

anything, apart of course from kitchens and latrines, they would have to climb the 'Cuds,' we were left severely alone. An exception was made in the case of our own Brigadier and a magnificent camp was laid on complete with a piper, who paraded romantically up and down in the firelight, and every other amenity calculated to soften and impress his inspecting ardour. While on the subject of inspecting officers a useful tip was given to me early in the war. It was, 'Give 'em plenty of bangs.' There is no doubt that the judicious, if extravagant, use of high explosives has sent many an inspecting general away serene and happy.

Courses ended with a week or more of strenuous tactical exercises in which as many as possible of the lessons of basic mountain training were incorporated. They certainly revealed many weak points and the need for a far longer training than could be given during the war. It is easy enough to teach a man to climb, but the finer points such as use of ground, route finding, observation and that instinctive appreciation of country and weather which is the hall mark of sound mountaineering need a long apprenticeship. Map reading, in particular, was always a weak point among officers and N.C.O.'s, and mountain map reading, involving as it does a three dimensional visualisation coupled with an accurate appreciation of space and time, needs much practice.

On the whole, however, exercises passed off well, though I must confess to some despondency on one occasion when a platoon commander preferred to march his men 30 miles along roads rather than walk 5 miles across the hills. But such instances were rare enough to be memorable, and the fitness and enthusiasm of all ranks after a six weeks' training made the instructional staff feel that their efforts had not been in vain.

(To be continued).

ADULA AND OBERLAND : PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

By G. GRAHAM MACPHEE

Read before the Alpine Club, November 6, 1945

IT is a great honour for me to be invited to undertake the task of reading a paper to you this evening, a task for which I am all too ill equipped. You must blame our Honorary Secretary for my being in this embarrassing position. My feeble resistance to his suggestion was soon overcome, for efficient Honorary Secretaries like ours always win in the end. Once they get an idea, they are more relentless than income tax inspectors.

The problem which faced me was what subject to choose. On considering my various Alpine holidays, I found there was nothing outstanding to record. In fact, I have never had a good season in the Alps. Always something went wrong. Usually the weather was bad. Sometimes my companions failed me. Never did a holiday go according to plan. The best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley. Each spring my fancy would lightly turn to thoughts of a really good season in the Alps. Each summer I went out determined that this time things would go well. Every year something went wrong, as usual. Perhaps I expected too much. My repeated visits to the Alps were thus like a man getting married for the second or third time, the triumph of hope over experience.

In reading accounts of other people's expeditions, I am always struck by the smoothness with which their plans seem to be carried out. One seldom sees references to the untoward happenings that must often occur. Reading between the lines one sometimes imagines a discord in human relationships, such as is mentioned in *Mountain Craft*. Some of our greatest climbers have been, to put it mildly, temperamental. As a beginner, I was fortunate in being taken out by good climbers. I still smile at the recollection of a long day with two experts who were not on speaking terms for most of the time so that I, the new boy as it were, had to act as a sort of interpreter or liaison between them.

On another holiday, an excellent rock climber who had asked me to take him on his first season to the Alps, refused to cross a simple little glacier—he never got over his obvious fear of snow and ice—and left me with the choice of wasting a fine day or going on alone, full of resentment, to do a solo ascent of the Aiguille Noire de Péteret by a new and direct route. This was done in a cold fury. The most daunting moment of the day was when, after basking in sun for an hour on the summit, during which time my fury had no doubt evaporated, I looked down the almost incredible distance to the valley below and wondered if I should ever find my way down by the ordinary route. This exploit was kept a dark secret for years. Unfortunately an A.C. friend mentioned it for fun in an afterdinner speech, since when my reputation as an ultra-careful climber, cautious almost to timidity, has suffered a lot.

It occurred to me that an account of an ordinary Alpine holiday, telling the whole truth, failures as well as successes, might be a change. J. H. Doughty once wrote an article entitled simply 'Failures,' so my idea is not even original. Following the precedent of a paper called 'How it all began,' the title that suggested itself to me was 'How it all ended, or Never so young again,' for this account of my last holiday. Lest this should delude members into expecting more than the mediocre fare which is all I can hope to provide, it was decided to call it simply 'Personal Reminiscences' and then you would know what to expect. I did not realise that I was to appear between two such famous professional authors and lecturers as Arnold Lunn and Frank Smythe,

like a poor wartime sandwich. So far as one *can* tell the whole truth, and without any attempt at flights of literary fancy, my paper is simply a plain tale from the hills.

After weighing in at the Dorchester, travelling light, I crossed by Air France to Paris on Friday, July 21, 1939, visited and dined with friends there, got the 10 P.M. train by the St. Gotthard, not having been able to obtain a sleeping berth, left my suitcase at Airolo, and arrived at Biasca about noon on Saturday, rather short of sleep. During two hours' break for lunch, I watched the rain pouring down in vertical columns and felt that, if this was the Alps, I could have got just as wet in Wales or the Lake District. The rain bounced off the ground nearly two feet, and the station yard was flooded.

A train to Acquarossa, and then a bus, got me to Dangia about tea time. There was no tea and no signs of the companions of my section of the Swiss Alpine Club whom I was hoping to meet. Accordingly, I telephoned with difficulty from an Italian-speaking to a French-speaking part of Switzerland and learned that by some incredible mistake I was a day too soon and they were not due to arrive till next day, a setback at the very start.

There was nothing for it but to make my own way up to the Adula hut. Having in my mind stories of the difficulty of finding unfamiliar huts in gathering darkness and on my back a heavy rucksack, I had the sense to put my pride in my pocket and hire a native lad to accompany me into the dense mist above. He proved to be a huge youth of about sixteen, a young Hercules, and not a pocket Hercules either, who swung my sack on his back as if it had been nothing and set off uphill at a pace that even unladen I could scarcely equal. The perennial problem of whether to wear a waterproof climbing jacket and get wet from inside with sweat, or take it off and get soaked from outside with rain presented no difficulty to my young Hercules. He opened a large umbrella, stuck it in my sack, and strolled up with his hands in his pockets, cool and dry in the pouring rain. I only wish I had the courage to climb with an umbrella, like a certain Duke at a military review.

It was a relief to reach the well found Adula hut just at dusk—I would probably have been benighted if alone—and pay off the strong silent youth, money well spent indeed. My conscience was rather troubled at not having carried up the sack myself, but was salved by the thought that for the next four weeks I was to go in for peak-bagging pure and simple, and not a real climbing holiday at all.

Next day, Sunday, it continued to rain heavily. The hut was almost empty. Most of the day was passed in making up lost sleep. In the evening my nine S.A.C. companions arrived. I find it an excellent way of starting a holiday to join a meet of my section for a week and get gradually fit on ordinary routes.

On Monday it was still wet, but we set off at 7 A.M. and climbed the Rheinwaldhorn in dense mist. I presume we reached the summit as, after a long period of trudging up on soft wet snow, we began to

descend on the other side. Route finding was not easy and I almost suspected we were lost. A momentary glimpse through a clearing in the mist revealed a rock ridge and gave the only man in the party who had been there before a clue as to our whereabouts. We soon got down below the mist level over a difficult bit of glacier. The source of the infant Hinter Rhein issuing from an ice cavern at the foot of the glacier was a memorable sight. Even on that dull day the crevasses had a wonderful blue-green gleam. At a gorge lower down, our party got divided. My group kept to the left bank of the Rhine, the other to the right. It was with mild regret that we saw the other party cross over quite easily by a precarious snow bridge to rejoin us lower down. We rather felt they deserved more trouble for not having followed us.

We reached the Zapport hut soaked to the skin. Being rather a small, unfrequented hut, it offered no facilities for drying our wet clothes beyond the smoky wood-burning cooking stove. A night spent in wet clothes and two damp blankets was not my idea of comfort. The strapping round my chest was quite sodden. Exactly a fortnight previously I had bumped my chest against a sharp spike of rock in the dark on Crib Goch, by stretching out for a handhold and not seeing the spike which was in deep shadow. Apparently two ribs were fractured, so strapping had been applied to enable me to proceed on my holiday. This strapping had survived many baths during the fortnight, but not the soaking it got on this climb.

Next day, we found that the rain had turned ^{now} ^{during} the night, so there was a covering of new snow over everything. We walked over the Lentalücke in bad weather to the Lenta hut, the ascent of our proposed peak being voted against in these bad conditions—another setback. The weather cleared in the evening. We had a glimpse of the Rheinwaldhorn, and some edelweiss was gathered. The careful Swiss had arranged for food and drink to be delivered by pack animal at the Lenta hut, so we had a sumptuous meal and fifteen litres of wine for ten people. The Swiss realise that mountaineers, like an army marching, climb on their stomachs. 'Manger, c'est la chose principale.' In the continental fashion, the evening was passed in singing and storytelling.

Next day, Wednesday, revealed a thick mist and a further covering of new snow several inches deep at the Lenta hut. While peaks were out of the question, passes still had to be crossed to keep to our programme. We accordingly set out to trudge through the new snow. At the top of the pass, the weather suddenly cleared and we all went up the small Piz Cammai, only a short walk up a snow slope. The neighbouring peaks could be glimpsed among clouds.

The descent of the pass on the other side was steep. One of my companions suddenly came off below me. It was encouraging to find how easily he was held, owing to there being no slack in the rope. It was also encouraging to find in the pastures that some of the Swiss knew even less about Alpine flora than myself. One of the Swiss

had a fine tenor voice and enlivened the long tramp with folk songs, of which there seem to be examples for every mood. We walked along three valleys and reached Campo Blenio in time for a magnificent meal in the hotel, followed by a comfortable night's rest.

Next morning we left at seven to walk down to Olivone and get the bus up the Lukmanier Pass to Santa Maria, where luncheon had been arranged for us. The Scopi was in cloud and presumably covered with new snow, so we had to be content with walking over the Colle dell' Uomo, a long trudge in rain, to the Ritom lake—still another failure of plans. Part of the Swiss army was training on these hills. We descended to the valley and got a car to Airolo, where my suitcase was retrieved ; then a train took me to Zürich.

I parted from the good companions of the S.A.C. with mutual expressions of goodwill. There had not been a single fine day and after nearly a week my list of tops was only one moderate mountain and one small hill. I felt rather cast down and had seen very little of the Adula region.

The time spent attending meetings of the International Association which was my reason for going to Zürich coincided with perfect weather conditions, wasted for climbing.

On the 29th I went to the Grimsel Pass to meet another Swiss party of fifteen and go up to the Lauteraar hut, formerly the Pavillon Dollfus, in less settled weather. We had intended sailing along the reservoir from the Grimsel dam to the foot of the glacier. The water was ~~exceptionally low~~ and the boat was not available, so we had to walk all the way. This was rather a setback at the very start of our 'Semaine clubistique.' In this party were two Englishmen, one a barrister, the other a solicitor. It turned out that although they met for the first time in the Lauteraar hut in a Swiss party, they had both lived for years in the same building in London. Two Scotsmen who had arranged to climb with me later were also in this party. The temperature of the hut rose in the evening to almost tropical levels and the visibility became less, due to tobacco smoke, than in any of the mists I had encountered the previous week.

On Sunday it was still fine. We climbed the Hühnerstock, not a big mountain but a good viewpoint. Our sojourn on the summit was, according to the usual continental formula, celebrated in song—'Alors nous chantons quelque chose, et puis nous partons.' We saw chamois on the way down, and could not but envy the effortless ease with which they ran up steep snow slopes. This was the first fine day I had spent on a mountain in nine days' holiday.

On Monday we set out in doubtful weather for the Scheuchzerhorn, a peak whose name had always attracted me. The names of many of the Oberland mountains seem to me often singularly suitable and appropriate. Take the Mönch, the monk with his white cowl of snow ; the Wetterhorn, or peak of storms ; the Schreckhorn, or peak of terror ; the Gespensterhorn, or peak of ghosts ; the Jungfrau, or maiden with white mantle of snow ; and so on. It seems to me

unnecessary to go past these simple explanations of the names being given because of some obvious or supposed natural characteristic (like Carn Dearg, the red hill or Am Bodach, the old man, of which there are several in the Highlands) and introduce some erudite but farfetched complication to explain them, such as to say that because some fields in the valley or on the lower slopes of the mountain once belonged to a convent, they were called Jungfrauenalpen, and this name was gradually transferred as Jungfrau to the mountain itself. Even at the risk of being regarded as a superficial thinker from 'the lazy habit of escaping from the difficulties of a complex problem by over-simplification,' as Arnold Lunn puts it, I am quite content to take these names at their face value, especially since some of them seem so apt and even beautiful. As the child of ten said, 'Does it matter, anyway?'

To return to our climb, the weather turned really bad at the Scheuchzerjoch, so the Swiss decided to give up the climb. I realised then how hard it is to turn back when a summit seems almost within one's grasp, and inwardly cursed the Swiss for depriving me of one small peak. In a previous year, the Swiss had taken me up Lo Besso in a snowstorm, when all the holds had to be cleared of snow (and got filled up again almost at once) and only an intimate knowledge of the route could have got us up. I felt that this time there must be good reasons for retreating. We sadly relinquished the height gained with so much toil and sweat in the rain and in vain, for we did not even cross the pass. Height has always been sacred to me since my early days as a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps. We consoled ourselves by visiting the scientists who, camped on the surface of the glacier in very well furnished and comfortable-looking tents, were investigating the thickness of the ice. One of them told me that the ice at that place was about 400 ft. thick.

On Tuesday, August 1, we walked over the Strahleggjoch from the Lauteraar hut to the Strahlegg hut, rather a waste of a fine day. By this time I had been out eleven days and climbed three minor mountains, a poor result.

On Wednesday, another fine day, we all eighteen went up the Schreckhorn by the ordinary route. The snow was good. Owing to the slowness of such a large party, it was soft and laborious on the descent. It was a great contrast to my first visit eleven years before. Then the conditions were icy. We had some step-cutting to do. A falling stone struck my companion behind the ear. Fortunately he was not killed or even knocked unconscious. On our return I remember he insisted on drinking copiously on the ground that he had bled!

This time, the hut intended for 45 had 64 in it, so we had a poor night's rest. It was still fine, so on Thursday we set off for the Finsteraarhorn, two ropes of three. The couloir to the Agassizjoch was in good condition and we cut up it in an hour and a half, and reached the top of the Finsteraarhorn 5 hours and 40 minutes after

leaving the hut. It was one of the coldest and draughtiest summits I can remember, cold enough as Sean O'Casey puts it to make the legs of a nun numb. Alas for foolish optimism! The condition of the couloir had deteriorated and it took us $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours to descend, against $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours going up. As last man down, I realised the importance of being earnest in endeavouring to ensure safety. Another party, crossing the Agassizjoch, overtook us and kept grumbling at our slow rate of progress. Our leading man was having hard work down below. At last I suggested that if they were in a hurry they might make their own steps and so go past us, instead of following us and using our steps. This seemed to quiet them. It took us altogether 7 hours to get back to the hut from the top, making a 13-hour day. We were glad to have done a second peak, still in fine weather, for a change seemed imminent.

Friday was a bad day, rain and mist all day. Saturday was almost as wet. I descended to Grindelwald to enjoy some comfort, buy a pair of boots with Vibram soles, which proved to be good, and meet some friends at the Schoenegg hotel. They invited me to join them, but I had other companions in view.

On Sunday morning it was still raining heavily. The rest of the Swiss party got down to Grindelwald in the afternoon, and we had a final meal together to end our week's climbing. Unfortunately, one member had fallen off the path and fractured some ribs. In spite of this slight shadow (he was like the skeleton at the feast, except that he was outside in the waiting bus) the dinner passed off well. Then we British members said goodbye to our Swiss colleagues with real regret. It had been an enjoyable week, they had arranged a good programme, and the only thing they could not arrange was the weather.

My plan for a peak-bagging holiday seemed as unproductive of even mediocre results as when we used to try for big climbs. I recalled spending days at the Tour Rouge hut with sundry tigers of the G.H.M. waiting for the weather to improve enough for us to try the Mer de Glace face of the Grépon, while more and more snow fell until we were compelled to make a difficult retreat, owing to our food running short. At other times, big things we aspired to were impossible when we might have been doing smaller ones in safety. Here I aspired only to ordinary climbs and did not even get them done. After more than a fortnight, I had only accomplished two large and two small mountains and one hill, and one of these, Schreckhorn, I had done already, so it hardly counted. The good comradeship of the Swiss did much to soothe my thwarted feelings and I have the pleasantest recollections of both parties, each one so different in composition from the other.

On Sunday evening, August 6, it was my turn to make plans for my three British companions, who may be called Tom, Dick and Harry. We set off on Monday morning by train for the Jungfrauoch and, as it seemed a fine day, started after lunch for the Trugberg. The rocks were covered with ice and snow after the bad weather. As it is a long

ridge to the summit, I realised there would not be time under these conditions to complete the ascent and return before darkness, and the weather looked bad. Accordingly it was I who now had to decide to turn back, a bitter pill for me to have to give up another top so near and yet so far. To console my three novices, we went up the Mönch instead. I had ascended it before on January 1, 1929, after bringing in the New Year in the highest inhabited house in the Alps with the hospitable Herr Sommer as our host. This time, a snowstorm came on, but it is not a difficult mountain, there was a well worn track on the ridge and I wanted Tom, Dick and Harry to get something done. On the way down the storm cleared. We met a solitary climber ascending near the foot of the ridge about 5 P.M., unequipped except for an ice-axe. Having heard of tourists trying the Matterhorn with umbrellas and other mountains in silk stockings and high heels, we decided, after some hesitation, to find out if he were likely to meet his doom if not warned. We were rather shaken by his reply that he was just out for his evening stroll, his *Abendspaziergang*. We found out later that he was one of the scientists at the observatory on the Jungfraujoch, which made us feel rather small.

Tuesday was a bad day. It snowed hard all day. Visibility was almost nil. We hired skates and skated all day on the ice rink. This rink is cut out of solid ice beneath the Jungfraujoch. It was rather a strange experience. I still wonder how the subglacial chamber was ventilated, if at all. Next day my ankles ached with the unaccustomed exercise. It was a sunny day with more than a foot of new snow. We hired ski and spent all day trudging up and sliding down the slopes of the Mönch and Obermönchjoch. The perfect powder snow of the morning had by the afternoon softened in the hot sun and made heavy going. Thus two more days were lost to climbing. Poor Harry now had to leave us, so it was a good thing we had climbed the Mönch. We had also enjoyed two evenings with the genial Herr Sommer.

Thursday, August 10, was the second fine day. We three, Tom, Dick and I, set out at 4.30 A.M. for the Jungfrau, the only ones to attempt it. The other parties all went for the easier Mönch under the new snow conditions. The snow was soft and exhausting. Dick was inexperienced and slow. Tom had learned a lot on Scottish hills, but the snow there has a different consistency from Alpine snow. We found only one feasible route over the cornice to the Rottalsattel. We decided to leave our sacks there, and hewed out large holes in the snow to hold them. Being in a didactic mood, I insisted on these holes being made at least five feet lower down than the others had intended, to avoid the cornice. They were thus on the steep slope that plunged down valleywards, and our traverse at this low level was much more difficult than if we had kept a few feet higher where the slope eased off. The conditions on the final slope to the summit were bad. The new snow lay on ice, and I had plenty of work clearing it off to cut steps, while Tom and Dick also had some practice. We

did not reach the summit till 9.30, five hours after leaving the Berghaus. We started back very soon, as the condition of the slope we had ascended made me decide not to linger. On reaching the Rottalsattel a few yards from our sacks, we heard a sound like a deep sigh and, almost before our very eyes, the entire cornice gave way, carrying all our sacks with it, and leaving us standing on the crest of a snow ridge where a moment before we had been well down a steep slope. Evidently the line of our footsteps had determined the line of cleavage. It was as well that my native caution had made us cross even lower down than seemed necessary or was desirable. It was a lesson to me how very careful one should be on any cornice.

Somewhat shaken by what seemed a narrow escape, and still more by the total loss of our sacks, we proceeded to the point where we had been able to surmount the cornice on the ascent. With some misgiving, we descended into the hollow beneath the still remaining parts of the cornice and fairly ran down over the soft heavy broken snow. Dick was exhausted, but he stuck to it manfully, and we were soon out of danger's way. A hot and tiring trudge in blazing sun over soft snow brought us perspiringly to the Berghaus before 1 P.M. Here we found that the fall of the cornice had been observed, and we had narrowly escaped being sent for by a rescue party. I wonder if anything ever passes unobserved on Alpine mountains.

In the hotel we were confronted by a fresh difficulty. An order had been issued that no water was to be supplied for drinking, on the ground that it might make the visitors ill. We were much impressed by the solicitude of the management for the welfare of their guests, even residents like ourselves. Nevertheless, it presented a problem. The only available beverages were wine or coffee. We felt that neither could be consumed in quantities sufficient to assuage our thirst. The theory that one should not drink when on an expedition does not appeal to me. During all my climbing life of fifteen years I have always drunk as much water as I wanted whenever I could, and no apparent harm has resulted. When no water is available on a long day, it is necessary to make up the fluid lost by perspiration and respiration at the end of the day, and I see no evil in this but rather good. Water discipline may be necessary in the desert or elsewhere if there is a real shortage of liquids. The only day on which I have ever suffered seriously from thirst was on the traverse of the Coolin Ridge on June 1, 1939, a blazing hot day. Then we got so thirsty that my companion's tongue became swollen and so protruded that he could not close his mouth. We were both almost speechless. When we got down from the ridge, I drank four quarts of water at once, and then more and more on the way back to Glenbrittle. Paul's advice to Timothy to drink no longer water but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake would not have done for us, but the ever thoughtful Speaker had waited up till midnight and gave us each a huge nightcap of fine old Talisker whisky.

At the Jungfrauoch I felt that even if our heads could stand four

quarts of wine each our pockets could not. We offered to buy the water which was brought up each day for cooking, so we were told, but this was also refused. An appeal to the all powerful and now not so genial Herr Sommer found him adamant. We were now more than impressed by the great care taken of the visitors' health. Necessity is the mother of invention. The difficulty was overcome by collecting water dripping from the melting snow at the eaves of our bedroom window. Risking lead or copper poisoning from the roof, we were each able to make up about a gallon of tissue fluid loss.

Having lost our sacks with crampons, cameras and spare clothing, we descended grudgingly to Grindelwald to refit. We felt it had been an unusual experience in August to skate one day, ski the next and climb on the third, to say nothing of a collapsed cornice.

The next day was a fine day wasted. Tom had to leave, as his holiday was over. Dick did not feel like more climbing. My other friends, not expecting me back, had gone up to a hut before my return. The fine weather had cleared Grindelwald alike of climbers and guides, so I was left with no companions at all. After three weeks' holiday I had done only two new *Viertausender* and felt thwarted and frustrated at wasting a fine day in the valley. After a day of fruitless searching for anybody at all to climb with, I met two Alpine Club members in the Bear hotel. One of them very decently offered to lend me his good guide who wanted to try the second ascent of the N. face of the Eiger with me. As this then had, and perhaps still has, a sinister reputation, and the weather might after all not be settled, I rather demurred at embarking on such a big climb with a total stranger who evidently had a flattering but exaggerated and erroneous opinion of my abilities. After some discussion he arranged for me to have as a companion a young man who hoped to become a guide. I was most grateful to those two members and their guide for this help, and went to bed full of optimism, with visions of an incipient Knubel to meet me in the morning.

(To be continued)

CHRISTIAN ALMER AND MELCHIOR ANDEREGG

By D. F. O. DANGAR

ON Wednesday, July 22, 1863, Messrs. H. B. George and R. J. S. Macdonald, accompanied by Christian Almer and Melchior Anderegg, made the first crossing of the Col du Tour Noir. This expedition has been regarded, wrongly, as the first occasion on which the two guides were associated.

In the obituary notice of George in *A. J.* 25. 530 *sqq.*, it is stated that the expedition was 'the first occasion on which Christian Almer and