

the much-loved Port de Rat. Until then we had seen no-one for many days. We had had the world to ourselves and gloried in the solitude. But as we approached our last pass we saw three climbers descending the ridge above us. They arrived at the pass a minute or so before us. They greeted our arrival with friendly smiles, but with the demand also to see our passports. They were French border police making one of their occasional visits, and we were their first 'customers' for more than three years! A bottle of wine was produced from a rucksack and we celebrated the fact in the best interests of Anglo-French relations.

Heady with the effects of wine on empty stomachs, we descended from the luxury of solitude and unmarked wild beauty, left the challenge of the High Route for others to follow, and walked on down into Hell.

### FINHAUT

*By Dr I. A. Richards*

(Finhaut is the highest point on the railway over from Martigny to the French frontier at Le Chatelard.)

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 numerous gulf uprear  
Sheer spires and sunlit snow;

Along this ravening brink  
Our wheels will wind and 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, sixty odd years ago,  
Happened here first to lift  
My young mere eyes to snow.