

EXPEDITIONS

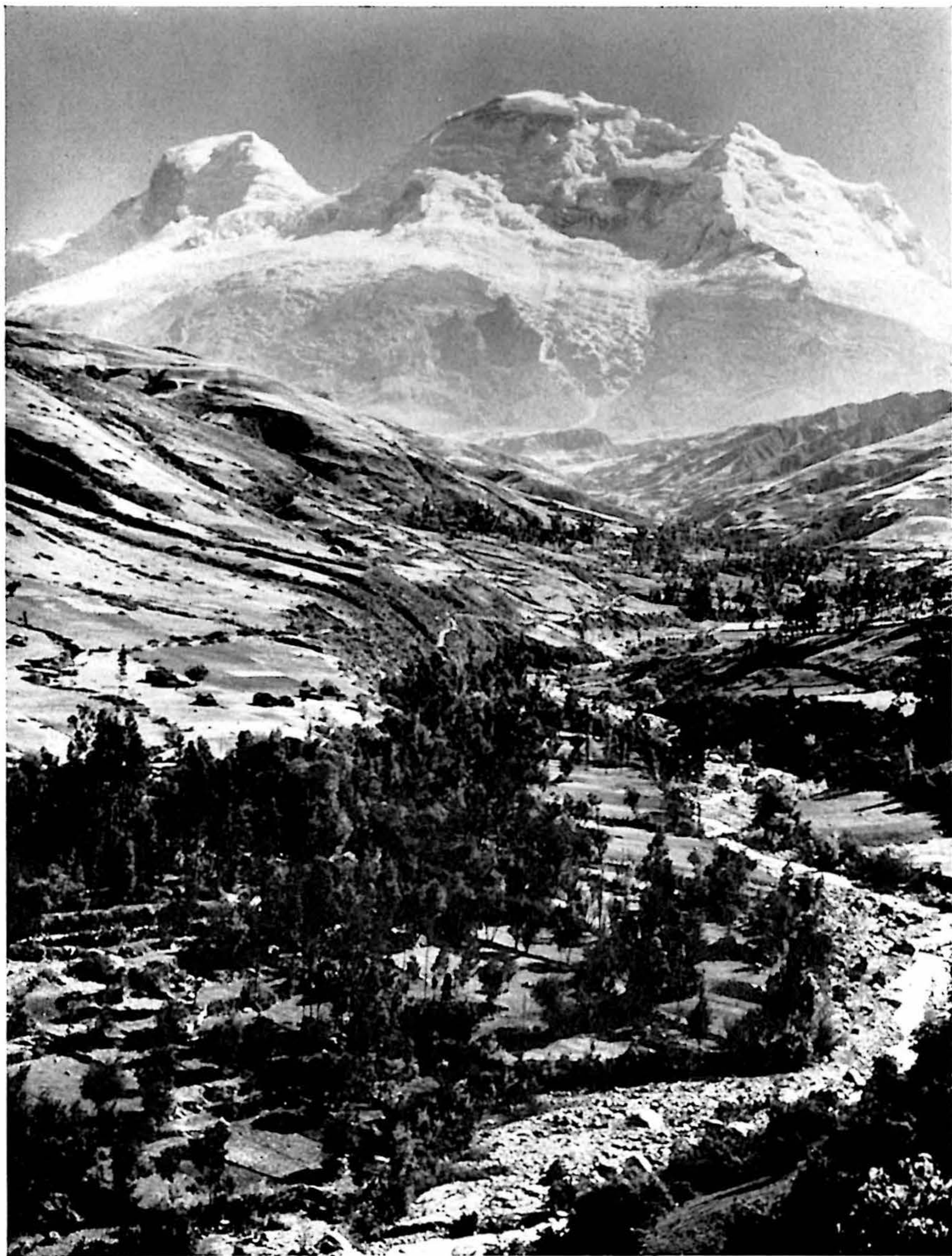
HUASCARAN, 1958. Our problem was which peak to climb during the last ten days in the Cordillera Blanca. By August 22, if everything went according to plan, we should have climbed our seventh peak and returned to Huaras. The party, consisting of Miss Myrtle Emslie, Dr. Hugh Simpson and Mr. William Wallace, was divided on the proposal to climb Huascarán. Until this year the only route of ascent had been from the north side *via* the Garganta. This route did not attract us. In Huaras we learned of a new route climbed by an American party one month previously on the South face and ridge.

This news of a new route decided us; we would attempt Huascarán. Monday, August 25, saw us making our way up the Quebrada Ulta. Two donkeys were quite adequate to carry all our food and equipment as we did not require porters and were travelling as light as possible. In the afternoon we established Base Camp at 11,700 ft. under the southern flank of the mountain.

The next morning we slowly toiled up the precipitous sides of the Quebrada and at last reached the top where we were confronted by the great glaciers and ice-falls of the South face. As the sun climbed higher in the sky our packs seemed to grow heavier and heavier. By early afternoon we had reached the lowest point of the glaciers, about 1,000 ft. below a prominent rock ridge on which we hoped to camp. At last, at 16,000 ft., we reached the crest of the ridge where we found an ideal camp site which, we later learned, had taken four of the American party half a day to level. Before the sun sank over the serrated crest of the Cordillera Negra we anxiously scanned the face above us for a possible route.

The sun reached our exposed site as we breakfasted and soon after we scrambled up the last hundred feet of rock to the glacier. All that day we threaded our way up the glacier and through the ice-falls. At about 18,500 ft. we passed the site used by the Americans for their assault camp but we pressed on, climbing a long steep ice slope where we knew that fixed ropes had been used by the Americans. At the top of this slope we found a suitable camp site at a height of 19,500 ft.

There was little point in moving before the sun reached the tent next morning. However, we started as soon as the warming rays reached us, making our way up and then contouring the small peak at the end of the South ridge. In two hours we were just above the col from where we could assess the difficulties of the South ridge which we saw consisted of steep walls of snow and ice separated from each other by easier



HUASCARAN—LEFT, NORTH PEAK 21,834 FT. RIGHT, SOUTH PEAK 22,205 FT.

ground. If these walls proved feasible we would reach the summit. They were no more difficult than expected and at 12.45 p.m. on August 28 we stood on the flat summit (22,205 ft.), the first British party, as far as we knew, to climb Huascarán.

After a few minutes for photography we retired to a more sheltered spot for a rest and then commenced our descent to the tent. On the following day we continued down despite having to find our way in falling snow and mist, eventually reaching Base Camp in the late afternoon.¹

WILLIAM WALLACE.

SARAGHRAR, 1958. This peak, *c.* 24,000 ft., in the Hindu Kush was attempted by the Oxford Chitral Expedition. Base Camp, at 13,800 ft., beneath the West wall of Saraghrar was reached on August 8. After about ten days it was decided that although there was no obviously easy route, the North Cwm offered the best prospect. It was hoped that a way could be made up a steep snow couloir at the head of the glacier (19,000 ft.) to the summit ridge (*c.* 22,500 ft.) and thence about three-quarters of a mile along the easily inclined ridge to the summit.

The succeeding days were occupied in achieving a build-up of supplies and camps. Upper Camp I was pitched at 17,500 ft. on August 12, an intermediate Lower Camp I at 16,000 ft. on August 18, and Camp II at 18,500 ft. on August 19.

On August 24 the assault plan was prepared by which it was proposed that two assault parties, at an interval of two days, should each climb to the summit, the whole operation to take eight days. The plan involved the establishment of two, and possibly three, more camps. The first assault party was composed of P. S. Nelson and F. S. Plumpton; the second of E. W. Norrish, W. G. Roberts, and N. A. J. Rogers.

On August 27 there occurred an accident which resulted in the death of Nelson. He and Plumpton were returning from an unsuccessful attempt to reach the summit ridge from Camp III. The highest point they reached was about 21,700 ft. In retracing their footsteps to Camp III they had to recross the steep snow couloir. While doing this Nelson dropped his axe and overbalanced as he tried to regain it.

¹ Mr. Wallace is correct in thinking that this was the first ascent by a British party of Peru's highest mountain.

An Englishman named Reginald Enock made an attempt in 1904, reaching his highest point, 16,500 ft., on May 5. He reported the 'limit of the ice cap' as being at 14,500 ft., considerably below its present level.

The first ascent of the south (highest) summit was made on July 20, 1932, by five members of the D. and Oe.A.V. Andine Expedition; only eight or nine ascents have been made since that date.

The claims of Miss Annie Peck to have reached the highest point in 1908 are not regarded as valid but it is now generally accepted that she made the first ascent of the lower northern summit (21,834 ft.).

Without his axe, he fell out of control for about 1,000 ft. and was killed instantly. He was not roped; having decided to cross the gully first he was of the opinion that the rope would not provide much more security after a few yards than was already provided by his ice-axe. Furthermore, he was wearing crampons and had already been over this section once during the day.

In the light of this accident it was decided unanimously to give up the attempt on the mountain. Several factors contributed to this decision. In the first place, such an accident was very distressing to the whole party, but especially to the porters who had witnessed it from close quarters and who were much demoralised by it. Secondly, in these circumstances the route was adjudged too formidable. Although quite steep, the couloir was not in fact of excessive difficulty; the accident which occurred in it was of a kind that could have occurred on any hard snow or ice slope in any range of mountains; the party now considered it their duty to avoid all further risks of any kind, even such as would normally have been called justifiable.

PUNTA MARGHERITA (Grandes Jorasses), North face (first ascent). August 5-6, 1958. J. Couzy, R. Desmaison.

Starting from the Leschaux hut, ascend the glacier to the foot of the North face of Punta Margherita (4 hours). A very early start is desirable to avoid stone-fall.

Attack a rock spur about 100 m. to the right of the spur descending from the Pointe Young; mixed climbing for 300 m. When the spur peters out under ice, traverse some 30 m. to the left on slabs with verglas to join another rib which, 300 m. higher, merges into the summit cliff (the distances quoted may vary with the amount of snow cover). Climb this rib (pitches of III, IV and V) to a small shoulder.

The 200 m. of the final cliff are the difficult part of the route.

Traverse 25 m. to the left (IV); then climb vertically for 4 rope-lengths by cracks and *dièdres* (verglas; IV, V and V sup.). On reaching an overhanging section, traverse 30 m. to the right by a sloping ledge under deep snow to reach a large chimney crack about 60 m. high and leaning to the left. Climb this (IV and IV sup.; iced); bivouac site at the top of the crack. Climb straight up for 10 m. (IV) then traverse to the right for 15 m. (AI and V) to a small *dièdre* which leads to the ridge about 40 m. below the summit.

R. DESMAISON.

POINTE YOUNG (Grandes Jorasses), North face (first ascent). August 14, 1958. E. Cavalieri and A. Mellano.

From the Leschaux Hut, the party followed the route to the Col des Grandes Jorasses up the Mont Mallet glacier. They turned to the left near the *bergschrand* and reached the base of the spur about 50 m.

below two prominent small gendarmes. After climbing iced rocks to the foot of the second gendarme they reached the notch beyond the gendarme by a rappel and delicate traverse. The line of the rib was then followed by red slabs (III and IV) and a series of rock teeth until the base of a grey tower was reached; this necessitated a traverse to the right before rejoining the ridge (piton, IV). There followed further pitches of IV, a smooth *dièdre*, another traverse to the right (piton), an ill-defined chimney (piton) and delicate slabs. The penultimate buttress was climbed directly and proved the most difficult part of the climb, including pitches of IV sup. and V, and requiring half a dozen pitons. The final buttress, which looked unclimbable, was turned on the left by a *dièdre*, coming out to the right of the summit (IV). Time : 13 hours from the hut ; 7 hours from the foot of the spur.

PIK SHCHUROVSKY (4,259 m. = 13,974 ft.). By the South-east ridge from the Ushba Plateau.

July 9, 1958. John Hunt, E. Gippenreiter, G. C. Band, A. Blackshaw, R. F. Jones, C. W. Brasher, M. J. Harris, D. C. Bull, J. Neill.

From a camp on the Ushba Plateau, the highest basin of the Shkhelda glacier, reached from the ' Spartak ' Camp in the Adyl-Su valley via the Shkhelda glacier, with a bivouac (called by the Russians the ' German bivouac ', because of its use by Schmaderer's party in 1936), on rocks on the north side of the eastern arm of the glacier, below the South-west ridge of Pik Woolley (the peak south-east of the Shkhelda Pass). Open snow-slopes led from the plateau camp to the col between Pik Shchurovsky and Chatyn-Tau, from which the easy snow and rocks of the South-east ridge rose to the top. The only real difficulty was the ascent of the ice-fall in the eastern arm of the Shkhelda glacier below the plateau. The route up the mountain is that of the first ascent, in 1915, by the Russian climbers M. S. Golubev and J. Frolov, who named the mountain after another pre-revolution mountaineer. It is graded as IIA by the Russians.

GESTOLA (4,860 m. = 15,946 ft.). By the North-east face of the Gestola-Lyalver col and the North-west ridge ; descent by the ridge to just below the summit of Lyalver and down the North-west face of this.

July 17, 1958. J. Neill, E. Gippenreiter (and D. Thomas as far as the col between point 4,530 m. and Gestola, and back).

From a base camp on the Mishirgi meadows, the path along above the east side of the Bezingi glacier was taken to about a mile beyond Missess Kosh. A descent was then made on to the glacier, which was crossed diagonally to a camp site on the west lateral moraine, a little way above a lake between the moraine and the mountain-side and below the slopes of Kel-Bashi. Next day the corner of Kel-Bashi was

rounded to reach the western end of the Bezingi glacier and the ice-fall in this arm ascended. The finding of a safe route through the ice-fall was made difficult by great depths of soft snow. On reaching the top plateau of the glacier the proposed route up the face to the Gestola-Lyalver col was seen to be swept by successive avalanches. A laborious ascent in deep snow was therefore made to the southern Tsanner Pass (3,920 m. = 12,862 ft.), where the party bivouacked to await more favourable conditions. Early next morning the top plateau was regained and, after an initial ascent of the rocks at the left-hand end of the face of Lyalver, a diagonal line was followed over steep snow-covered ice slopes to the col. The ridge to Gestola then leads over two subsidiary peaks, points 4,360 m. and 4,530 m. Point 4,360 m. was turned on the right a few hundred feet below the summit. A similar turning movement on point 4,530 m. was frustrated by steep broken cliffs, to avoid which it was necessary to ascend to the summit. From the col beyond, a zig-zag route, on the lower snow-slopes, was taken rather to the right of the ridge leading direct to the top of Gestola, then broken rocks to the final short snow-slope under the summit cornice. Most of the going from the Lyalver col to the final rocks was on deep crusted snow on ice, very laborious and rather dangerous on steep slopes. On the return the crust had largely gone, increasing the danger. As descent by the route of ascent was quite out of the question, the party continued along the ridge to within a few yards of the summit of Lyalver (4,350 m. = 14,272 ft.), and descended the mixed rocks and snow of the North-east face, keeping to the rocks as far as possible in view of the execrable snow conditions, to the top basin of the glacier. In gathering dark this was descended rapidly to an uncomfortable bivouac on the shale slopes north-east of the ice-fall. Next morning the ridges of Kel-Bashi were traversed to the camp on the moraine of the Bezingi glacier (this route would have been more suitable for the ascent than the one taken by the ice-fall), from which a return was made to the base camp.

The last ascent of the mountain recorded in the tin in the summit cairn was in 1954. The party was followed by four Russians, who ascended by Lyalver. Two of them reached the summit, the other two remaining at the last col. The Russian party was out for five nights.

The route of ascent is graded as IIIB by the Russians, and that of descent as IIIA.

J. NEILL.

AN ALPINE SEASON, 1958. These short notes on an Alpine season last year are given partly because of the poliomyelitis which, of all things, must have been picked up during it by one member of the party. We do not know where, though we have one or two guesses.

D. Cox, A. K. Rawlinson, P. Norton and W. N. were based in August on Armand Charlet's barn at the Col des Montets above Argentière. The Albert Premier hut was very full; since the proximity of the Balme *téléphérique* it must be the most crowded building in the Alps. We spent two nights here, on the traverse of the Aiguille du Tour and the South ridge of the Purtscheller. Already the party was so debilitated that it took two days to get up to the Argentière hut, one bivouac *en route*. Here some very dirty utensils seem a most likely source of infection. The West ridge of the Tour Noir gave a partial *coup de grâce*. W. N. returned via Chamonix, after a possibly rash but interesting ascent solo of the North-east face (couloir) of the Petite Aiguille Verte. The exit to the left rather than the conventional right of the summit seemed a new diversion.

A dash over to Italy was followed by disappointment on the Brouillard, owing to weather. We had to be content with a storm on the Rochers route. Another disappointment followed for two of us on the Plan in rain. The last climb, D. C. and W. N., was the North face of the Aiguille du Lac Blanc, a climb that could hardly have been done had the disease started to manifest itself. IVB normally, it must have been a good V in snowy conditions and with more falling, and not short (August 21).

Some six days later the disease, which has an incubation period varying from a fortnight to a month, struck David Cox and struck hard. At the time of writing he is fighting for a good recovery, and with a very fair prospect of success.

I know of no one else who has had the terrible luck to contract polio in the Alps; but as numbers continue to swell, so may the incidence. And it is perhaps well to be warned.

W. NOYCE.