

THE KLEINE SCHEIDEGG MEET

By G. F. PEAKER

IN 1948 the Club decided to hold a meet at Kleine Scheidegg, with the object of giving experience in Alpine mountaineering to home-trained climbers. Nominations were invited from the principal climbing clubs, and experienced members were invited to act as leaders. In this way about sixty young climbers were introduced to Alpine climbing, and given a wider experience of it than they had hitherto enjoyed.

The preliminary organisation was undertaken by Mr. T. A. Brocklebank—and Messrs. Bryan Donkin, Peter Lloyd, and A. D. B. Side were in general charge on the spot of the three successive waves which invaded the Oberland. Each wave had a period of a fortnight, and the whole meet lasted a month—the third wave succeeding the first and the middle wave overlapping them both (and enjoying the luck of the weather, such as it was).

About a score of experienced members, including Himalayan stalwarts like Messrs. Graham Brown, Lloyd, and Warren, volunteered as leaders, and our distinguished Swiss member M. André Roch was able to be with us for a fortnight and rendered invaluable service as a leader and a teacher. Through the kindness of the Swiss Foundation for Mountain Exploration we also enjoyed the services of three Oberland guides—Steuri, Rubi, and Brunner—who accompanied some of the expeditions, and also gave some excellent demonstrations of safety precautions and rescue work.

The weather joined in the work of instruction. For the first and last week it was deplorable, but during the middle fortnight there were a number of fine or fair intervals, from which those parties who spent most of the time in huts were able to profit. The great prevalence of snow gave a rare beauty to the mountains, on the somewhat infrequent occasions when they were visible, in marked contrast to their dejected appearance in 1947 after the prolonged drought and hot sunshine. Indeed, when the sun was low, one had almost the loveliness of the winter landscape.

While some may have felt that this delight of the eye was dearly bought through the frequent snowstorms that produced it, there can be no doubt that it was the general view that the meet was highly successful. A great deal of climbing was done, despite the conditions, and almost everybody took home the recollection of some memorable days.

The number and variety of these can be seen from the following list of the climbs done by the three groups. The figure before each ascent indicated the numbers of learners who accomplished it (not always, of course, on the same day).

Group 1

20	Grünhorn	17	Schreckhorn
10	Finsteraarhorn	10	Wetterhorn
28	Mönch	3	Jungfrau

Group 2

18	Mönch	6	Jungfrau by Silberhorn (from the Rotbrettücke)
16	Jungfrau	4	Eigerjoch (from Jungfrauoch to Scheidegg)
4	Weissnollen and Fiescher Gabelhorn	9	Mönch by Nollen route
12	Aletschhorn	2	Ochs (from Strahlegg hut to Finsteraarhorn hut)
4	Finsteraarhorn	4	Strahlegghorn
4	Eiger traverse by Eigerjoch		

Group 3

8	Tschingelhorn	6	Dreieckhorn
6	Grüneckhorn	19	Jungfrau
12	Wetterhorn	6	Strahlegghorn
15	Mönch	- 15	Fiescher Gabelhorn

Readers will no doubt expect to hear some details about the climbing. Here I am in the same difficulty as Sir Boyle Roche ('Not being a bird, Mr. Speaker, I could not be in two places at once'), and I hope, therefore, that I shall be forgiven if I select a biased instead of a random sample, and only describe three expeditions in which I took part.

The first of these was the Jungfrau by the Silberhorn (from the Rotbrettücke). The other members of the party were Sinclair and Bryson (leaders), and Harris, Harrison, Bullock, Fincham, Cook, Yule and Cain. This route is described by the guide book as 'Landschaftlich grossartige, bei guten Verhältnissen nicht übermässig schwierige Tour.' It enjoys the advantage of being in full view from the Scheidegg, and the 'Verhältnissen' looked reasonably good in the sense that the great prevalence of snow made it unlikely that much bare ice would be encountered.

The first step is to get to the new hut on the Rotbrettücke, and this is not such a simple matter as might be thought. We set out on July 30, after a good night, to recover from our recent fatigues on the Aletschhorn, a late breakfast, and no more than a reasonable amount of confusion and delay. We were armed with the information that the new way to the Rotbrettücke was quite different from that described in the book, and that we couldn't miss it. The second part of this brief struck me as ominous. In the course of my profession I am not infrequently obliged to set out at night in search of little known buildings in strange towns, and to enquire the way from passers-by. These fall into two classes. Those in the first (and unexpectedly large) class immediately admit to being, like me, total strangers to the neighbourhood. The second kind, equally polite and in intention, at least, more

helpful, rapidly describe a route, with numerous references to unknown, inconspicuous, and generally unilluminated local landmarks, winding up with this same assurance that 'you can't miss it.' Their confidence is frequently shown by experience to be unfounded, but unfortunately the experience is mine, not theirs, so that perhaps less than the maximum of profit is extracted from it. Be that as it may, I for one was not surprised when, before we had gone very far a divergence of view as to the best mode of proceeding appeared in our ranks ; or rather it would have appeared but for the fact that the schismatics, headed by Sinclair, had vanished rapidly down an unlikely looking path leading into the lower recesses of the Trümletental. I yield to no one in my general admiration for Sinclair's topographical instinct, which frequently stood us in good stead (as will be seen later), but veracity compels me to admit that on this occasion he was undoubtedly wrong. True, when the party was ultimately reunited on the further bank of the Trümletenbach it was the heretics who were waiting for the panting orthodox, but it was clear, at any rate to the latter, that the only inference to be drawn from this fact was (a) that the orthodox had wasted much time and breath in futile hallooings, in the vain hope of recalling the heretics to the fold, and (b) that the heretics had striven to atone for their folly by mere brute pace and energy.

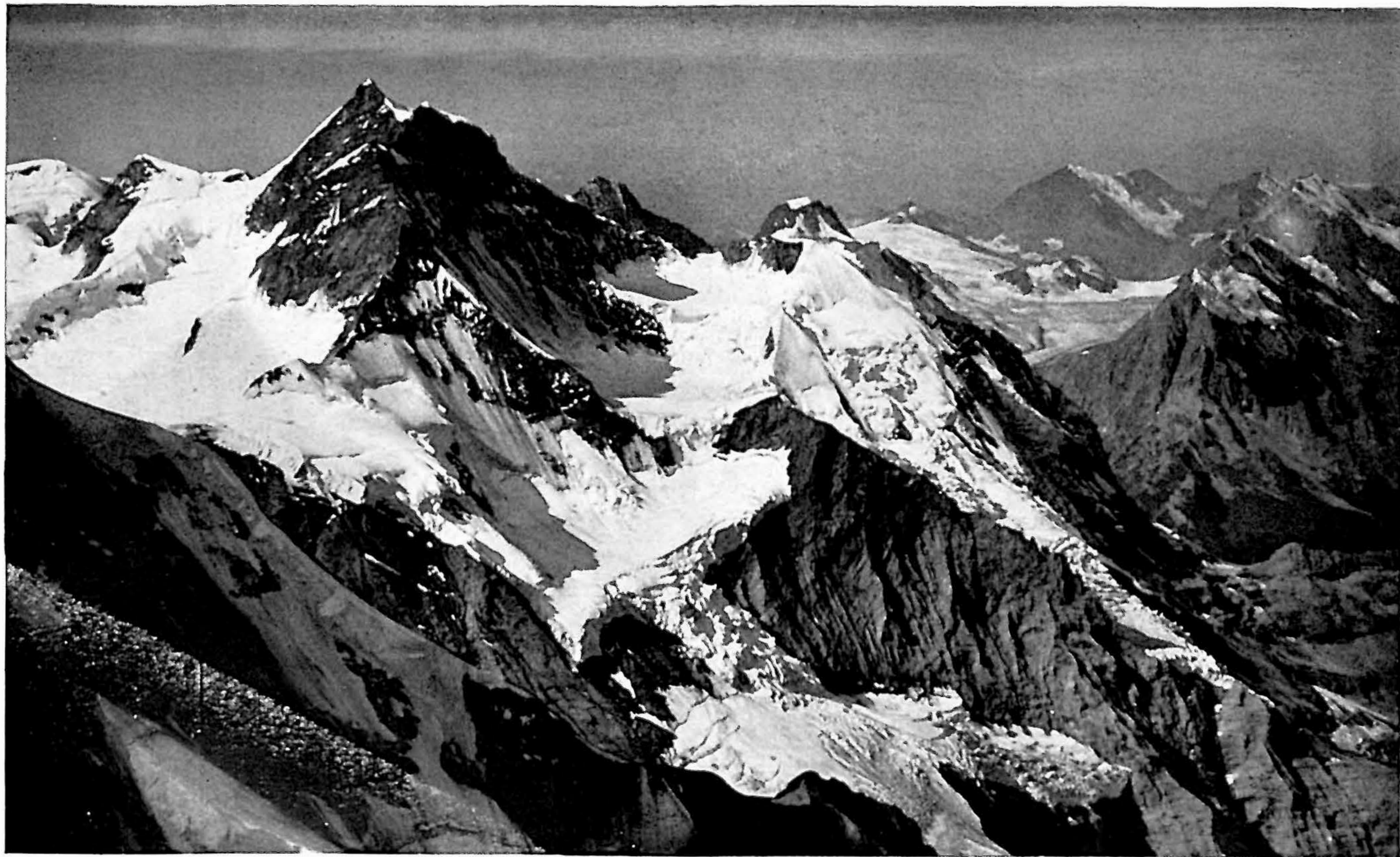
From this point it seemed clear that for some distance the way must lie along the upper edge of the terrace under the great cliffs below the Giessengletscher—a view which was presently confirmed by splashes of red paint and warnings to beware of avalanches down the couloirs. These fortunately are narrow and infrequent, while the intervening cliffs are so steep as to give good shelter from anything falling over them. There is in fact quite a good path along the upper edge of the terrace, 'qui constitue' (in Samivel's words) 'une charmante pâture,' although a somewhat steep one. We pursued this flowery way for some time, until we were startled to see it turn up into the rocks at an angle reminiscent of that other Paradise on Lliwedd. For the next few hundred feet we enjoyed some exceedingly steep climbing over very smooth rock. I was glad to observe that a plentiful supply of pitons had been used to facilitate this part of the way, and even more gratified to note the wholehearted way in which our Lake District purists employed them for hand and foothold. The cliffs are broken by grassy terraces, on one of which we stopped for lunch, a delightful meal whose too early conclusion was marred by a brisk shower of rain. Above the cliffs we crossed an upper bay of the Giessen glacier on claws, and a further scramble brought us to the hut in the Rotbrettlücke at about three o'clock. After tea a reconnaissance party was just setting out when a terrific burst of hail drove them back and from then until nightfall and long after we were treated to a first-rate thunderstorm. As this storm continued the likelihood of our being able to proceed on the morrow diminished, and the party settled down to enjoy Sinclair's remarkable powers as a cook, and the skill of Harrison and Fincham as vocalists, not to mention a formidable display of

virtuosity by Cain. (We were the only party in the hut.) In these diversions the evening passed with great contentment and rapidity, and it was very late before we turned in, and even later (for all I know) before a singular monologue or lullaby by our youngest member was finally stilled, as the voice of the glacier stream falls silent in the night.

‘ At two o’clock, much rain and mist,
At three o’clock the same,
At six the snows, Apollo-kissed,
Leapt trembling into flame ’

and in the meantime a dishevelled and dilatory breakfast party first sat about disconsolate, then made a tentative venture on to the slabs above the hut, then saw the mists rolling away from a clear and settled sky, wondered how they could have entertained the paltry notion of going straight down to Lauterbrunnen, and started on the long upward traverse under the séracs to the breach in the N.W. ridge. Once fairly started, we made rapid progress up this steep snow and ice, and were at the breach by eight. From this point to the top of the Silberhorn we were in the field of view of the telescope at the Scheidegg, where the fact that we were about three hours behind schedule was the subject of gloomy comment. It should, however, be made clear that the long upward traverse we had just completed includes the only delicate section of the climb—the passage below the séracs, and that it would plainly have been imprudent to embark on this before the weather had declared itself, since the prospect of a return later in the day would have been unpleasant. The weather was now exceedingly promising, and we had every reason to think that the snow on the upper part of the Silberhorn ridge was good. Moreover, Sinclair and I knew the way up the Jungfrau from the Silberlücke, having been up the mountain by the Guggi route in 1947, while the whole party had been up and down the usual way from the Jungfraujoch only four days before. Despite, therefore, the considerable length of the expedition ahead of us we felt reasonably confident of success.

From the breach the first question was whether to traverse out left and mount by ‘ glatte platten ’ now covered with snow, or go straight up the ridge, which the book recommended only ‘ bei trockener, schneefreien Felsen.’ The lower part of the ridge looked reasonably dry, and it was certainly sufficiently steep to rouse the combative instincts of our rock climbers. The dryness proved to be a complete illusion, and unfavourable comments were made on the presence of verglas and the absence of sound rock. The Rev. Mr. Paley, had he been among those present, would no doubt have argued the Providential nature of this concatenation; the ice at any rate glued the rock more or less firmly into place. Belays and stances, though infrequent, were by no means wholly absent, and as we had plenty of rope it was thought prudent to unite into a single party for this section—a party resembling a gigantic and singularly flexible caterpillar, with Sinclair, climbing in brilliant form, as its sapient head. These proceedings



Photo, C. D. Milner.]

THE SILBERHORN AND JUNGFRAU, WITH THE NOLLEN RIDGE OF THE MÖNCH IN THE LEFT FOREGROUND, TAKEN AFTER THE LONG DROUGHT OF 1947, WITH THE NOLLEN GREATLY REDUCED.

took time, since the speed of even the most flexible caterpillar regresses heavily on those of its component parts, even when none of these parts is embittered by the absence of sound Lake District rock in an ice-free state, and before we reached the snow the Cassandras at the Scheidegg had received considerable encouragement not only from the approach of the lunch-hour but also from the increasing plausibility of their vaticinations.

About the snow ridge, however, we were not mistaken. It was possible to cut steps straight up with only one or two rapid blows, and frequently to progress by kicking. We mounted rapidly, and soon after noon reached the lovely summit of the Silberhorn. A cold wind drove us down to lunch at the Silberlücke where, under the quizzical gaze of Sinclair, I expatiated on the glories of the Guggi route for the benefit of the younger members of the party.

The morning's labours with the axe having somewhat exhausted my aged frame, it was now arranged that Bryson's and Sinclair's ropes should proceed up the Hochfirn, while mine should follow on at a decent interval. The extent of the Hochfirn is considerable, the height of the Silberlücke being approximately that of the Jungfrauoch, and the decent interval was in danger of becoming indecent when a check on the final pyramid of the Jungfrau enabled us to close it somewhat before our absence had excited derisive remark. As it was now exceedingly unlikely that we could catch the last train at the Joch, I pointed out to my companions the superiority, as a view point, of the summit of the Jungfrau to the dining-room at the Joch, and argued the need for ingesting and digesting an ample supply of nourishment before facing the perils of the descent. These arguments so far prevailed that the shades of evening were already falling in the Rhone valley, and the light mellowing and yellowing on the snow, as my party plodded gently across the Jungfrau firn in a thoroughly comfortable frame of mind. From this we were suddenly aroused by a hoarse and entirely unintelligible yell from our companions half-a-mile away on the Joch. Surmising the existence of an unscheduled Saturday special we broke into a gallop, which reminded me of the finish of the 1928 Marathon, except that that was run on level ground, and that I was twenty years younger. After panting up the final ascent, and tumbling down the stairs to the dining-room we found our companions tranquilly drinking tea. They informed us that the railway company proposed to remove one of their trains from the Joch to the Eigergletscher Station, in readiness for the Sunday rush, and that they had kindly consented to allow us to accompany it. Our initial belief that this unexpected privilege was also gratis proved to be unduly optimistic; none the less, we reached the Scheidegg in time to eat an excellent dinner and to confound the prophets.

The following day was the Swiss Summer Festival, and the expectation of something really spectacular in the way of an evening meal inclined certain members of the party towards making it an off day. Against them it was argued that in such an extremely bad season the

present fine weather was unlikely to continue long, to which they ingeniously rejoined that in that case tomorrow would probably be wet. The forward party then undertook to buy fireworks for discharge at the Guggi hut that evening, and thus enable those who set great store by the festival to make a proper contribution towards it. This left the opposition with no retort other than a barefaced admission of greed, and after an early tea we set out for the hut, Yule's rucksack being decorated with a large bundle of rockets in execution of our promise.

A violent shower of rain fortunately delayed its advent until we were half-way to the hut, and close to a large overhanging rock, otherwise the dispute might have been renewed. Our objective was the Mönch by the Nollen route. Of this climb the book says—'Schwierigkeiten und Dauer hängen ausserordentlich ab vom Zustand des Nollens. Die Tour erfordert aber immer tüchtige Hackarbeit,' and as the Nollen is two or three thousand feet above the hut, we felt relieved of the usual necessity for a reconnaissance, and could devote the evening entirely to cooking and preparations for the discharge of the rockets. For this latter purpose we had the advantage of Harrison's experience as a gunner officer in the recent hostilities. Under his direction we arranged empty bottles (with which, needless to say, the hut was well supplied) round the palisade to act as mortars. Careful firing orders, for the discharge of salvos and single shots, were issued, and it only remained to await the signal and, like good gunners, to keep our matches alight (we improved on this by using them to ignite cigars). Somewhere near Thun the first burst went up. It was answered by red fire from the Joch, and we touched off our opening shot, which was designed, like the preliminary howl of the toast master or the tap of the conductor's baton, to draw attention to what was to follow. In this, we learnt afterwards, it was not wholly successful, and while our subsequent salvos were highly gratifying to us, they were for the most part unobserved at the Scheidegg, where the inmates were still in their cups.

The stars were paling when we started up the steep trough behind the hut on a day that owed its chilliness more to a searching wind than to a low temperature, for at this level it was not freezing. The Mönch plateau was reached in two hours, and as some shelter could be gained by descending a few feet on the E. side of the ridge it was decided that most of the party should wait here while Sinclair and I went forward up the ridge 'das zu dem gewaltig hervortretenden Eis Nollen leitet.' On the latter the book promised '2-5 Std. bis auf die Höhe des Nollens je nach Beschaffenheit des Eises' and it was clearly not a place on which to keep a large party waiting in a moderate gale. The Nollen is in fact the ice nose on the great N.W. ridge of the Mönch, which ascends between the Eiger and the Guggi glaciers and is, at this point, between two and three thousand feet above them. The profile has a point of inflexion about a hundred feet up from the place where it becomes really steep. This has the advantage of concealing most of its extent from the step cutter during his first encounter with the tough green ice of which it is composed, but entails the corresponding disadvantage that

when he has passed it he is on a steep convex slope with only a very slight curvature, a view ahead mostly composed of sky, and only the faintest promise of ever giving back enough to enable the lead to be changed. The uniformity of the angle, however, makes it possible ('with careful attention to balance' in the words of the Lliwedd guide) to cut for the most part with both hands, although one is generally near the limit of that process. This is fortunate, as it would hardly be possible to progress very far in ice of such toughness by one-handed cutting. We mounted in short zig-zags—short to keep touch with the left-hand edge, on which we hoped to find some irregularity for a stance, and zig-zags in order to have support for the heel and avoid the strain on the calf muscles which prolonged cutting by the ladder method involves. I was not short of practice, being fortunate to live near a sea-cliff, which gives ample opportunity for step cutting, but none the less I was exceedingly gratified when at length I reached a point on the left-hand edge where it was possible to thrust the shaft of the axe into a kind of crack or tiny incipient crevasse and thus obtain anchorage. Having tied on I mopped my steaming brow, while Sinclair (in the words of the poet)

‘ Clambering close beneath
Cried up tae me, through chattering teeth,
McSnort, hae ye belayed yoursel ? ’

His teeth were chattering with some reason, as for the last hour or two he had been standing on small steps on a steep slope exposed to a chilly wind and whatever slings and arrows (and larger missiles) I had sent down on him. Now, intent to take arms against our sea of troubles, and by opposing end them, or at any rate get warm again, he attacked the slope ahead with great violence. For my part I was very far from taking the headstrong line adopted by the eponymous hero cited above—the bauld McSnort, who, it will be remembered—

‘ . . . just answered ‘ hell,
Wullie, ye’re talking awfu’ soft.
The folk who use belays are daft.
Belays, ye ken, can only gie
A sense of *fa’s*e security.’

False or true, I clung to my crack with enthusiasm and was delighted to hear of the existence of its twin brother a rope length ahead.

The slope was now giving back, and also becoming snow-covered, so that it became possible to construct a straightforward ladder, and lead through, a process which rapidly brought us to the top, where the convexity turned into a little plateau. Here, however, we were concealed from our companions and they from us, and a somewhat anxious wait ensued. With a very proper desire to remain in shelter as long as possible they had not started until we were well past the point of inflexion, and had failed to allow for our acceleration when the ice grew less hard and the slope less steep. However, in an hour or so the shaggy

head and gleaming teeth of Bryson appeared over the convexity, and a reunited party sat in the shelter of some convenient rocks for lunch. (It was now snowing and hailing intermittently.) Above this point a moderately steep snow slope leads one to the point of union with the ordinary S.W. ridge climb from the Jungfrauoch. We were walking peaceably up this ridge when the ever vigilant Sinclair remarked that there was thunder on the left (and, to be accurate, on the right as well) and suggested that it would be prudent to place a respectable interval between ourselves and our axes, and burrow into the abundant snow with which the ridge at this point is clothed. We had hardly taken this excellent advice when there was an uncommonly loud crack and all members of the party save one received a distinct shock. (The one was Sinclair, who had taken his own advice so thoroughly that only the vibram soles of his boots were visible.) After this episode the blitz moved off and we reached the summit and descended by the E. ridge to the Obermönchjoch with no more inconvenience than was occasioned by cascades of hail and a strong wind.

At the Obermönchjoch we abandoned, after a brief debate, our original intention of seeking the shelter of the Bergli hut, which might have been difficult to find in the mist, and fell back on the Jungfrauoch once again.

The next morning, two parties set out to cross the Eigerjoch, Sinclair's party taking a more pessimistic view of the weather and electing to remain for ski-ing and a subsequent descent by train. The weather improved as the day broke and despite some driving mist we found the way to the Southern Eigerjoch without difficulty. From here, along the ridge to the Northern Eigerjoch one has an excellent rock climb, with the Kallifirn continually falling away on the right hand as the Eiger glacier mounts on the left, like a mathematical exercise on discontinuous functions. The descent from the northern pass to the upper glacier proved unexpectedly easy. On the glacier we at first kept to the left, until we were beneath the summit of the Mönch, then followed an obvious line back to the Eiger side, and then back again left through the ice-fall until we were below the big rock island on the Mönch side. Here we explored a gully between the ice and the rock. It would probably have gone, but was not easy, and was an obvious conduit should anything collapse above, so we left it and found a more sheltered but rather intricate way down the centre.

The next day (Wednesday, August 4) proving wet, we took an off day—our first—and on the Thursday started for the Strahlegg hut from Grindelwald in heavy rain, our major object being the Ochs by Hazard's and Smythe's 1926 route. On the Friday we made a somewhat halfhearted demonstration in the direction of the Lauteraarhorn which ended in nothing more than a lazy day in the Strahlegghörner—partly because of lack of information (the fifth volume of the Oberland guide has been out of print for a long time), partly because of snow on the rocks, but chiefly because we did not wish to lose our main objective by a late return from a side issue. For this equivocal conduct we

seemed at one time likely to suffer, for the weather—too fine on the Friday to last—changed for the worse, and we started at 1 A.M. on the Saturday over soft snow on the Ober Eismeer with an overcast sky close above. However, a careful study of our mountain from the Strahlegg Hörner had led us to think that the snow on the upper ridge was good, and if we could once gain the summit there should be little difficulty about descending on the other side to the upper reaches of the Walliser Fiescherfirn.

Our first aim was to effect a landing on the large rock island directly opposite the hut. Hazard and Smythe got on to this by a difficult rock climb from its lower end, but as Steuri (whom we met at the hut) pointed out, since that day the main glacier had sunk many feet, leaving an overhang. It was, therefore, necessary to go up the ice-fall with the island on our right until an ice wave overlapped it. At the bottom of the ice-fall we put on claws and cramped up three or four hundred feet by lantern light before arriving at an enormous crevasse. When we had spent some time in circumventing this, Sinclair, his topographical instinct thoroughly roused and stimulated by his stern Puritan joy in the prospect of losing three hundred feet in order to gain it again on still steeper ground, declared that we were on the wrong scent, and profiting by experience we took his advice. The ground on to which he led us would have been steep by day, and looked worse by candlelight. However, we soon righted this by allowing the candle to blow out. Before we could relight it the first glimmerings of daylight offered a better substitute (with the additional advantage of not having to be held between the teeth). We now progressed rapidly. A convenient ice wave landed us on the rocks above their steepness, and a short scramble brought us at dawn to the point where they finally ran under the ice. With the dawn snow began to fall, the Schreckhorn behind us was soon blotted out, and the way ahead was only intermittently visible. However, this way belonged to that rare class of whose members it may truthfully be said 'You can't miss it.' What we had to do was first to mount our rib to the point where it merged in the upper terrace—the Firnhöhebene of the guide book—cross the latter on an upward traverse to the left and so gain the foot of the upper rib. The latter (being anatomically a pelvis rather than a rib) would lead up the right flank of the Ochs to its rump, and at the rump we must turn right-handed along the backbone to the withers, or thereabouts, whence we might hope to escape down the left shoulder to the Walliser Fiescherfirn. It could be done in poor visibility, or none, and provided the upper rib or pelvis was snow and not ice, as we had reason to think, was probably simpler than retreating down the ice-fall we had already ascended. We therefore pushed on rapidly despite the weather. As we hoped, the rib turned out to be good snow and despite its steepness we mounted quickly, mainly under the conduct of Bullock, who was by now in excellent form and kicked steps with youthful vigour at a speed far beyond the capacity of his aged leader. Occasionally we caught a glimpse of the face to the left or right, but for the most part



X

THE OCHS; THE CLIMB DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT IS FROM X TO Y.

[Photo, C. D. Milner.]

Y

Y

X

the mist and driving snow shut out all but a few feet of rib. After rather more than a thousand feet of ascent, the rib gave back, and fairly soon we reached the crest and turned right-handed along it. The wind was more troublesome on the comparatively level crest than on the steep rib where one could adopt a ladder-like method of progression, and in the slight and infrequent clearings we peered down to the left for a way of escape. For some time we saw nothing but steep rocks vanishing into unknown depths, but presently a snow slope appeared, at a practicable angle so far as it was visible. A cautious trial showed that the snow was good, and we went straight down until a considerable schrund appeared through the snowstorm. Traversing to the right along the upper lip we reached an excellent bridge and, after a further descent, comparatively level ground, which we took to be the upper basin of the Fiescherfirn.

This seemed a good place for lunch, and a halt to give the mist time to clear. Lunch was duly consumed, but the weather showed no sign of taking advantage of its opportunities, and the search for the Fieschersattel began with a visibility of only a few feet. We reached the rim of the basin but failed to see anything but driving snow. If we were going down it would plainly be prudent to explore some way along the ridge in each sense, to make sure that we had reached the actual saddle. The book spoke of step-cutting, so the right descent was presumably fairly steep, and any wrong descent steeper still. These proceedings would take time, and though it was still quite early in the day I did not altogether relish the notion of a long trudge in thick weather up the Ewig Schneefeld, with a dubious prospect of finding the Untermönchjoch and the Bergli hut at the end of it. No doubt we could eventually have found the Ober Mönchjoch and the Jungfrau-joch before nightfall, but we should have been uncommonly weary, and hardly fit for an expedition the next day (our last) even if the weather improved, whereas we judged (and rightly) that it was badly broken. These considerations I laid before my companions, being prompted by an earnest wish to save them from futile exertion, and entirely unmoved by the fact that I was now feeling decidedly middle-aged, whereas they appeared capable of continuing to move rapidly for an indefinite period. The voice of age and experience, not to say pusillanimity, prevailed and we beat a rapid retreat down the Fiescherfirn. Our progress through the narrows was stimulated by the fact that at this point the snow turned to rain, visibility improved, and we saw the serpentine tracks made down the lower glacier by enormous snowballs, the size roughly of a modern three-bedroomed house, which had presumably fallen from the cliffs of the Ochs to our left. On the flat glacier below the narrows we had a further halt for hors d'oeuvres (grands portions) before proceeding to the Finsteraarhorn hut for soup (*à la marguerite*), fish (*à la Portugaise*), entrée (*à l'Argentine*) and fruit (*sèche*), after which we retired to bed, the pleasure of our company having been requested to a friendly swarry, with the usual trimmings, the swarry to be on table at half-past seven o'clock punctually. (For

this departure from the traditional hour of half-past nine we can only tender our apologies to the shade of Mr. John Smauker, and plead the absence of a boiled leg of mutton. It would obviously be futile and indeed tactless to refer to the necessity of early rising.)

'That punctual servant of all work, the sun, had just risen, and begun' without much success 'to strike a light' as we plodded across the Fiescherfirn on the way to the Grünhornlücke and the Jungfrau-joch. Snow was falling gently, the glacier was wet, our boots wetter, and our clothes still decidedly damp from yesterday's soaking, but Harrison and Bullock were in excellent voice and we were soon opposite the Concordia. The lower part of the Jungfrau firn was a marsh, and the upper part heavy with new snow. The more recondite items of the repertory were exhausted, and even those repetitive and vaguely defamatory allegations, which to the tune of Onward Christian Soldiers had urged us over many a mile, showed signs of flagging before our moving circle of opaque whiteness was at length broken by the rocks of the Sphinx, and we ended our adventures where they had begun a fortnight before, in the catacombs of the Jungfrau-joch. Decidedly we had had the luck of the weather. The next day we left for England with sleet down to the Scheidegg, and our successors experienced the sort of weather that Sinclair, Bryson and I had in 1946.

Ex pede Herculem. In this account I have followed the fortune of one party at perhaps inordinate length, not because its feats were particularly remarkable, but because they were the only doings which I could describe at first hand. I hope that the leaders and members of the other parties which scoured the length and breadth of the Oberland will forgive me for dealing so cursorily with their achievements, and that the reader will infer the population from the sample.

[The following paper was written by one of the 'recruits' who had been at the meet, and it describes an experience which, in as far at least as its severity was concerned, must be accounted rare. That the story is understated rather than overstated may perhaps be judged from the following facts: Some years ago, one member of the party was turned back by bad weather when not far below the level of the (present) fixed bivouac on the Brèche Nord des Dames Anglaises. On that occasion, the descent to the Gamba hut was made in about two hours and a half of actual movement. On this present occasion, a strong and (in its different ways) a widely experienced party, was forced to spend no less than twenty-three hours on actual movement during the same descent; and, with an intermediate bivouac in the open, it was literally and continuously on its feet for eleven hours on the first day and for twelve hours on the second. That may perhaps serve as sufficient credential for the following account of how the experience impressed one who was new to the Alps.—*Editor.*]