

The same year, on August 6, Vianin accompanied Messrs. H. B. George and Alex. Mortimer over the Triftjoch and gave 'full satisfaction. His local knowledge is most minute and accurate.'

The last entry is dated August 16, 1865, over the names of James Riddell and A. J. Butler. 'Joseph Viennin accompanied us over the Col du Grand Cornier (between the Dent Blanche and Grand Cornier) as leading guide, and also from the Arolla auberge to Zermatt by a passage leading between the Mont Brulé and the Dent Berthol, and then eastwards to the Zmutt Glacier. He is attentive and hard working as a guide and was fully competent for his work with us, both on rocks and on ice.'

A LONG DAY ON PIZ PALÜ

By C. G. WYLIE

I'M not very sure what goes for a long day in the Alps in the best circles—but, personally, I hold that if one has made a respectable start at 2 or 3 in the morning, it's carrying things too far to have to resort to the candle at the other end of the day. I don't know what it was that led us—most misguidedly I used to think as the sun dipped to the horizon—to practise the theory that one should always come off a mountain by a different route to that by which one climbed it. Perhaps it was excessive zeal, perhaps a sense of seasons wasted in wait, or perhaps merely a determination to get our limited money's worth after I had lost my wallet, 300 francs, and my return ticket on the Biancograt. Whatever it was, we shall both remember 1947 as a season of cloudless weather, traverses and long days. Though we only returned after dark once, I seem to remember our average timing over about eight traverses as being suspiciously near 14 hours. However, this used to present us with an unassailable excuse for an off day on the morrow, and a blissful sleep right round the clock. This, I think, not zeal, was the real spur.

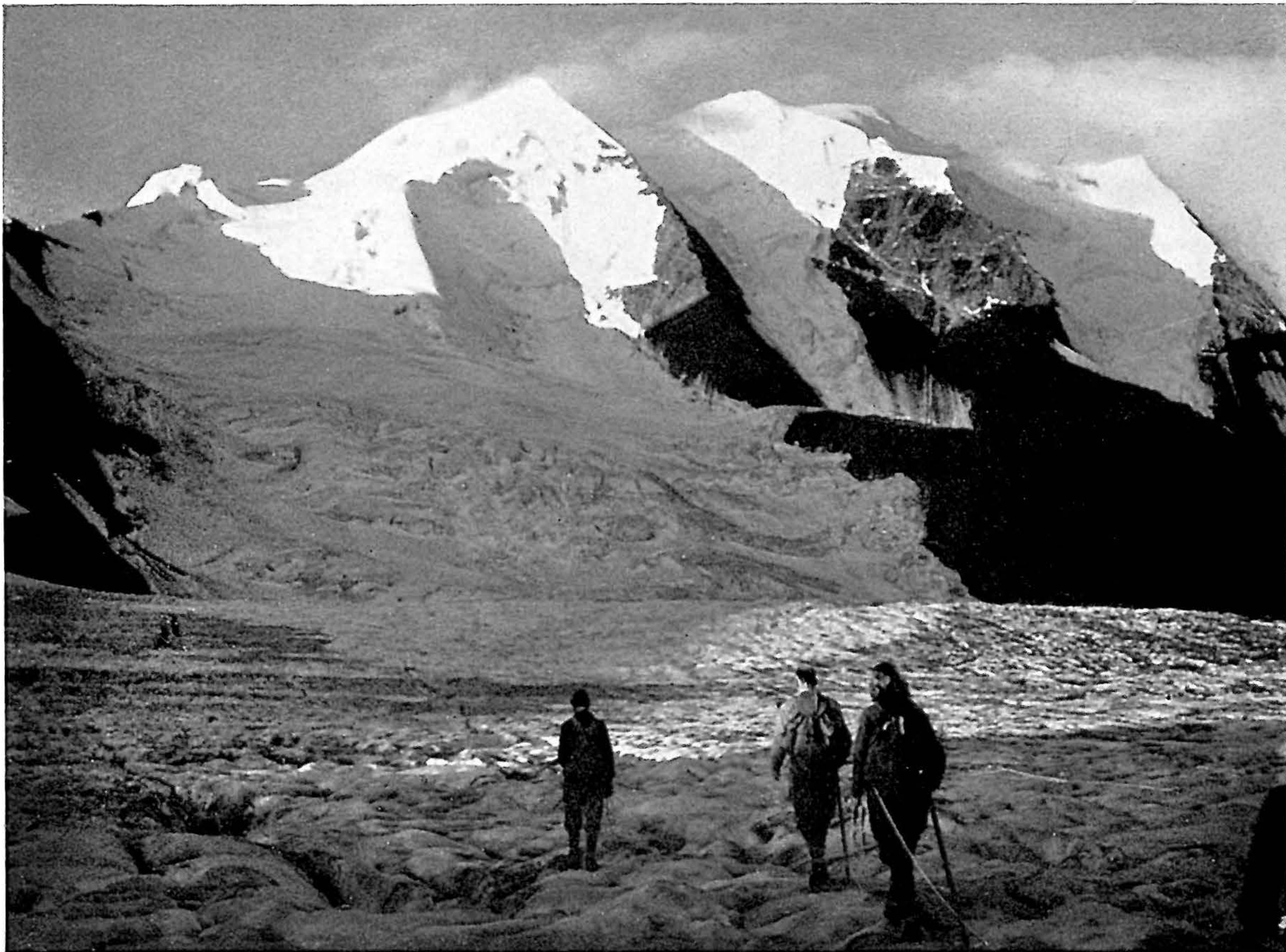
The E. peak of Piz Palü by the rib on the N. face was the first and longest of a season of long and memorable climbs. It was 11 years since J. O. M. Roberts' last Alpine season, and 8 since mine. In the interval we had climbed only in the Himalayas, and although Roberts had several expeditions to his credit, he was as anxious as I to improve technique. We had spent three or four days on training walks and in practising rock work and step cutting. We arrived at the Boval Hut simultaneously with one of the few snow storms of the season; this cut out climbing next day, which we spent studying the guide book. We chose Palü; I had done the ordinary traverse in 1938, so we considered the ribs on the N. face. The guide-book says the E. rib was the easiest, 'empfehlenswert,' and 'ungefährlich,' and gave 3-4 hours up the rib itself. This seemed to be just what we were looking for. There were practically no details; one gendarme was mentioned which

had to be turned on the left; the first two-thirds were rock and the one-third snow—'manchmal vereist'—the forbidding guide-book cliché which leads to lugging crampons, always, apparently, needlessly.

We started at 3 A.M., and approached round the left of the rock island at the foot of the rib, as the direct approach seemed threatened by the big séracs of the 'White Hell.' We had first breakfast on the top rocks of the island and studied the route through glasses. There was still a fair amount of snow on the rocks which we hoped would melt as the sun rose. Then we hurriedly crossed the flat snowfield to the bergschrund, hacked through its upper lip, and floundered somewhat insecurely through deep powder snow on broken rock to the ridge. The rocks here were incredibly jumbled, huge blocks and flakes, rather reminiscent of Glyder Fach. Magnificent rocks in themselves, but looking so insecure collectively that we almost expected to bring half the mountain down with us. In fine dry weather it would have been magnificent climbing, but we had to clear each handhold of snow, and soon we were wet and cold and conscious of slow progress. We led through, but at no time could we both move together. The sun was now well up and it was obvious that the snow would remain during the day, and also that we would be much longer than the four hours of the guide-book's estimate. It was lucky that at no time did we guess just how much longer we were to be—or our hearts would have failed us and we should have beaten an ignominious retreat. As we continued, always hoping for an easier pitch above.

We came to a gendarme, and turned it—needlessly as it proved, for later we came to a much more obvious impasse. We edged gingerly to the left along a ledge which turned to snow-covered slabs. When we thought we must have passed the gendarme, we struck up again to the ridge. First a crack behind a flake, then a chimney—both of the sort where rucksack and boots, to say nothing of shoulders and hips, get apparently inextricably jammed in turn. We reached the ridge without much dignity and minus bits of our breeches. We were now confronted by an enormous tombstone-like slab; or rather two tombstones, one on top of the other. The leader could reach the top of the first with the aid of a shoulder, but thereafter he had to tackle the second standing on one toe-nail. We were both about 6 inches too short to reach the top of the second tombstone; I suppose one might have jumped, but the prospect of either being unable to pull himself up, or of missing and sliding the length of both slabs did not appeal. We tried everything—to stocking soles and the layman's idea of the use of an ice-axe. We must have wasted nearly an hour, but eventually it was obvious we had joined the ridge again too soon, and there was nothing for it but retreat down the chimney and crack. We took the sting out of these horrors by a sort of pseudo-abseil and lowering the sacks.

From the base of the crack we continued our previous traverse. For some reason the snow was thickly banked on the slabs, and there was little one could do but stamp a hole and hope for the best. We were soon wet through and, the sun having left us, not a little chilled.



Photo, B. R. Goodfellow]

PIZ PALU.
At Sunrise, from Pers Glacier.

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We blessed our light Nylon rope, which holds water much less and behaves much better than ordinary rope in the wet. Eventually we reached the end of the slabs, and emerged on to a clear snowslope up which we could regain the ridge; we were, however, a good 300 ft. below the ridge by now, as we had been travelling horizontally. The snow on the slope proved to be about 2 ft. deep on ice. By the time one had stamped through to the ice it was quite impossible to cut a step, as there was no room to wield an axe; and the snow refused to avalanche off. We donned crampons, dug solid holes for pick belays, and floundered on. Progress was incredibly tiring and slow, and the second had time enough to wonder what on earth the leader was playing at until he took the lead himself.

When we eventually reached the ridge we found ourselves looking down, infuriatingly, on to the tip of the tombstone slabs only a pitch or two below; the *détour* had cost us a good two hours. We took off our crampons and continued up the remaining rocks. Soon we were looking up the final snow ridge to the summit. Unwillingly, I realised we still had the height of Lliwedd to go. Much depended on the snow; it proved to be hard, and four or five kicks made a step. Probably it would have been better to have had a rest and a meal, and put on crampons, but the chance of making steady height seemed to us more attractive than any of these things. The ridge was narrow and exposed, and though it was not too frighteningly so, one was thankful, balancing on one foot and kicking with the other, that there was no wind. The angle steepened and continued to do so. Soon we had to cut steps; then two steps ahead of that on which one was standing; then handholds, while one chipped with a short handle up by one's chest. At last we burrowed through the cornice, and sprawled laughing on the flat summit. It was 6 P.M., when respectable climbers should be sipping soup and rolling up in blankets with their rucksacks ready for the morning's start.

The ascent had taken 15 hours, and we wondered just how long we would take to get down again. We were just steeling ourselves to further climbing over the other two summits to return by the Fortezza route, when Roberts found tracks the other way. We could see that they led through the icefall on the Diavolezza route, so we plunged thankfully down them. But Piz Palü was not going to let us off so lightly, and made us cut steps down the steep bit off the summit. Then the slope eased and we left the ridge, and soon were half skating, half *langlaufing* down through soft snow, revelling in the speedy motion. The little glacier above the Pers glacier had also decided to do its share in delaying us, by carefully hiding its small crevasses with new snow; they were just wide enough to let a boot in, very numerous and quite invisible. We prodded like a brace of blind men for half-an-hour and both fell in hip-deep, twice, before we were away, and jumping the streams on the Pers glacier to reach the Isla Pers.

Here we had second breakfast—at 9 P.M.—and lit the candle for the second time in the day. We arrived at the hut an hour later, just

19 hours after we had left it, wondering vaguely what the S.A.C. charged for search parties. However, the cheery Hüttenwartin said she was never in the least surprised at the antics of Englishmen, who were always mad anyway. She had watched us reach the summit, and had an enormous bowl of soup ready for us, and cheese and kirsch to help it down.

I think we slept 13 hours that night ; but alas ! too soundly to gloat at the early risers. Piz Palü had cheated us of the best fruit of all.

MOUNTAINEERING WITH THE ARMY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

BY A. D. B. SIDE

Read before the Alpine Club, December 8, 1948.

WHEN I was asked to read a Paper on 'Mountaineering with the Army in the Middle East,' I was instructed by our Hon. Secretary to deal mainly with topography, as the military side was now ancient history. While I have not forgotten these words it is impossible to avoid the story of what was essentially a military commitment lasting 16 months.

So I will try to tell you briefly about some of our activities, and also about the grandeur of the mountains of the Lebanon amongst which we worked.

We were not the only mountaineering school that was functioning : there were other mountain warfare, climbing and ski schools established and their work has been made known by lectures and articles. But the Middle East school has, I believe, a record worthy of publication and, moreover, it was the only school which produced trained mountain units which were organised and equipped as mountain troops and which fought as such.

The school was a War Office school and it came directly under the War Office with regard to policy, training, personnel and large commitments. It was under G.H.Q. Cairo for supplies of some equipment and some training programmes ; under Army for actual provisions of tents, vehicles, food, petrol and all those things which keep units alive and active in the field, and it eventually obtained specialised equipment and supplies from Britain or the U.S.A. That was the complicated order under which we lived and worked.

The Mountain Warfare Training Centre, to give it its full name, was sub-divided into three parts. One part was situated in the low foothills at Amioun, a little inland from Tripoli. Its main function was engineering work and included mountain road and bridge building, demolitions, field firing and mule pack work.