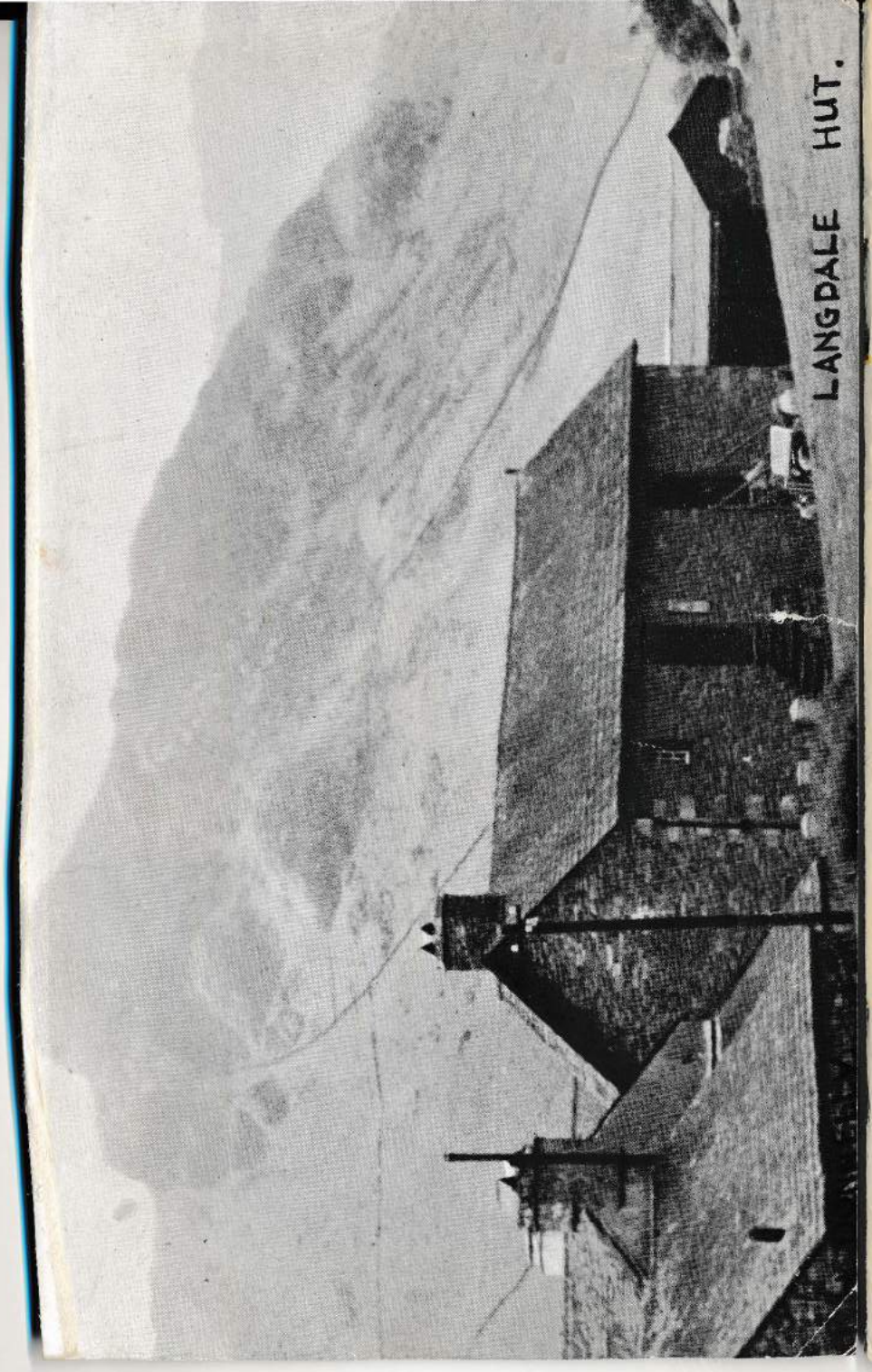
THE ORPHANS' PRESS
ROCHDALE

ARCC JOURNAL

NUMBER 1



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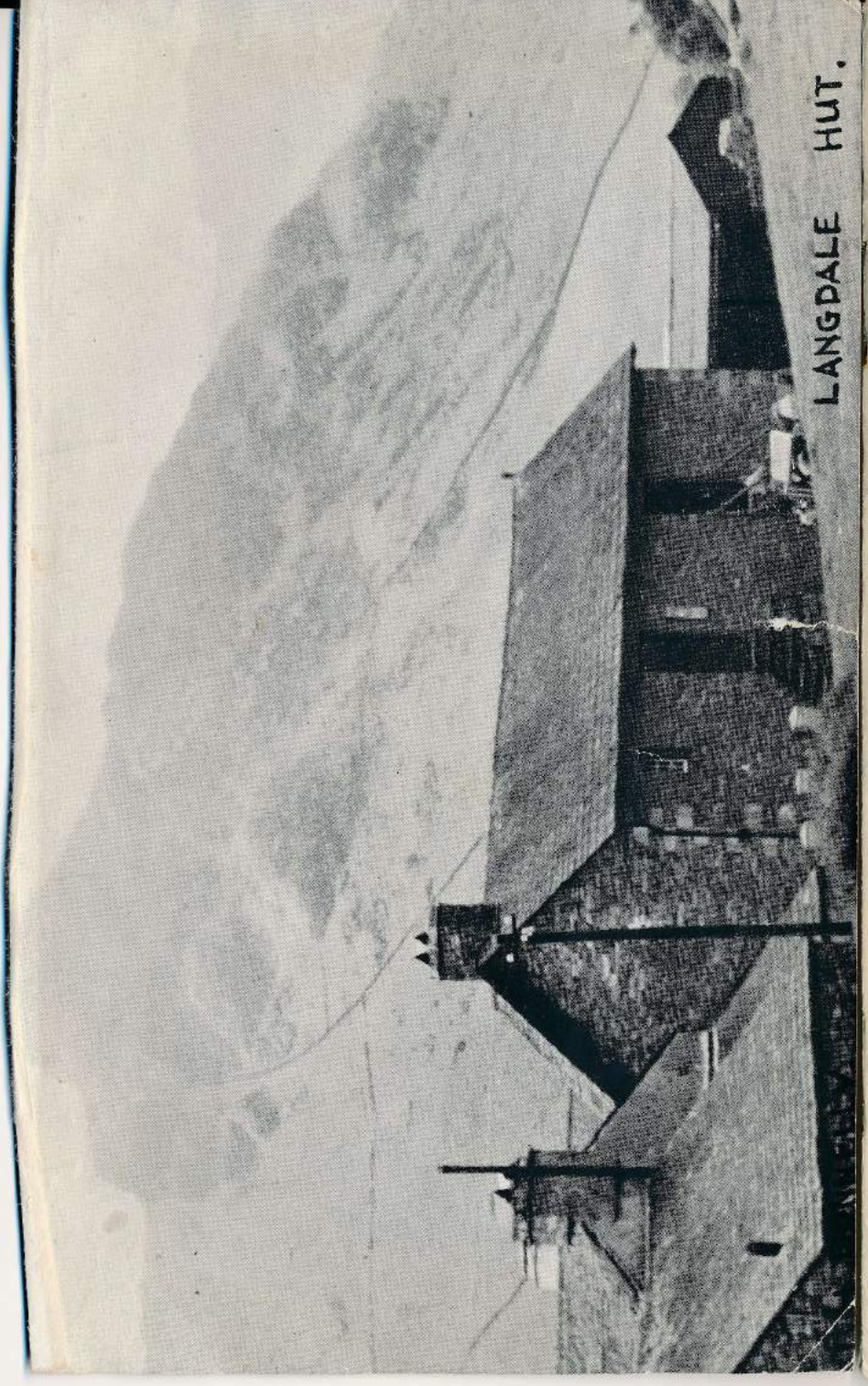


LANGDALE HUT.

G J Partridge.

JOURNAL OF

THE ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB

No. 1 1946

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

SOONER or later every budding organisation starts mooting the point of a journal or magazine. The first murmurings were heard in the Achille Ratti Climbing Club during the Christmas meeting of the committee this year. After being solemnly voted in, and then equally solemnly voted out, in a way that committees have, the idea of experimenting with a journal of our own was decided upon. Our plan is to publish, with each number, articles that may be of interest to all lovers of the hills. Inevitably rock-climbing will find as prominent a place as it does in the activities of the Club, but as we are not exclusively a rock-climbing fraternity anything that savours of the bracken and heather will find a welcome in its pages. Few of us have the pleasure of living in the hills or even near them, and we are grateful for any literary effort that helps us to share that pleasure vicariously. Evidently this journal must aim at being more than a printed extract from one of the Hut Log Books, but our numbers are too few to exact a high literary standard. Let this be an encouragement to our more diffident members to expand on paper some of the exuberance they show on the fells and the rocks. They need not fear any lack of interest on the part of their fellow members.

We are writing, obviously, in the first place, for our own immediate circle. A word of warning is necessary for the non-member who may turn its pages. Climbers, like fishermen, tend to give glowing accounts of their experiences and particularly of their 'near-misses.' Those whose knowledge of rope technique is next to nothing may get a totally false impression if they do not understand the background against which such accounts are written. They may rest assured that though the use of the rope will not make vertical rocks flat, it can reduce danger to a negligible factor on the ordinary classified routes that are always followed. It seems a pity that we cannot repeat this with every issue,

but let it stand once and for all.

It is fitting that we should begin with an article from the founder of the Club giving an account of its origin. The final article is a reprint from the "Parishioner" of 1940, and is included because of its intrinsic interest, and as a relic of the days before the Huts were acquired and the Club moulded to its present shape.

THE EDITOR.

THE CLUB

THE "Achille Ratti" Climbing Club is now well-known in Catholic circles, and to many other people besides. Since it has been mentioned in the Catholic press so many times recently, numbers have wondered at its origin and purpose. Few know that for a long time it was called the "Catholic Boys' Association Climbing Club," and that in those days it belonged to a few mountaineering enthusiasts of the Blackpool C.B.A. It was started simply because a number of us from the Boys' Club wanted to climb the hills and found it very inconvenient not to have a base from which to operate. Almost from the beginning we realised that it was too selfish to keep such advantages to ourselves and so organised it as a Catholic Mountaineering Club without any restriction as to its being a sub-section of any other organisation. It was at the suggestion of Mr. Arnold Lunn that we changed the name to "Achille Ratti," for the obvious connection with the late Pope, who was a skilled and keen climber, and also because the whole development of the Club was in the line of an ordinary mountaineering Club, and the name "boy" was likely to be misleading. When you read further on in this article how the acquisition of the most recent Hut has been made in response to a need to introduce boys to the hills, it will indicate how quickly the Club departed from its original purpose.

Many people have wondered why we started a mountaineering Club. The real answer is that we did not group together and say: "There is no Catholic Mountaineering Club, and so we must begin one." It just came into being as we have already said, and, having happened, we found that it evidently responded to a long-felt need. Priests in particular hailed it with delight because it solved for them the almost insuperable problem on such holidays of daily Mass. Catholic young people welcomed it because it was somewhere to go where they could be sure of meeting their own company. More than that the friendship that exists between Catholic

Priests, the Religious that teach in our Colleges and the Laity has very deep roots, and when to this is added the common passion for mountaineering one can easily understand how such a Club should begin to flourish at once.

Perhaps the part that some are least able to comprehend is the mountaineering! We have often been charged with introducing young people to a dangerous sport. Now that is taking a very narrow outlook on mountaineering, for to us the definition of a mountaineer is simply "one who loves the hills." Once a person loves the hills he delights to read about them, to hear about them, and above all to be amongst them. Rock climbing is only a part of his mountaineering. It is not the purpose of the Club to encourage people to take up rock climbing. Rather it begins from the fact that there are many who are very keen rock climbers and many others who are anxious to begin. Keen spirits of this kind who go amongst the hills, when they are faced with the challenge of the rocks, will climb whatever happens. It is all to the good that they should belong to a Club which has sound traditions, and which has amongst its members those who are able to lead and to train in the art of good climbing, and also to teach the right attitude towards the sport. It must be admitted that there are far too many who rush at the rocks and think every climb is easy until they get on it. It is too late then to find that it has obstacles that are beyond their powers. All climbing clubs deplore this type, and still more the accident, which is not really an accident at all, but the result of foolhardiness. The existence of the Club is a great help both in avoiding such mishaps and in directing this fine pioneer spirit into proper channels. During the mountaineering course that we held recently we saw on the one hand the amazing keenness of our Catholic young men for the hills and their great capability of endurance born of years of youth hostelling, and on the other hand their entire underestimation of the difficulties of rock climbing. Perhaps it would be better to say that they had not a proper respect or reverential fear of the rocks, for the

difficulties are not great except in relation to the exposed positions and the vagaries of our English weather. It was by seeing really experienced climbers take the greatest care, and having to feel their dependance on the rope, that taught them that "cleverness" was no substitute for rock-sense and skill.

However, this article is meant to be merely historical, but since we shall be read by large numbers of young Catholic men who intend to join the Club, and, what is more important, by their parents, it seemed advisable to say a word or two as to our *raison d'etre*.

In the Autumn of 1940 I was taking a party of boys up Scafell Pike. As we were walking along the Mickleden, just where Gimmer Crag towers like a Dolomite over the valley, John Schofield was listening with adolescent ardour to accounts of life in the Alpine Refuges. In his innocence he asked why we did not have similar Huts for the lads of the C.B.A. When it was pointed out that such a project needed money he remarked that it had always been said that "in the bright lexicon of Youth, there's no such word as 'fail'." These facile phrases are apt to come back upon one, and the challenge had to be accepted, especially as the motto of the C.B.A. was "ad Altiora," and should at least then lead to the hills. It would, however, have remained a pleasant day dream, but for its being mentioned to our friend, Mr. Cyril Bulman, of the Dungeon Ghyll Old Hotel. Now Mr. Bulman is not like a placid tarn that just reflects ideas, he is rather a cataract of productive energy. Before long he had found us a place that we could convert into a climbing Hut, namely the superbly situated Langdale Hut behind the Dungeon Ghyll New Hotel. Mr. Bulman is our first honorary member, and shares that privilege alone with Mr. Arnold Lunn, and has ever been our source for sound advice and practical help. And it is right that he should be so, for in spite of his fine business acumen he has all the spirit and zest of a boy. With the formation of a Club, Father Atkinson, of Ambleside, became the Secretary. There have been many famous

names amongst the Clergy connected with Lakeland, but his name will live on in Lakeland annals for many a year to come. He is an enthusiast who has spared nothing, least of all himself, to make mountaineering a practical reality for Catholic Youth. Plans would have remained plans had he not fulfilled the role of carpenter and plumber, painter and decorator, furnisher and fitter. The comfort, the utility, the splendid altar of the Langdale Hut, are all the result of hours of patient work, and it is to the edification of the people of the valley that they have come to know him best in his working attire, tired out and having a cup of tea with them when he had been working for "those boys." Behind this practical gift there is a keen apostolic spirit that sees great possibilities in the mountains to help those adventurous youths who are suffocated with the artificialities of modern town life to regain perspective in the grandeur of the hills.

Langdale is the most popular Hut amongst the climbers. It is the most accessible by rail and road from the South, and itself provides the most accessible approach to the rocks. The nearby crags are convenient for all weathers, and Pavey, Gimmer and Bowfell are within easy reach. Added to this is the fact that there is not a climbing Hut in the whole of Great Britain that commands so magnificent a view as the alpine aspect of the trees, with the numerous cascades of Mill Ghyll rising in tier on tier and flanked by the imposing crags of White Ghyll, Pavey and Harrison Stickle.

However, popular though Langdale is, it was only to be expected that the time would come when Wasdale would attract our attention. It was our original idea merely to seek a "bivouac" where we could lay our heads at night when we had tarried too long on the Gable, Pillar or Scafell. Several times we treked over the Esk Hause and the Sty Head Pass to seek such a place, but all in vain. And then Father Atkinson took up the quest, and when he had only just learnt to drive a car ventured up the fearsome hill at Ulpha by the Travellers' Rest, and made his way over Birker Moor to Wasdale. Providence was kind. As he was retreating

from the valley, disappointed, he heard of Mr. Gass at the Ghyll Farm, and a new era opened up for the Club. Mr. Gass had the farm at Buckbarrow and offered it to us. After a further discussion all was settled and Buckbarrow became our second Hut. The character of the Wasdale Hut is entirely different from that at Langdale. It is a lonely farm-house, situated on the Fellside right under the rocky shoulder of Buckbarrow. This splendid cliff on the North, and the imposing sweep of the Wastwater Screes on the South, form a wild setting, whilst to the East, aloof and inspiring, the Scafells are in full view from the level of the lake to their summits. The house is cosy, with thick walls and casement windows of little white-framed panes. After a long day on the Fell, or a battle in a blizzard of snow to the top of a peak, it is the climbers reward to spend his long evening by the huge fire-grate full of blazing logs, and savour in anticipation the aromas coming from the oven. The nearest farm for supplies is the Gasses, at The Ghyll, and they are also our next door neighbours, even though they are half-a-mile away. Still, if they were literally next door there could not be more neighbourliness, and many have been the happy times when visits have been interchanged. The remoteness of Buckbarrow, and the difficulty of easy access, have conspired to make it less popular than Langdale, but to many it has an atmosphere and a charm that can not be found anywhere else, and from a climber's point of view, if he possesses convenient transport, which most conveniently is a car to take him to the head of the valley, it is the key to all that is best.

The acquisition of the next Hut was more in the nature of an accident. We had no further aspirations at the time. But Father Atkinson heard of the cottage, shown on Bartholomew's map as "Raise Cottage," and in reality the old Isolation Hospital towards the top of Dunmail Raise. We first went to view it on a morning when it was raining in truest Lakeland style, convinced that if we saw any possibilities in it on such a day, then it must surely be worth while.

The entry was not promising. Indeed it looked as if there had been a bomb on the ground floor, it was so pitted and mutilated. But one glance upstairs was sufficient to indicate to us the possibilities, and soon we were in negotiation with the owner. Eventually an agreement was concluded, and the third Hut, the Dunmail, came into our hands. Plans have been got out for its conversion, and we hope that it will be on modern and convenient lines, including such items as a drying room, and hot and cold shower baths, as well as good central heating, all of which are necessary for its purpose. Perhaps it should have been said earlier, but the real reason of this Hut was because there are so many who have charge of Colleges or Clubs who are anxious to introduce boys to the hills, and yet cannot take them to the Climbing Huts, that we felt that something ought to be done to meet this need. Here was the ideal situation, on the slopes of Helvellyn, centrally situated between Keswick and Grasmere, and easy of access, being on the main road and connected by a regular bus service with Windermere station. At the same time there can be separate quarters for the Club members, who will appreciate them for fell walks as well as for some nearby rock climbs, and perhaps most of all for its possibilities in the way of winter expeditions in snow on Helvellyn, and even skiing on the north slopes when the snow is good. One does not want to say too much in this first account of how the Club came into being and so rapidly took root. But one must mention the two vice-presidents, Mr. Tom Donnelly and Dr. Francis Rickards. Mr. Donnelly brought to the Club an almost passionate love of the Lake District, and has rendered invaluable service by his sound business experience and caution without timidity. He is best known for his photographs, for he has now a complete record of the Club's activities by means of his Leica camera, and his photographs will often, we hope, appear in this journal. Dr. Rickards brings enthusiasm and always work. He is the life and soul of any expedition—the first to present himself for work and the last to be

downhearted. What more can a young Club trying to face difficulties and disappointments ask than that? We are thankful to say that we have not had need of his professional skill. And, though, there are many other names whom we hope to include in good time, we ought to mention the Editor of this journal, Dr. Park. A keen alpinist and well-versed in all things connected with the mountains, he took us up, as it were, from outside, and gave us great courage and help to carry on the work that we had begun. For that we shall always be grateful, and now still more for this proof of his interest by editing this first little journal from the Grampian Sanatorium, where he is at present detained. May he soon recover.

That, then, completes the story of how Achille Ratti Mountaineering Club came into being. But it is only the beginning of the story. It is up to the enterprise and spirit of the members to see that it develops into a saga of adventure and progress. There will be more difficulties, we can see some on the horizon even now, but our lessons of the hills would be superficial indeed if we had not learnt that the spirit of the hills is to overcome obstacles and to venture new and better things.

T. B. Pearson.

MY FIRST CLIMB

(NEEDLE RIDGE).

THE reverend head of Fr. Pearson was framed in one of the upper windows of Buckbarrow. He gave us the usual encouragement of: "It's easy . . . plenty of airy perches . . . jug-handle holds," salted with: "Once you get over the first pitch . . . an awkward step on to the wall . . . don't funk the groove—it's interesting." Frankly, I had my misgivings; Fr. P. said it was easy, but the F.R.C.C. guide said it was difficult—there might be more air than perch—even jug-handles have been known to break—and the silken tone in which he described the groove as "interesting" had the refined flavour of medieval torture about it. We cycled along to the hotel and parked our bikes in the barn. I glanced nervously at the stretchers on the rafters above and noted the suspicious brownish stains on the canvas. I tried to convince myself that they were scree-stains, made some inane remark, giggled nervously, and was heartily glad to leave the barn and strike up the path towards Great Gable. It was a lovely day, and the sun warmed my courage . . . great stuff, this rock-climbing! We hit back along the track towards the Needle, and soon were munching sandwiches on the platform at its base. Every now and then I glanced down to the valley below and the white hotel shining in the sunlight, and then upwards to the granite giants which stood brooding over us. At other times I had sat on such a spot with a feeling of great contentment and fulfilment; it had been the end of what I then fondly considered "a grand climb." But today I realized that my former adventures had been mere "walks," and that climbing only begins where such walks end. We finished our lunch, changed our boots for rubbers, scrambled up the few feet to the start of the climb and roped up. Lofty was to lead (his first lead, I remembered, a little nervously), Doc was to follow, and I was to be last man. I felt a strange sympathy

for the victims of human sacrifice as I stood waiting my turn and watching my two companions slowly but surely climbing the wall. It was just a matter of moments now; it would be nice to be able to back out gracefully, but there I was, alone, tied to the end of a rope, the coils of which were running out all too quickly, like sands out of an hour-glass. A cheerful hail from the Doc broke my reverie. There was no time to stop and think, but at the back of my mind the words of Fr. P. loomed large . . . "once you get over the first pitch." I stepped off on to the wall, and after a period of much grunting and little grace, was relieved to find myself in a position where the law of gravity was not so painfully obvious! So far, so good. From this point I actually began to enjoy the climb, jug-handles, airy perches, and all. Fr. P. had been right, it was a grand climb for a novice, with plenty of variety without severity. We gathered at the foot of the pitch which is climbed in the corner of two walls and immediately precedes the groove. We had climbed leisurely up to now, enjoying the warm sun and the brilliant light and shadow on the rocks. But, quite suddenly, like a petulant child, the sun decided not to play, and sulked behind a great cloud. The warmth and colour went out of the wall before us, and the first heavy drops of rain began to fall. Lofty and Doc quickly climbed the wall. There was hardly room for three on the stance above and I waited below while Lofty moved out on to the groove. It was raining heavily now. I waited for what seemed an age, and then ventured to ask the Doc what was happening up there. He replied, in that lugubrious tone I have known him to adopt when trying to teach young philosophers the finer points of metaphysics, "You wait and see" . . . and mumbled off into something about a "nasty bit." I replied, a trifle impatiently, by recalling that Fr. P. had said it was plain sailing after the first pitch. The Doc countered this with a hollow laugh and an unkind remark about Fr. P.'s sense of truth. I settled down to a further wait. Lofty was certainly finding the groove "interesting" I thought, in fact, quite absorbingly

so. After a ticklish passage over the wet rock he finally negotiated the groove and the Doc called to me to climb the wall. When I reached him I found him looking somewhat bedraggled and a little grim, and with a remark about "no time to lose" he departed round a rock bulge on to the groove. Again I waited, and still the rain poured down. Then my turn came, and I slobbered along the first part of the groove and reached the bulge of rock; I realised that the jug-handle stage had ceased, and for the next few yards saucers were to be the order of the day. Gingerly I put a wet rubber on one of these saucers and began to draw myself up; the next second I was dangling like a sack of potatoes against the rock. The Doc had me well belayed and gave me the couple of feet of rope I needed to get back into the groove and find a foothold. I would have gladly spent the rest of my life there, but an acid remark from the gentle Doc prodded me into a second and more gingerly ascent of the bulge, which this time "went." I began to breathe freely, but only for a moment, for a brief self-examination revealed that my shorts were hopelessly ripped and that the slip on the bulge had tightened the wet knot of the rope so well that the question of who was to carry it on the downward journey was beyond debate. We picked our way very carefully over the "easy rocks" to the summit. From here there seemed to be two possible ways down, the screes to our right, or the gully to our left. The scree route, we thought, would mean a long tramp to the base of the Needle, where we had left our boots and sacks, while the gully, if somewhat steeper, lead straight to the foot of our climb. We elected for the gully, and with much slithering on wet grass and scree picked our way down. I reached a small platform and peered over the edge to see what came next. With some misgivings I saw it was a steep pitch with the only possible route lying on a steep wall which was running with water. Swallowing what little pride was left in me, I shouted up that I didn't like the look of it and would wait for them to join me. I was relieved to find that my misgivings were shared

by the rest of the party. Lofty volunteered to look for an alternative route, but after a good deal of traversing over slippery and diminutive grass ledges was glad to regain the platform where we stood. There was no alternative, the slippery wall had to be negotiated and the rope would have to be used. A further problem faced us—the fact that one end of the rope was anchored immoveably to my middle. The Doc, after a few moments study of the problem, gave us a solution. I was to be belayed down to the next stance; the Doc would then hold the rope taut while Lofty used it as a hand-rail, and finally the Doc would thread the free end of the rope through an excellent thread belay, let it down to Lofty, and descend himself with the help of the two taut ropes as best he might. The solution was a good one, but completely dependent on the length of the rope. I was belayed without difficulty; Lofty followed on the hand-rail theory and the Doc sent down the free end of the rope. It was a terribly near thing, and only when I managed to get a stance a foot or so higher up the gully was Lofty able to grab the free end of the rope and provide the double hand-rail for the Doc's trapeze turn. There was one final moment of agonized suspense as the rope was pulled through the thread belay—if it stuck? We sighed with relief as the sopping rope fell at our feet. Its clammy coils were soon about my shoulders and we made our way without much difficulty to the foot of the gully, climbed up to the platform, and after emptying approximately six pints of water from our boots, donned them and made our way down the screes to the path. With the approach to civilisation the problem of adequate clothing became acute. There was only one thing for it—I took off my wind-jacket and tied it on like an apron, using the sleeves as strings. We decided on a warming drink at the hotel before cycling back to Buckbarrow. The small bar was crowded and there was a cheer of greeting as three bedraggled, dirty climbers entered. I had long decided that I should have to spend the night with that wet rope round my stomach, but a willing helper in the bar

managed to get the butt of his pen-knife into the knot and by standing on a bench and heaving mightily, finally loosened it and freed me from its watery embrace. There followed a mad ride along the lakeside road, where two poor hikers nearly died of fright as three wild figures in scree-stained shirts hurtled past them in Apocalyptic fury. Night was falling, and the screes hung black above the sombre waters as we left the lake and raced along the last stretch of road to Buckbarrow. *Ad altiora.*

Gerard McKenna.

LANGDALE TO BUCKBARROW

IT was after ten o'clock before we finished packing our rucksacs and were ready to leave the Langdale Hut. We set off with the intention of walking over to Buckbarrow, climbing Scafell Pike en route. The morning was fresh and clear, almost perfect for fell-walking, but the warmth of the sun's rays, falling upon us from the cloudless sky over Lingmoor Fell as we turned along the road to the Old Hotel, foretold an uncomfortably hot afternoon. Beside the small bridge that carries the road over Dungeon Ghyll, we paused to look at the large flat stone, remarkably like the headstone of a grave, still bearing legible traces of an inscription recording the fictitious death of one of our present vice-presidents. A few minutes later, after an encounter in the grounds of the Old Hotel with some large and very belligerent geese, which ended in a rather undignified rush for the gate, we were walking along the stony path leading into the valley of Mickleden.

I have somewhat mixed feelings about this particular valley. It usually seems to be the first defence of the mountains against the invasion of the climber, a dull three miles designed to wear down the body before the great rampart formed by Bowfell and Rossett Pike is reached. At other times, especially after a gruelling descent of Rossett Ghyll has terminated a long day on the fells, the soft springy turf of the valley more than compensates for its length. Whatever feelings one has about it, it still remains a long stretch to be covered by those walking between Dungeon Ghyll and the great fells to the west.

My first visit to Langdale and the Mickleden, and, incidentally, my first introduction to climbing anything higher than Loughrigg, was on the memorable occasion over six years ago when our founder-president celebrated the first Mass on the summit of Scawfell Pike. The novelty of arriving in the early hours of the morning at a place which, to my unaccustomed and youthful eye, looked far wilder and more

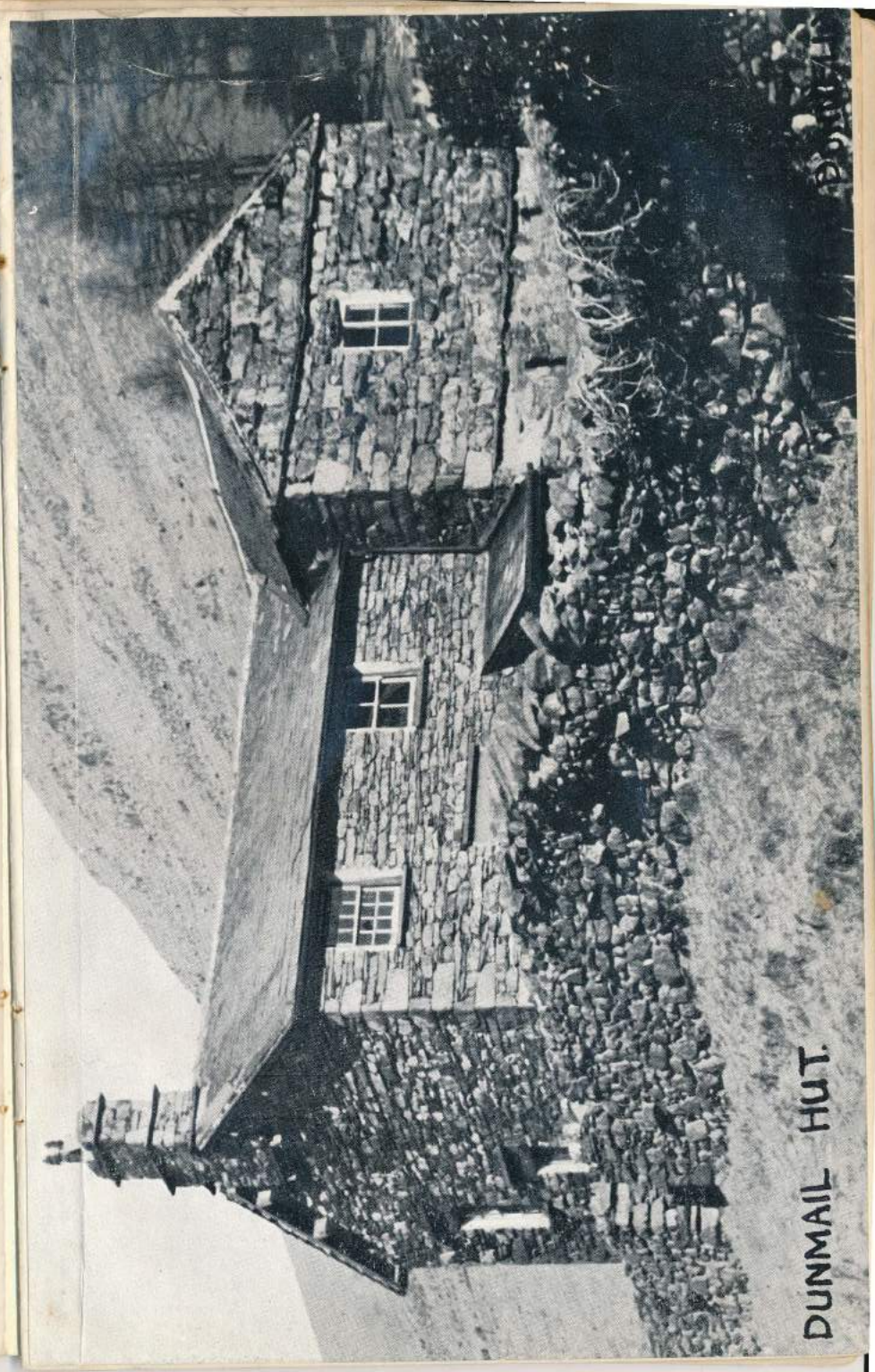
mountainous that it really is, left that first encounter with the fells indelibly fixed in my memory. That first sight of the Langdale Pikes, indistinct black shapes, sensed rather than seen through the clammy mist lying in the valley as they soared upwards to lose themselves in the night sky, is as fresh in my mind today as it was then. Bowfell and Rossett Pike, with the infamous pass in between them, gradually materialised out of the night looking like a vertical grey wall of incredible height. Someone told me that we had to climb over the pass, and until the end of the valley was reached, I thought he was joking. The first experience naturally left me with memories of the nicer aspects of the climb, of the sight of the peaks, their summits a blaze of colour in the rays of the newly-risen sun, whilst the valley was still full of mist and shadow; of the freshness of the mountain air at dawn and, above all, of that feeling of awe at being in close contact with the eternal grandeur of nature which only the mountains can give. Since then the less aesthetic aspects of climbing have been impressed upon me by numerous journeys along the Mickleden in the dark, which meant a series of painful encounters with large stones and unexpected immersions in pools and streams, and in unpleasant conditions of wind and rain which, on one occasion, caused us to wade for nearly a mile along the valley with water above our knees.

Today we were more fortunate. A fortnight of almost completely dry weather had reduced the becks and ghylls to mere trickles. At the sheep pen we had a short rest, as usual, before beginning the ascent of Rossett Ghyll. The two thousand feet high climb up to the summit proved, as usual, to be a hot tiring job which gave us good cause to add to the multitude of uncomplimentary remarks already made about it by generations of climbers. We did not linger long on the summit of the pass, but followed the path past Angle Tarn, the black crags of Hanging Knott reflected in its placid surface, towards the Esk Hause. Where the path crosses the stream which drains the tarn, we had once

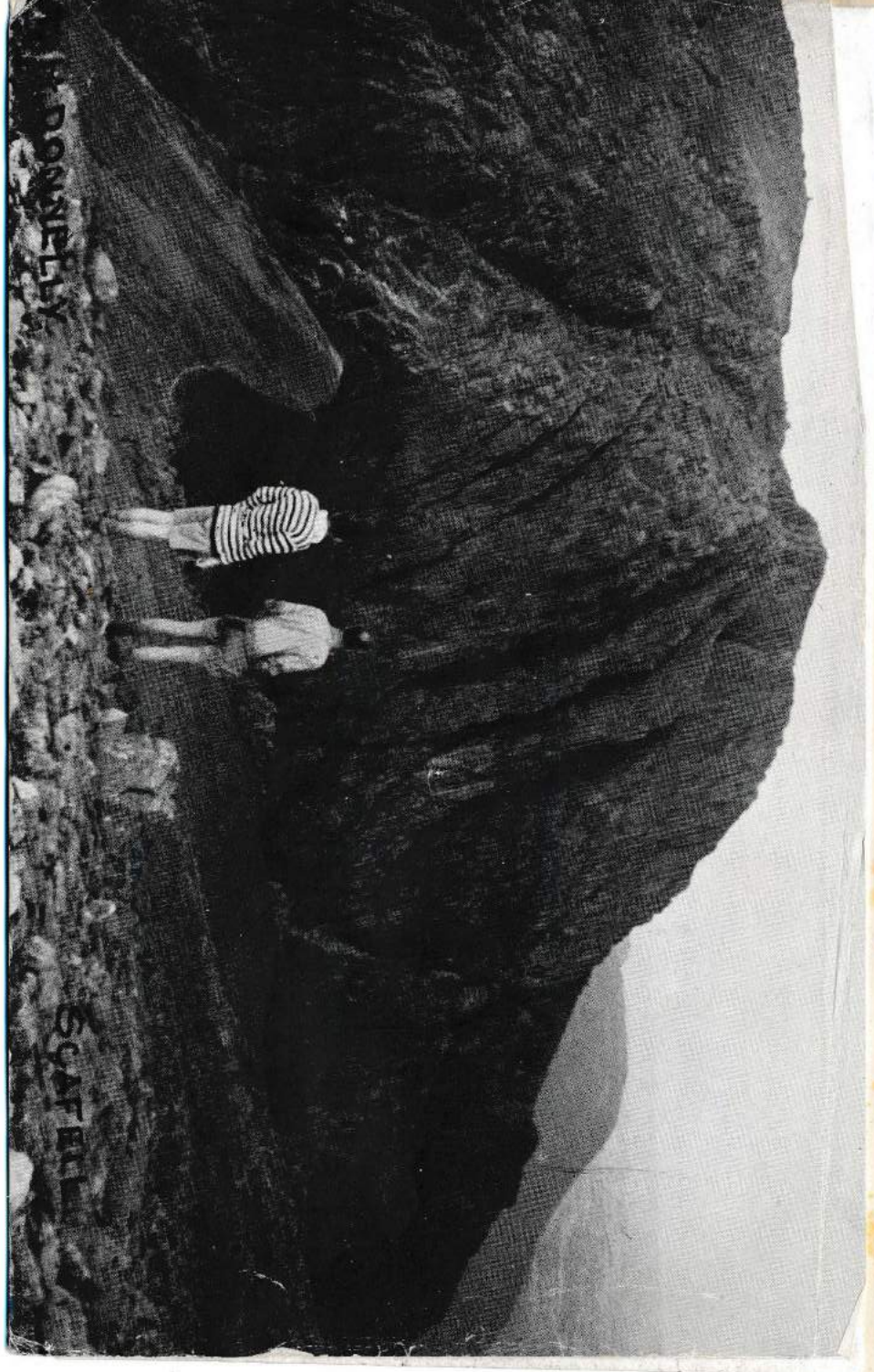
met two fell walkers who, being lost in the darkness and mist, had sat down in the vague hope that someone might come along. The fact that one of them was an art student from the continent, complete with curly beard and a foreign accent, gave the incident a peculiar flavour.

At the Esk Hause we sat down by the cruciate shelter, with the smashed signpost nearby, to eat our lunch. The fine weather had brought many people out onto the fells, and the path from Sty Head was dotted with parties travelling in both directions. It was getting really hot by now. Inland, some banks of white cumulus cloud were forming, but elsewhere the sky was a hazy blue, beneath which the fells shimmered in the noonday heat. We finished our meal, and after a short rest set off along the Scafell track. To the right the ground dropped away over the shoulder of Great End in a great sweep towards Sprinkling Tarn. In winter the winds sweeping up Borrowdale and over the Hause pack the snow so tight and freeze it so hard on this slope that very often the climber, crossing from Esk Hause to do the great snow climb in Central Gulley, finds it impossible to kick steps in the icy surface, and has to resort to the use of his axe. I remember seeing a party of three, roped together, go slithering away over the sunlit snow when two of them slipped simultaneously. Skilful use of the axe by the last man stopped them before they had gone fifty yards, but an ice-axe, which one of them inadvertently dropped, went considerably farther before it finished up against a projecting boulder. It was on this slope, too, that we had wandered one autumn night in darkness and thick mist trying to find the cairns of the Scafell track, an incident which did much to convince us of the dangers of getting lost in these parts to anyone not perfectly familiar with the district.

The path soon reached the wilderness of boulders which characterise Scafell Pike and its satellite peaks. We took things easily over this stretch, for the day was getting really hot and we had plenty of time. Everywhere around us were the grey mounds of dry, sunbaked rocks, shimmering in the



DUNMAIL HUT.



heat. The final stretch up to the summit cairn seemed as bad as Rossett Ghyll had been, but it is relatively short, and we soon ascended it and sat down to rest in what shade the cairn offered. Apart from the occasion on which the Mass was celebrated on the summit, I had only been there on one other occasion, when the weather had been at all kind. On that occasion we had met two American soldiers with whom we had quite an interesting conversation, during which they informed us that the highest peak in the world *was* in the U.S.A. !

Through the blue haze filling the valley we could see a corner of Wasdale Head three thousand feet below as we made our way towards the Mickledore Ridge. Before us were the sunless crags of Scawfell, with a few parties of rock-climbing enthusiasts dotted about their precipitous faces. We went along the ridge to the foot of the crags, and then followed the Rake's Progress route to the foot of Lord's Rake in order to cut out the descent of the great scree slopes below Mickledore. The Corridor Route came into view as we neared Hollow Stones, bringing to mind memories of hurried descents to Styhead Pass as night or mist closed in on the mountains, descents which were made in the unwelcome company of large birds of prey which left their nests on the ledges of Pikes Crag to wheel above us, fearsome black shapes against the darkening sky. At Hollow Stones a sizeable group of Youth Hostellers were resting on and about the great boulder that lies there, watching with great interest the antics of a party of rock-climbers on the Pinnacle, so we carried straight on down the steep grass of Brown Tongue. Yewbarrow, on the opposite side of the valley, imperceptibly grew larger as we descended, and began to assume its normal impressive form as the lower stages of the descent were reached. As usual we were tormented by myriads of flies as we walked through the ferns above Brackenclose, but they left us as the floor of the dale was reached.

From Brackenclose we could see the narrow road winding

away into the distance along the shores of Wastwater. Buckbarrow was a mere hazy outline in the distance, an outline that looked considerably more than four miles away. Then, as on many previous occasions, we wished that the Wasdale Hut was as admirably situated as the F.R.C.C. Hut. The lane from Brackenclose led us through fields full of gorse and holly bushes, across the stony delta where Mosedale Beck enters the lake, to the road which we were to follow for the rest of our journey. As yet the Screes were in shadow, the sun having not moved sufficiently westwards to illuminate their famous slopes. The pleasant little wood at Netherbeck, which looks so beautiful in spring when the trees are covered in white blossom, provided welcome shade for yet another pause.

The tiring effects of the long walk in the heat were making themselves manifest now. Walking was becoming semi-automatic, and short pauses were made whenever any view of merit provided a reason for doing so.

After what seemed to be a much longer time than it really was, we reached the signpost where the lake road divides, and turning our backs upon Wastwater and the Screes we were soon passing through the tiny village, if such it can be called, of Greendale. Once through Greendale, where the ancient and modern in Lakeland housing styles clash incongruously, we could see the trees and buildings of Buckbarrow. The anticipation of a repast of the maximum size that the present state of rationing allows, filled us with new strength, and we were soon at the Hut, only to stop in dismay when we remembered that we still had to walk up to Ghyll Farm for the key.

Bernard Nolan.

THE MOUNTAINS AS AN ESCAPE

O Täler weit, o Höhen,
O schöner, grüner Wald,
Du meiner Lust und Wehen
Andächt'ger Aufenthalt!
Da draussen, stets betrogen,
Saust die geschäft'ge Welt;
Schlag noch einmal die Bogen
Um mich, du grünes Zelt!

(Eichendorff.)

IT is a remarkable fact that the modern cult of mountains dates from the age of industrialism, when large tracts of the earth's surface were rendered hideous by the more or less misguided enterprise of man. When the progressive spirits of this country had turned many of its fairest prospects into a desert of slag-heaps and slums, and amassed much gold thereby, they seem to have taken fright at the work of their own hands and to have felt a recurring need to escape from it.

The habit of the seaside holiday dates from the same epoch, and is to be ascribed to the same cause. But the seaside is not found to be sufficiently immune from the sequelae of the industrial plague. Its most attractive resorts are speedily mobbed and commercialized and made as similar as possible to the places from which the resorters seek to escape. So the escape from London to Brighton, or from Liverpool to Blackpool, is illusory. You have the same Babylonian captivity; the same milling crowds and stereotyped amusements, the same queues, chain stores and films, the same swing and jazz. (If you like these things, please read no further).

There remain the mountains—the wilder, higher and remoter, the better. So those of our countrymen who could, fled annually to Switzerland, and started the immense vogue of that "playground of Europe"—hitherto regarded with urbane horror by the children of culture. When the

Alps themselves threatened to become too popular, they moved on to the Caucasus, the Himalayas or the Andes. And when they could not get so far afield they proceeded to discover the neglected mountains of Great Britain, and found these to be quite as thrilling in their way as the everlasting snows.

In a happier, simpler past, there was not this need of escape from ordinary life. Men lived close to nature and found content in her placid round. Even the cities were not so large as to hide the face of nature from their inhabitants. A journey from London to York was as great an adventure as a cycling tour in the Balkans is now. No layers of metal and concrete were interposed between man and his Mother Earth; no roar and stench of machinery blotted out the sounds and scents of the fields. There was nothing particular to run away from; so the wilder regions remained unexplored and the peaks unclimbed; and something no doubt was lost thereby.

The relentless career of civilisation has now changed all that. For most people nowadays, ordinary everyday life is a downright ugly, inhuman and unnatural affair. They spend their lives driving pens or machines, cooped in dismal brick boxes and dressed like blackbeetles, eating tinned food, and themselves projected to and from their work in tightly-packed, mechanized containers. Periodical escape from this kind of existence has become an imperative necessity if some shreds of sanity are to be preserved.

The worst excesses of *laissez-faire* capitalism may not perhaps be repeated. The slums may be gradually eliminated and the blackened countryside tidied up. But it will hardly become green again. The dingy, sprawling black of private enterprise may give place to the streamlined pinks and browns of planned socialism. But these new smokeless plants and suburbs are, no less than the Victorian eruption, something to be escaped from. The purlieus of the Great West Road are hardly less soul-shattering than the warrens of the East End. Our new Jerusalem-builders have so far

only succeeded in giving us spiritual deserts instead of material ones. Their maisonettes, clinics and super-cinemas, are unhappily no nearer to the ideal of a human and spiritual life. They speak of a life unhinged and uprooted from its eternal foundations; a life dedicated to progress in material efficiency and comfort, but deprived of its mysteries and sanctities. Therefore, "fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!"

Only nature as God made it has balm to heal this malady. But where shall we find it? Our captivity is aggravated by the virtual disappearance of the common lands. Streams, lakes and woods are no longer accessible. The landlords have annexed them to their broad acres and fenced them round with barbed wire and many assurances that trespassers will be prosecuted. Only a few tracts of barren moor and upland are left free; and even these have now been in great part requisitioned by the War Office, so that the refugee from civilisation can only trespass there under peril of being—not prosecuted, but blown to bits. Rupert Brooke in his sweltering Berlin café sighed for

> "Meads towards Haslingfield and Coton
> Where *das Betreten's* not *verboten.*"

He would be hard put to it to find them now. I recall a highroad running through the heart of Wild Wales. Not a human habitation to be seen; yet the country on both sides of the road was inexorably wired off for mile after mile and the weary traveller allowed no deviation from his macadamized ribbon. He would have been better off in Piccadilly, where at least he could have turned aside into the Green Park. England's "green and pleasant land" is still largely intact, but few of her children can enjoy it, even if they still want to. Whether the age of socialism will compensate its inroads on personal freedom with some mitigation of the abuses of landed property, remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, one refuge at least remains. Our mountains still raise their calm heads above the world's insanity, and