

CORRESPONDENCE

St. John's School,
Leatherhead,
Surrey

September 28, 1955.

The Editor, the ALPINE JOURNAL.

SIR,—I was much impressed by the somewhat unusual article which appeared in the May number of the *A.J.* entitled 'The Technique of Artificial Climbing.' At first glance it was not easy to decide which way up some of the illustrations were meant to be.

Now, Sir, while I have great respect for the achievements of the exponents of this technique, I would humbly suggest that the article in question is somewhat out of place in the ALPINE JOURNAL and would better grace the pages of an engineering journal. The methods of the 'Hammer and Nail Co.' to quote the words of our pre-war Editor, Lt.-Col. E. L. Strutt, are alien to the traditions of the Alpine Club and to British mountaineering generally. It used to be a point of honour never to sully the face of a British climb with a piton. Let me quote the instance of the Munich climb. The visiting party of Germans in the middle 'thirties found it necessary to insert one piton in that remarkably steep and exposed face. The climb was promptly repeated by a British party who took out the piton!

Mountaineering is a sport and not a form of war. A sport is governed by a set of rules which allows each side a fair chance. Why must we use 'all out' methods in mountaineering? Why not let the mountain win sometimes? The occasional piton for security perhaps, for roping off, or when caught by bad weather, but 'tension' climbing no; *étriers* no!

I admit that this change of tactics on the part of the modern generation would mean that some routes could not at present be climbed, but would that matter? Let the Alpine Club lead the world back to sane methods and fair tactics and give the mountains a sporting chance.

Your obedient servant,

T. A. H. PEACOCKE.

(The article in question was written at our special request, and we take full responsibility for considering it in place in the ALPINE JOURNAL,

We see no virtue in ignorance and sought therefore to keep our readers informed on a subject which has so far inspired little literature in English, apart from ejaculations of disapproval. The use or otherwise of artificial aids such as crampons or *étriers* appears to us to be purely a matter of individual taste. We climb to please ourselves; the only rule is that in taking our pleasure we do not spoil the

enjoyment of others. Ideally each peg placed is removed by the party placing it, but even if pitons remain they are unlikely to remain in places where they seriously disturb the view of climbers who do not use them. The rubbish at the *Frühstückplatz* is a more serious intrusion.

Let him cast the first stone who has used neither axe nor crampon, who has never touched a fixed rope, who has never used a hut to shorten his route, and who has never donned a wind-proof jacket. He, and he alone, alpenstock aloft, can hold the pure doctrine of the hardy pioneers. Traditions develop or die, and ours have not died.—EDITOR.)