

NORDSAULO

By J. C. HAWKSLEY

THOUGH she has not formed the subject of an article in the ALPINE JOURNAL, this mountain is portrayed in the centre of the frontispiece to the May, 1875, number (*A.J.* 7. 48) over the title, 'Camp by the Pieska Jaur,' as an illustration to the article 'Across Lapland' by W. E. Hall. The author, accompanied by his dog, was exploring the possibilities of game and fishing, rather than of mountaineering, and having reached what he described as the last habitation on the Norwegian side, a house upon the Lang Vand, proceeded into and across Swedish Lapland, accompanied by two Lapps, whose reindeer were being used as pack animals for the expedition.

Nordsaulo is 1,745 m. high and lies on the frontier between Norway and Sweden, just south of latitude 67°. Twelve miles further north lies the better known massif of Sulitjelma. The view of Nordsaulo shown in the frontispiece referred to is approximately its north-north-west aspect. To reach this spot, Hall had travelled from Bodö by steamer to the north-east corner of Skjerstad Fjord and then by rowing boat up the Nedre and Ovre Vand to Stormoen and subsequently overland to the Lang Vand and along it by rowing boat to the 'last habitation on the Norwegian side.' From Finneid, this is more or less the route taken to-day to the copper-mining town of Sulitjelma, except that a small tug replaces the rowing boat and a small railway takes one from Ovre Vand to Sulitjelma.

The 1949 Expedition of the British Schools Exploring Society, of which the Chief Leader was Major G. F. Spooner, Parachute Regiment, and which I accompanied as a medical officer, had its base camp half-a-day's march to the west of Nordsaulo. Climbing was not one of the expedition's objects, though without climbing boots or rope a party led by one of the Assistant Leaders (rubber-shod, it was dry at the time) reached the saddle between the North and South peaks from the west side, and with proper equipment should have had an easy passage to either summit. This note, however, is not concerned with the expedition as a whole, the report on which will be published by the Society, but is to describe a mountain whose portrait appeared anonymously in our JOURNAL 75 years ago and to make a few observations on it and on Hall's article.

Nordsaulo stands, an isolated peak, with North and South summits separated by a broad saddle. Her western face is steep but climbable, according to the Leader, without difficulty. Immediately below the western face is Lake Dorro, one of many glacial relics, linked by an out-running stream with others in the paternoster style characteristic of the whole district. On its edge is a hut for the occasional fisherman from

Sulitjelma, about a day's tramp away. The circuit of Nordsaulo presents no difficulty; to the south there is a broad valley, reached from the west side by crossing a fairly high vjeld and containing a broad flat-topped hill named Kassavardo, with, to the south of this, the western end of a large lake, Mavasjaure, the waters from which flow eastward. Falling abruptly into the lake's south-western side is the steep north slope of Arjsaulo (1716 m.) easily climbed by its West ridge, according to another Assistant Leader who took his party to the summit by this route.

South of Nordsaulo and linked by a ridge is a small rocky crag of commanding aspect resemblant to a miniature Matterhorn but having no name. Nordsaulo's eastern face is snow-covered and, though no glacier snout appears to the view, the extensive snowfield at a steepish angle must, judging by the exposed rocks below, represent the static remains of a dying glacier. To the east, and connected to Nordsaulo by a col, is a dome-shaped mountain (seen on the right of the 1875 frontispiece) upon which, right to the summit which we visited, Hall might have found some of the ptarmigan and other game for which he was yearning on his trip. The north wall of Nordsaulo falls fairly steeply into a small lake (Nordsaulo lake) which even in August contained small icebergs from the surrounding snowfields and which drains into Pieskajaure.

To a climbing party, Nordsaulo appears to offer a number of short but attractive routes, some probably of no great difficulty. According to friends made in Sulitjelma the mountain is only rarely visited for climbing purposes.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about Hall's article is that he illustrated it with a good picture of Nordsaulo but does not even refer to the mountain, let alone by name. He may not have known the name, but its very appearance might have justified some reference. Perhaps he was so much impressed by the much greater magnificence of the Sulitjelma massif, which was much closer to his route and which he describes enthusiastically, that his interest in the more distant and smaller southern mountain was not stimulated. Another likely reason is that he had made his journey primarily for sport and had been very disappointed at the paucity of the game; also he found the reindeer a disappointing baggage-animal and was in constant trouble with transport, bad weather and the slowness of his Lapp drivers. He mentions that early delays in his journey had wasted the precious time that he had hoped to devote to the Sulitjelma massif which leaves the inference that on this holiday he had put shooting first. But even his disappointments and the weather seem hardly to justify his slurs on the intrinsic attractiveness of this wild and desolate region. He describes a distant view of a flat snow plateau, probably the great Blaamannsisen, as 'entirely destitute of interest' and says of the vicinity of Lommi Jaur (a lake just south of Sulitjelma), 'a more dreary country it would be impossible to imagine.' Actually, to anyone fond of glacial scenery or arctic natural history, the whole area is alive with interest and, if game



NORDSAULO FROM THE WEST.



NORDSAULO FROM THE NORTH-WEST (distance approx. $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles).

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is sparse, there are enough northern species of bird to keep the amateur alert. One feels a sense of disappointment that Hall elected to devote his limited time to a search for game when, had he chosen to follow the climbing plans of his holiday, his notes on Sulitjelma could hardly have been other than enthusiastic if one is to judge by his earlier writings.

Even without serious climbing I found this neighbourhood very well worth while and acknowledge my indebtedness to the British Schools Exploring Society for taking me with them.

It was in the year 1741 that the Danish navigator, Vitus Behring, then in the employ of the Russians, is said first to have sighted the great snowy mountain range of southern Alaska, the most stupendous and spectacular peak of which he named Mt. Elias, in honour of the patron saint of the day. Some geographers have applied the name 'St. Elias Alps' to this great range of ice-bound peaks which stretch for some 180 miles or more along the Pacific Coast, and which cuts off Yukon and a small part of British Columbia from access to the sea. Yet there is a good deal about the mountains and glaciers of the St. Elias Range that can be said to give them more of a Himalayan than an Alpine character. Where, except in the Himalaya, and but a few other ranges, can one see such high summits as Mt. Fairweather, 15,300 ft., in full stature from its base at sea level to its culminating peak; or Mt. St. Elias itself, sweeping up to an altitude of 18,008 ft. from the great Malaspina Glacier, which descends to tide-water; or again, Mt. Logan, standing north of Mt. St. Elias in Yukon Territory and the highest summit in Canada, which towers to an altitude of no less than 19,830 ft. a.s.l.?

Mountaineering in this region is attended by its particular difficulties, scale, inaccessibility, etc., and consequently success in the main ranges have been conspicuously few, and mostly far between in time. In fact apart from Mt. Fairweather, Crillon, etc., at the south-east end of the range, it is 'virtually only Mt. St. Elias itself that has received any attention from mountaineers. Early attempts on the latter included that by Lieut. Seton-Kerr, R.N., with an American party, in 1880, when this enterprising Naval officer solo reached about 7200 ft.; and in 1888 the English expedition of W. H. and Edwin Topham, who made a bold attempt on the peak to an altitude of 11,400 ft. W. H. Topham was a member of our Club and had made some pioneer ascents in Canada, Mt. Topham in the Selkirk being named after him. Later, were the two important expeditions of Prof. J. C. Russell, the American geologist, who not only paved the way for the Duke of the Abruzzi's attempt in reaching 16,000 ft. (Russell's Col) on Mt. St. Elias, but did outstanding geological work in the adjacent mountains; these enterprises, in 1891 and 1892, which showed remarkable evidence of vertical uplift of as much as 2000 ft. in the main range, have never been followed up.

J. C. Russell: *Second Expedition to Mt. St. Elias*, 1901 Ann. Rep. U.S.G.S., 1891-92; Pt. II. *Geology*, Washington, D.C., 1893.