kept very close together. We blessed the masks which were now protecting our faces from the raging blizzard and thanks to them we were able to go unhindered straight down to the Western Cwm. If we had not had them we would not have been able to breathe.

We were worried that the storm would cut us off from Camp 4 and we would run out of oxygen and so we decided to make for Camp 3 immediately, a distance of almost 1200m. I will never forget that bitter struggle we had in order to keep alive. The hardest thing of all was to overcome our increasing indifference. We were growing indifferent to everything, no matter what. The only thing we wanted was to rest, to stop moving, to lie down and to sleep. To force ourselves to make further effort was a most difficult thing to do but yet very important. Later when I was resting in Camp 3 one thought kept on going through my mind – the summit had not been conquered. I consoled myself with the thought that the request I had sent to Kathmandu for permission to extend our expedition until January (we had enough supplies of food to last us until March) would be granted. Unfortunately it was turned down. Our expedition had to finish definitely on 31 December and nothing we could do would alter this decision. But we were returning to Poland convinced that it was possible though very difficult to conquer summits of 8000m in winter.

Mountains and mountaineering as symbols

I. A. Richards

Let us think for a minute about my title. I have been in some doubt whether I should be talking of mountains or of mountaineering. The doubt dissolved as soon as I realized that they could not be separated. For What is a Mountain? Is it the thing perceived by, fancied by, dreamed of, by people who have never been among or on any mountains? Or is it the thing known or imagined by people familiar with most of the activities and possibilities of mountain travel?

Probably, all of us who are thinking here, as I ask this, about mountains have often pondered this difference – taking it, perhaps, as typical of the changes which fuller experience can make in how we see anything and everything. Most of us have our own memories of occasions somewhat like that behind the little anecdote I will now relate.

I was at Saas Fee a while ago. (In fact it was in 1910.) And I was being talked to, at breakfast, by a very pleasant and intelligent woman about a girl she knew who had got up the year before very early – about 5.0am – at the Hotel Täschhorn, where we were, and gone up the Dom alone before breakfast and come down again to have her breakfast before they finished serving them. I hope I did not betray what I thought about this story and that girl. I asked, I think, how far up she had gone. 'Oh right up to the top. There is no doubt about it. She is the sort of girl who is always doing these things. Very exceptional!'. I was young enough then to be surprised that people could be like this. Later on, one gets more used to it.

The point, however, is that very much of the symbolic use of mountains by authors earlier than the 18th Century is shaped by the fact that the authors did not know much, if anything, about mountains, either at first hand or through those who had been among or up them. So they could and did use mountains as symbols in ways that people who know about them probably wouldn't.

Take John Donne, for example:

> On a huge hill,
> Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
> Reach her, about must, and about must goe;
> And what the hill's suddennes resists, winne so.
> Satyre LII

When I first used these lines as a text for some comments on the pursuit of truth (in a book called *How to Read a Page,* written in the Selkirk Range of British Columbia) I added: 'Sir Donald and the Asulkan peaks are wrapped in cloud as I write and the night wind visits only a cairn on the highest summit. Our tracks on the snow about it turn down again. Donne's image is not very comforting to a mountaineer.'

That was written 33 years ago. To-day, having had opportunity and occasion for further thought, I am not so sure that the need to come down from summits upsets the image so much.

> Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:
> What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang),
> In height and cold, the splendour of the hills.
> . . . . . Nor care to walk
> With Death and Morning on the silver horns.

We had better, perhaps, not be too hasty in dissuading our Psyche (come down, O maid) from seeking Truth upon the heights and not conclude that a modern writer who had been up and down a lot of mountains would not use a summit as a symbol of a Truth. He might very well have subtler uses to make of the necessity of descent. Maybe any Truth reached through long and arduous enquiry has in due time to be departed from – as Newtonian physics had to be descended to make room for post-Einsteinian developments.

To look a little more closely at Donne's symbolic mountain; 'about must and about must go' might well suggest to us that he did indeed know about routes up mountains and was not merely reminding us of what any path or road-builder would bear in mind. Devotees of the *direttissima* in routes will, of course, maintain that 'what the hill's suddenness resists' is what makes it worth a visit, and that Donne is naive in not knowing that the difficulty in reaching Truth is what makes her worth attempting. But there may be more behind Donne's lines. He may very well be following the pattern of Mount Purgatory exemplified best in Dante's *Purgatorio*: you can see a picture of the 'huge hill' in the frontispiece of The Temple Classics Edition 'from the painting in the Cathedral of Florence (1463)'. It is a conical hill, ringed by 7 terraces each 18 feet wide which go right round it. Between them are pitches which begin by being 'Very Severe' but as you get higher they become easier and easier. Just the opposite of what happens, we are told, on Everest. On Purgatory, high enough in this ascent, you move *up* the pitches with less trouble than you walk round the terrace, and as happily as a boat glides *down*

a river. Moreover this is a mountain no one descends. Once on the terraces you are free from temptations.

As you will see this Mount Purgatory is much more a sermon than any real peak. It has a flat summit on which is the Garden of Eden, which we regain by climbing it. That is the whole point, in fact, of the exercise. The only links, I think, with actual mountaineering are that you can't travel at night and that the people on the lowest terrace, who are being purged of pride are carrying more than Himalayan loads – not of useful things but of stones, however. Dante, indeed, can hardly recognize them as human beings. Their chins are pretty well down on their toes.

Let us turn now to another sort of symbolic use where it is the vision of a real mountain scene or detail which carries the meaning. For Dante and for Donne the mountain is little more than a schematic diagram of a moral effort. But from now on I will be considering cases where it is the perceived or imagined actuality which enable the mountain image to present *something else.* And that *something else,* it often seems, cannot be presented by other means. You can of course say in various ways what the something else is, but only the mountain image brings it home. For example, we will most of us agree that one of the key motives of much climbing is something we can call, if we like, 'the attraction of the not yet'. But when Keats somehow or other writes:

> Lo, on the shores of darkness there is light
> And precipices show untrodden green.

that does the job on quite another scale. *Untrodden green* – no wonder Charles Evans rested content with *Kangchenjunga, the Untrodden Peak* as title for his account of an expedition which to me seems unique: not only in making and holding to his promise that no foot would be set on the Summit, but in being throughout conducted so happily and with such grace and calm as to invite and to create the good luck it so needed. It is long since my wife and I saw Kangchenjunga in the flesh (1927), but when we want to dream of mountaineering *in excelsis* we are back in spirit at Rungneet or at Kalimpong gazing again, as comprehendingly as we can, at that supernal rampart, that symbol of as yet we know not what. To quote De la Mare's lines:

> And still my ghost sits at my eyes
> And thirsts for those untrodden snows.

Let me take as my next illustration a justly famous description of the high Alps seen from the Jura. Here is Hilaire Belloc in *The Path to Rome.* 'I saw – in front of me a sight in the sky which made me stop breathing, just as great danger at sea, or great surprise in love, or a great deliverance will make a man stop breathing.' 'A great surprise in love': that is just what it is – though what we are in love with, there that no one knows, that no one knows, and no one ever will. In between the branches of the trees was a great promise in unexpected lights beyond . . . there below me, thousands of feet below me, was what seemed an illimitable plain; at the end of that world was an horizon, and the dim blueish sky that overhangs an horizon.

There was brume in it and thickness. One saw the sky beyond the edge of the world getting purer as the vault rose. But right up – a belt in that empyrean – ran peak and field and needle of intense ice, remote, remote from the

world. Sky beneath them and sky above them, a steadfast legion, they glimmered as though with the armour of the immovable armies of Heaven. Two days' march, three days' march away they stood up like the walls of Eden. I say it again, they stopped my breath. I had seen them.'

We are a long way – are we not? – from Dante's account of 'the walls of Eden'.

My next example of symbolic use is very different. It is from one of Gerald Manley Hopkins's most self-torturing sonnets.

> O the mind mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
> Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
> May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
> Durance deal with that steep or deep.

This cragsman who hangs so on those cliffs of fall is seen with Shakespeare's eyes, as

> One who gathers samphire, dreadful trade,

on the Dover cliffs, rather than as a modern rock-climber would see him. It is the layman's not the adept's view of cragmanship. Do you remember reading in your old Baedeker the magic words, 'For Adepts only' or 'Fit only for those with steady heads'? Hopkins' spiritual climber is feeling the exposure somewhat. He needs, we might say, to put a runner on. But this sort of comment is in danger of that cheapening the lines speak of. We all know fully enough what it is like to be on ground which is a bit more than we can manage. And here, seeing that it is not the body but the *mind* that is in this hazard, we do well to be careful. The lines open with a curious repetitive emphasis on *mind* which can, if you linger with it, turn into a warning.

A longish time ago (in 1921 I think) we met the Oxford philosopher, Schiller on the rocks under the Bertol Cabane. I knew of him as author of an engaging pamphlet entitled *Mind!* with the apostrophe, the exclamation mark in charge of the word. It was an attempt to remind us that *Mind* – the title of a very formidable periodical indeed – is about the least understood word we have in spite of (some might say 'because of') the monumental amount of attention spent on inquiry into it. Anyway Schiller's cautionary pamphlet was well timed. But, I am sorry to say, when we watched him dealing with those rocks under the Bertol, we were not thinking about his philosophic but about his physical difficulties. They were much what I would expect to have myself on such rocks now. But I was too young then to have any conception of them; I am ashamed to confess I found them simply comic. The point here, however, is that both philosophic and physical difficulties are things we have to feel, and feelingly, before we can begin to understand them. By the way, I hope very much that the modernization of the Bertol at present going on won't include any building of a staircase complete with handrails or *(horresco referens)* any lift or escalator.

What comes out of my instances, I believe, and out of the scores of others you will have thought of while I talked, is that most symbolic uses of mountains compare some aspect of them with some phase of the mind's activity – whether it be Belloc's religion or Hopkins's agony and terror. Hence it is that Schiller's *'Mind'* can be useful.

Anyone's mountain experience, if fairly extensive, gives him or her endless instances of all graduations between them. Every mountaineer, I suppose, has reason to wonder at the variety of ways in which mountain views, near and far, mountain incidents and episodes, mountain difficulties and delights, successes and failures – all the chances and changes of mountain doings, can reflect other vicissitudes of mind, often, at first sight without apparent connection or similitude. The mind is inherently a traveller. The mountaineer's travelling is the most variedly exacting the body can achieve. Herein, maybe, lies one of the deep sources, in some people at least, of the mountain passion. I use this immense, this immeasurable word here because no other word that I know adequately names what I am talking of. It is a passion, we should realize, relatively very recent in mankind's development: less than 200 years, 3 standard lifetimes old. And though it has in the last 3 or 4 decades been spreading at an astonishing rate, it is still confined to a very small segment of the peoples of the world. This segment may be far smaller than we would guess. People who frequent the hills can be easily observed and may be counted. Which of them are possessed of this passion I speak of is not by any means as easily ascertainable. And, if I may be forgiven for saying so, it is the passion which matters, not the frequentation. The frequentation is physical, the passion is of the mind.

It is a passion that has been described by many, by none better than by Arnold Lunn, wittiest of men and wonder worker in description. Would that he were here with us to-night giving this lecture, in my place! Here is his account of the Oberland as seen from a train window in the Jura. To me it measures well with Belloc's.

'Beyond the dreaming lake, beyond the vine-girdled hills and beyond the plains a faint haze encircled the horizon. Pillowed on the distant mists a steadfast array of cloud-forms suddenly resolved itself into the snows of the Oberland . . . but those far-flung legions of the sky had no kinship with the friendly old peaks, the Wetterhorns and Schreckhorns that guarded the valley in which we lived . . . One felt that at any moment that white-sailed argosy becalmed on a windless sea, might weigh anchor and set sail for the blue harbours of remoter skies.'

And he heads his first chapter with a motto I must quote to you:

> 'Neither indeed is there any hill or hillocke which doth
> not containe in it some most sweete memory of worthie matters
> from *An Oration in Praise of Travel in General Coryat's Crudities* (1611).

This passion is a long-lasting thing. It can rule us from those early days when – as Dorothy Thompson beautifully put it 'one feels one could knock over a bus' to, well . . . when we feel the steps up to the door of this Alpine Club are about all we can manage.

We of the Alpine Club, this very odd institution, whose founding marked the first social acceptance of the claim it made for this passion – in the very teeth of reasonable common-sense – ought, I think, to accept an especial responsibility. We first, here in these islands, formed an originative, germinating nucleus or ganglion, a centre, may I say it, of infection, within which mountaineering as a sport, a game and a skill and technique, became endemic and acceptable, indeed respectable. So there came into being a new cultural ingre-

dient and a focus whence has spread with amazing rapidity an activity which was for mankind until then, and still is for the huge majority, an inexplicable, dangerous and wasteful species of *dementia.* We, I suggest, who suffer from this addiction, should do all we can, more than we have ever tried to do, towards diagnosing, accounting for, explaining – or, at least, speculating about – this extraordinary fresh development in human pursuits. It has, we must admit, been growing in extent and degree, accelerating, as we know, beyond expectation. More important still, mountaineering is now claiming and gaining new roles in pedagogy. I confess that I am in two or more minds about this. And I much hope that some cautious thinking is being attempted about it. Is it not true that whenever what was originally, in large part, a protest turns into the following of a fashion, a warning may be in place? It is an occasion for saying 'Mind! Mind out!' We do not know enough yet about what can happen when an unconscious stirring is made over into an imposed or even a reflective endeavour.

But come back to the ways in which a climb can variously image, represent, be a symbol of others among our doings – up to and including a whole life, its inevitable profile, its rhythm of ascent and descent.

Here is Shakespeare, our highest poet, on this: this highest and most baffling of all themes for thought.

> Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
> So do our minutes hasten to their end;
> Each changing place with that which goes before,
> In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
> Nativity, once in the main of light,
> Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
> Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
> And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.

It may seem exceeding cheek to follow such verse with verses of my own. But, after all, there is more than a little cheek needed in all mountaineering, physical or poetic. Those who first tackled the Matterhorn were not lacking in cheek. And there is a strong case for thinking that many themes (of which this is one) are more suited to verse than to prose and even though the verse be by no means supremely good. So I hope you will take what I offer as a full hardy venture – even though privately you call it not full hardy but foolhardy.

What comes now is a retrospective presentation of a lot of seasons on all sorts of mountains made from the viewpoint of one who isn't so much *retiring* from the game as *being retired.* The House of Commons that is shouting at him: *Resign! Resign!* is his own thoughts about his situation. It is a situation you, sooner or later, may happily come to. And I do wish you long life so that you may come to it.

Resign! Resign!
Up hill, down dale . . .
So ran the tale

We have them in our bones:
Ten thousand miles of stones,
Moraine, debris and scree;
As many, could-be twice,
Over the fissured ice,
The clinging, slippery snows
That of our feet dispose;
As many again, or more,
Beside the torrent's roar,
Within the scented gloom
Or through the sorrowing cwm.

Or by the scythe-worn dell,
And cow-placated swell

Up the redeeming grass
Lifting toward the pass.

Along the ridge itself,
The ridge that earns its pride,
Riven from either side:
Lord of the rift or shelf
Whence the awaiting cliffs
Hang out their 'buts' and 'ifs'
To magnetize the eye
From sweeping round the suspect sky,
That could so soon prevent
Our inexplicable intent.

Or where the driven snow
Invites our steps to show
No fluted, rearing wall,
Or plum'd crest too tall
For our impertinence.

What did we gather thence?
The bootprint in the dust,
The upward roll and thrust,
The limber footfall plunging down,
The axe-head friendly in the palm
Or snug between the sack and arm.
Clutches of delicate fears,
Qualms as the *néant* nears:
Relieved – our summit joys;
Relived – what toys!

All that – Goodbye!
And this has told you why:
Not of all that bereft,
But we, ourselves, have left . . .
Leave that behind.
And not as Fall . . .
Even resigned.

The next poem takes up the same theme and extends it. It has 3 stanzas. The first stanza sketches an attitude to rock-climbing, once rock-climbing is over, out of the question, a thing of the past. The second, middle stanza, parallels this for man's central concern, the Helen of Troy thing! the face that launched a thousand ships. The third, the closing stanza does the same thing for our unquenchable thirst to understand. It is about butterflies (symbols of the Psyche in us) killed by the frost of the high snows as we have all seen them.

Conditional

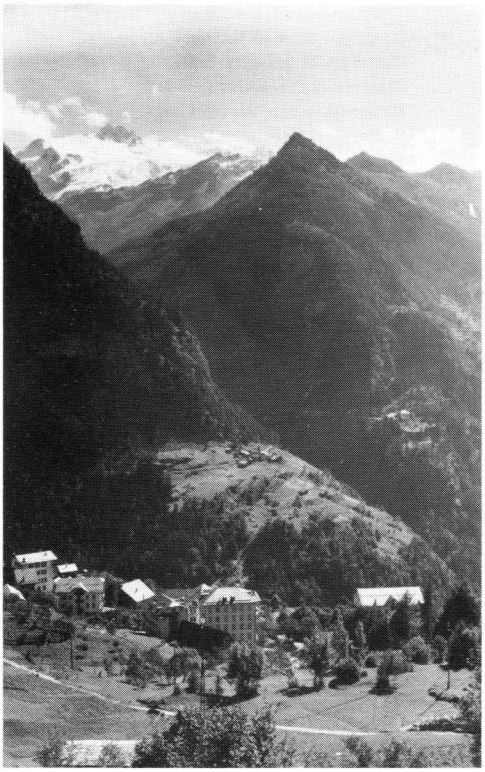
Beckon some cragsman's paradise from the sky,
Heart-beat slows down, lungs halt their heave,
So to descry, conceive
How it was with me when that sport began:
Muscle and nerve wrought for me by the strain.
Fain as of old I feign that yet I can.

Pass by some image of the world's desire,
Eye beam narrows, glance sharpens to discern,
So to attire, adorn
Some visitant from when that hunt began
Whose hardihood now tells me what is vain.
Fain as of old why feign that yet I can?

Butterfly thought, sail gaily through the void,
Seeking your mate, belike, gale-borne astray,
To be destroyed, betray,
Ice-caught, the thoughts from which your life began
Torn downy wings that will not sail again.
Fain as of old, I feign that yet I can.

The last poem, which ends this talk, is simpler. It is called *Finhaut.* Many of you, no doubt, know the place: the highest point on the railway over from Martigny to le Chatelard and Chamonix. Its name long seemed to me ominous and as though speaking of the END of GOING UP HIGH. It was actually the place where, as a small boy, I first saw Alpine snows. On a hot afternoon in the steep village street I could not believe that the snows would not have melted before I could see them again. As soon as we came inside the *Hotel Bel Oiseau* I scampered upstairs to the top floor and down the long dark corridor

to the end window. The Aiguille du Tour and the Trient Glacier were still there! They are still there now.



Finhaut

An ominous name? Could be:
These gyring rails must mount no higher,
Firmly descend into another country.

Their duty's done. What though
Across the numinous gulf uprear
Sheer spires and sunlit snow;

Along the ravining brink
Our wheels will wind their squeal;
Tunnel to trestle to tunnel blink

On down, past footways to
Known heights now out of reach;
To this pass come, and through:

Who, some seventy years ago,
Happened here first to lift
My young mere eyes to snow.

14 Finhaut (Photo: Swiss National Tourist Office)

Cragwork in Cumberland[1]

W. P. Haskett Smith

Christopher North, of genial memory, had a pet saying that the season of the year to be selected for a visit to the English Lakes extended from the 1st of January to the 31st of December. All seasons have much to recommend them, but the affections of the climber of rocks hover doubtfully between two less extended periods – early summer and mid-winter.

In the first place there is no crowd. It is something to be able to reckon on getting a bed and finding the people of the house not too much overworked to bestow any attention on your comfort. Next, if winter be chosen, the few people whom you find there are bent on the same errand as yourself. They mean business. Half-hearted admirers of the mountains stay at home, and your only companions will be life-long lovers of the mountains, and robust

1 Reprinted from *Black and White,* June, 1892.