lane, a fairy being appeared before us, a child not more than four years old, with outstretched arms, reaching almost from one bank of the lane to the other, while in each hand she held a shewy nosegay. The little creature had been sent out from a cottage, then unseen by us, in the adjoining field. She walked beside us, after giving in the same moment one of her posies to each, a work performed with a shy struggle (perhaps it was her first effort in barter or begging). She was pleased with our notice ; but ventured not to speak a word.’

The moral which Dorothy Wordsworth draws from a chance encounter in an inn near Schwyz is a fascinating footnote to the history of the French invasion of Switzerland.

‘ A tall, grave, middle-aged woman had entered . . . I found her seated, and could not but fix my eyes on her the moment I entered the room. A company of peasants of inferior rank were at supper at one end, we at our tea table in a distant corner, and she, at a third table, ate her supper alone, being served with ceremony like a person of distinction. Not one of us, I am sure, can ever forget this gentlewoman (for such I must call her). The involuntary notice she drew from us did not seem absolutely to offend—yet I cannot say she was pleased with it. She seemed to be an adequate representative of the Helvetian Matronage, as the Mother of the Gracchi might have been of the Roman, and some of our party were reminded by her appearance and deportment of the complaint made by the French, that, while stationed in this country, they could neither procure a mistress nor a spy.’

Wordsworthians will enjoy the curious blend of realism and reverence with which she writes of her brother. It would be easy for a reader who knew Wordsworth only from his poetry to assume that he had a mind above material considerations. In point of fact, like many other idealists he could drive a hard bargain and he intensely disliked being overreached. At Herzogenbuchsee, for instance, Wordsworth spent the night in the voiture rather than pay 6 francs for

a bed. At Stans the driver demanded 27 francs instead of the agreed 18 francs, and refused to surrender the coats and cloaks of the party, which he 'had locked up in a seat of the Char' till they paid. The ladies naturally were far more distressed at the prospect of losing their cloaks than of yielding to extortion, but Wordsworth, after assuring the carman that 'if justice were to be had in Switzerland, he should feel the weight of it,' bundled his party into a boat for Lucerne, where he laid a complaint against the errant carman, and pursued the matter with such energy that the coats and cloaks were returned and the carman sentenced to a month's imprisonment. 'We hastened down,' writes Dorothy, 'to congratulate the conquerors, and give them due praise for the spirit which had carried them through the business, honestly confessing that we, by being willing to submit to imposition, rather than run the risk of losing our coats, should have betrayed our own countrymen, and not done our duty to the Swiss.'

Let us hope that the journals, which are already out of print, will be reprinted after the war. Meanwhile those members of our Club who are sensible enough to be ski-ers and lucky enough to be members of the Ski Club of Great Britain can borrow the journals from the Ski Club Library, if and when I remember to return them.

SIR AUREL STEIN, K.C.I.E.

1862—1943

AUREL STEIN, who died in Kabul on October 26 last year, was the greatest Central Asian traveller of his generation. His pre-eminence was due to his scholarship, both in languages living and dead, and in archaeology and historical research. He was a resolute explorer of unknown mountain regions, a sound geographer and a good map maker.

Born at Budapest, he studied oriental languages and antiquities at the Universities of Vienna and Tübingen; but he told the writer of this notice he had to come to Oxford to complete his studies. He became a naturalised British subject, joined the Indian Educational Department, was appointed Principal of the Oriental College of Lahore and Registrar of the Punjab University in 1888 and in 1899 of the Calcutta Madrasa. But during these years he also carried out archaeological investigations in Kashmir and on the Afghan frontier. His work was of so pre-eminent a nature, especially his researches on the influence of Alexander's Greek colonies and its effect on native Buddhist art, that in 1910 he was transferred to the Archaeological Survey of India.

Here his great talents found a wider scope. He was already a Sanskrit scholar. He was one of the first to translate Kharosthi, a dead language. But his colloquial knowledge of the many living languages of the Indian borderlands and of Central Asia was unique