

beds and the primitive conditions compared with the almost hotel-like facilities provided today.

In those days everyone was away at the war, the crags were deserted and if you wanted to learn how to climb, you took yourself off with a guide book and rope and hoped for the best. Yes, those first entries in the log book : Scout, Route I, dry, rubbers, followed by the beginner's usual florid style. I think most of us will remember Scout for it is our Club's "nursery" and on its rocks most of the club members gained their first experience of climbing.

Then Pavey Ark : Great Gully, Little Gully and that grim struggle in hobnails, Gwynnes Chimney — all have been scarred by the nails of the Club.

Then, after the war, the flood released by Brother Joseph and the increased numbers. Soon all the crags in Lakeland saw our members struggling up their faces, and even the formidable Gimmer resounded to their shouts of "Belay." The wave of exploration spread rapidly across the faces of Scafell, Gable, Pillar and Dow.

But Langdale is the home of the Club and here most of our climbing has been done and it would be an idea to traverse for a short while the crags of Langdale.

We can start as we did at first in the "nursery" Scout Crag. Route I is the best example and the "nose" can still provide a thrill, especially if it is raining Lakeland fashion. Scout revives pleasant memories for us all.

The bolder spirits can go up White Ghyll and sport themselves on the harder routes. Nowadays there is quite a selection of climbs here ranging from route I on the Slabs for ordinary mortals, and for those aspiring to harp and wings, the tiger specials like Slip Knot or the Gordian Knot or White Ghyll Wall may assist them to Heavenly bliss.

The more timid of us will settle for a trip to Pavey Ark, where, under the right conditions, an ascent of Great Gully is like jousting with a waterfall, and an attempted ascent of Rake End Chimney is like sitting under a tap. How many of our members have got soaked to the skin here I don't know, but rumour

hath it that Blackpool are holding the record for the greatest number of soakings. The struggle with Gwynne's is exhausting and exasperating, but does that put them off? Oh no! for you soon see their names added to the list of the devotees of Gimmer.

Gimmer is the main attraction and going through the log is like reading the runners for the Grand National. Top favourites seem to be Ash Tree Slabs and Main Wall, and its a wonder there are any holds left on Oliversons Variation and Lyons Crawl. I suggest that the West Face be know as Clapham Junction, after the numbers of Claphamites that have streamed up and down it at speeds greater than the trains in that junction. But a record must be made of the gentleman from the Midlands who (being a member of the nationalised Railways perhaps) set up a "go-slow" policy on "B" Route and spent three and a half hours or thereabouts on its ascent.

But quite a lot is learnt about the climbs from the amusing conversations which take place at night in the hut or "Black's." The rather squeaky voice of Ronnie Smith describing the last pitch of Asterisk as a scamper from hold to hold, or George Partridge's comment on a V.S. as "Fierce" or "You go across at a hell of a lick before your feet come off the holds." One also remembers the loud laughter as one member informed another that the excellent hold provided by a jammed stone in the crack of the Morning Coffee pitch on Middlefell was no longer there as he had personally removed it — by accident of course!

We who are members of the Acchille Ratti will remember gratefully Langdale and its Hut to which we returned tired after a grand day's climbing on the crags around it. Here we meet all those with whom we share our experiences and the excitements and the companionship which comes between those who have been roped together aloft on the crags.

I personally remember Langdale for its face climbing, for there are not many gullies or chimneys in Langdale.

Some of the best routes deserve a mention. Bowfell Buttress is a grand climb for those who do not aspire to the sensational. For those who like sensationalism with comfort "C" Route

on the West Face of Gimmer will provide just the thing. For the rubber expert, "Asterisk," "E" the Crack and "Hiatus" will give quite a variety, and if tired of life, the recent additions like "F" Route and "Kipling Groove" may cure your boredom.

But remember, the crack facing the road on the "Three Bears" practice boulders below Scout still defeats even the experts.

"Langdale Marmot."

THE SECOND MAN.

THE principal duties of the second man consist of paying out the rope to the leader and fielding him on the rope should he fall. The first of these duties is reasonably straightforward and scarcely requires further comment but the ability of the second man to deal with a leader diving through space is a matter of the greatest importance, maybe a matter of life and death. It will possibly be the leaders' first aeronautic demonstration (outside of an aeroplane), and whether it is to be his last or not is decided by a person who, without any understatement, is lacking in the constant practice of dealing with the situation that leads to perfection. In fact it may possibly be the second's man first encounter with such aerial cavortings.

Theoretically he holds the leader by absorbing through his body a shock load of anything up to one and a half tons, after that the rope is supposed to break and presumably the leader performs the rest of his act solo. The second man is left on his stance firmly belayed and safe — again, theoretically. But is this what happens to the second man in actual fact? Suppose that the leader has ricocheted *en passant* from his companion and knocked him from his stance! The weight of two men is now on the rope and the hope of the rope's holding is very small, and whether it breaks at the belay or at the second's waist will spell the same result. Both will fall. Even if the leader avoids a direct bombardment of his companion, is it not all too probable that the shock load of the leader will in any case pull the second from his stance, again causing the weight of both men to come on the belay? Or thirdly, suppose the second man, with a prompt dexterity acts according to the text and manages to hold the leader; is sufficient allowance made for the condition of the second man, who, unnerved, with useless hands and maybe damaged shoulder is now expected to take over operations at a most crucial moment?

By this time some readers may have started muttering to themselves, denouncing the scribe with a huffy "Pshaw! Pessimistic old so and so! . . ." Maybe you're right, gracious

readers, maybe you're right. I hope you are. I admit that it is often a difficult thing to maintain realism in relation to rock climbing. We have but to read the paragons of brevity in the log books or listen to the affected callousness, simulated facetiousness, hyperbole and meiosis of climbers' accounts. The line between fact and fiction becomes very faint and what is reasonably safe becomes jumbled with what is downright dangerous. Realism in rock climbing is found not in the spoken or written word; it is something that is seen and felt on the actual rock face and it is in relation to your secret apprehensions on a difficult crag — apprehensions that are rarely divulged in their entirety after the climb — that you must judge of any undue or exaggerated pessimism in the opening paragraphs.

You can easily prove or disprove what has been said by experimenting with a 140lb. bag of sand dropping 20 feet from your bedroom window while you are belayed and standing outside on the window-sill which should be considered quite a good stance. If you wish (and can) get a friend (or enemy) to take the place of the bag of sand and realism is considerably increased. You will find that the weight of that load is something more than one of life's little ironies, even on a 20 foot drop. 32 feet per sec. suddenly begins to mean something and practical usefulness of the second man is seriously brought into question.

When we received our first instruction in rock climbing technique ". . . leader falls . . . second man holds him on the rope . . . comes to his help if necessary . . ." we probably understood the words but almost certainly failed to appreciate their significance, mainly because we knew that the leader would not come off and so the necessity of holding him would not arise. Had we not been told ". . . the leader must not fall . . ." As more and more people are taking to the sport of rock climbing (and it must be admitted that many of them are merely getting up rather than climbing up), as more and more variations are added to climbs already of a severe and very severe standard, the safety of the leader and the usefulness of

the second man becomes more urgent and important. Psychological support and hopeful theories are valueless when a slip has actually occurred.

The Tarbuck method of rope management does much to obviate at least some of the risks likely to be met by the leader and the second man. The method of belaying prevents to a large extent the possibility of the weight of both leader and second man being pulled onto the rope. The karabiner and Tarbuck knot attachment makes it possible for the climbers to release themselves quickly from the rope in case they need to come to each other's aid. The rope is paid out round the bottom of the back instead of over the shoulder. Whether this ensures a more powerful hold for the second man or not, I cannot say from experience, but, in the event of a leader's fall, it would seem that the second man's body will not be subjected to the same severity of shock as would ensue if he were using a shoulder belay with the rope tied round his waist, as this causes a downward pull from the front and an upward pull from the side. The latest Tarbuck development, however, is by far the most important. This is a shock absorbing karabiner narrowing into two fins at one end. In the event of a leader's falling, the rope runs into the space between the two fins and gradually becomes jammed after a run of 10 to 15 feet. It thus absorbs the shock of the falling leader and will certainly shorten the total fall when in the hands of a quick-minded second man. This karabiner was tried out recently in North Wales and proved to be thoroughly reliable. It is of course particularly useful for traverse. It may well be one of the most important discoveries in rock climbing equipment. It is not an aid to climbing (I am thinking now of the purist) it is simply a safety device.

Not everybody will agree with the Tarbuck system of rope management and, unfortunately, not everybody will be able to afford the nylon required, but it is a system that aims at greater safety and for that reason alone it merits further research and discussion by cragsmen everywhere.

Brother Joseph, C.F.X.

AUTUMN LEAVES.

THE great blades of the air-screw hummed rhythmically above me. I checked the altimeter at 82 miles 4,000 feet. Far below the mountains rippled over the North West corner of the land, and the grey sheet of the sea swept away in an arc to infinity. So high in the air, how silly to think of PUNCH! Yet those ranges below looked like the letter H on the title-page of that journal; curved back to back, two of them formed the uprights, and where they came nearest together there was the cross-piece. And like little pools of pale blue ink were the Lakes . . . Bartholomew's 1" map of the Lake District hung on the wall *does* give the observer, standing ten feet away (have I got my calculations correct!), the impression that he is 80 or so miles up in the air in a gyroplane or whatever-its-name-is that looks like a mosquito, and is as obnoxious. But coming nearer to earth, and the map, is there not that faint outline of a rustic letter H? Start at the upper end on the left-hand side with Steeple, and curve round Pillar to Kirk Fell and Great Gable, follow the line through Great End, Bowfell and Crinkle Crag, jump the Dudden and come to Swirl How, Brim Fell and Old Man of Conistone. Then switch over to the upper end on the right-hand side at Great Dodd, and take giant strides to Helvellyn, Fairfield, Middle Dodd and High Street (not as far as Kensington!) Then, coming back to the middle of the formation, see the connecting link of high land, with High White Stones as a sort of pivot.

These flights of imagination help to fill in the time during the off-seasons, when we wonder how much more of that mountainous letter H we shall get to know next time.

"A surrounding stone wall kept the inquisitive villagers at a respectful distance; and in the absence of the usual afternoon wind, we could lie about on the grass, basking in the rays of the declining sun, watching Angharkay cooking our supper, or soldering leaking drums." Substituting "sheep" for "villagers" and a name beginning with "C" for "Angharkay" those who were fortunate enough to be there on the cloudless

days will recognise in this quotation from "Mount Everest 1938" by W. H. Tilman a near description of our delightful mountain bivouac above Goat's Water last August. Not everyone enjoyed the same ideal conditions at this stage of the three-point march over the hills, least of all the leaders who battled with the elements to establish the camp, but most will remember it as a real introduction of how to live in the mountains. One cannot think of "leaders" without the co-relative term, and reality: "coursees"; and reading a few lines further on in "Mount Everest 1938" it struck me that the "coursees," many of whom who could not have pleaded the case of age or infirmity, should be grateful that the disciplinary measures of "C" were not those of Antharkay!

Looking again at Bartholomew's map I have noticed that the three stages of our route on the course were situated in three different counties: Langdale in Westmorland, Buckbarrow in Cumberland, and Goat's Water in Lancashire. Why do we only associate smoky chimneys with Lancashire? The lads from that county have got one up on the Southerners in being able to claim a fair share of England's mountains and lakes as theirs. To while away the weary hour, next time Rosset Ghyll has to be climbed, remember that you are slowly climbing out of Westmorland and at the top you will be in Cumberland - which has the tradition for teas of a handsome proportion, if you find the landlady at home. You must, of course, go over Esk Hause first and then drop two to three thousand feet before coming to the land of plenty, but when you have reached Sty Head there is a short, but steep, cut down sharp to the left, if you are good at negotiating loose boulders, more liberally strewn along this route. By this time, if you have so far been indifferent to the pangs of hunger and the pinches of the leather or even grimly pessimistic, you may take on the more jaunty air of the optimist, but when the last of the farm-house doors has been found to be closed, the bar not yet open, and every car thumbed passed on heedlessly, you will forget all "isms," remember the warning of the parents Ibis, and get there just the same.

Anybody who has spent three days at Buckbarrow must surely count amongst his memories the sight of Wasdale gloomily brooding under its low blanket of cloud. Even during the finest spells of weather it seems to find its way up the valley at least twice a week. One might almost say that it is normal for Wasdale to have a ceiling, and that the glimpse of distant peaks is a concession too lovely to be repeated often and become commonplace. Nevertheless, our first impulse each morning at Buckbarrow is to peer out of the window, if we have been fortunate enough to secure a bed nearby, or round the corner of the hut to see if all is clear. To pass on the message that Scawfell is visible is the beginning of a long process that may eventually drag the lustier rock-climbers from the land in their affections which only the uninitiated will fail to associate with beetling crags. When Wasdale is normal the appeal must be to another instinct. If one has that instinct it can be well satisfied by a scramble along the foot of the Screes. There is the opportunity of getting gloriously wet in surroundings which are in sympathy with an otherwise miserable condition. And even for the rock-climber, especially the budding rock-climber such an expedition is not time wasted. As one of the second category I try to do the whole length of the Screes without using my hands as an aid to balance. Along many of the rough passages it is quite difficult to do this, and I have not yet succeeded in keeping my "hands-off" all the way. Apart from this practical value attached to such an expedition, there is that indefinable and strangely joyous experience of being in the midst of desolation. I have felt that, even though one of a party. The human person becomes almost insignificant in that strange waste of water and misted rock. One day, my party dotted along the very confined track met, one by one, two other walkers coming from the opposite direction. I was at the rear of my party and I noted that as one or other stepped aside to allow a passage there was not a word spoken. Only I, when my turn came, said "Good Morning" (though it was probably well into the afternoon); but the greeting was merely a convention, and all that we had and felt in common at the time

could hardly have been expressed in so short, and apparently erroneous observation. Yet it was "good" in the sense that all the parts of that scene seemed to hang together harmoniously, where sometimes it reaches the sublime with white clouds playing round the summits of Scawfell and a wisp or two caressing Gable.

There is a code about all sports, and it acts as a restraint over and above written rules. In mountaineering I wonder where one should draw the line in accepting, or seeking, mechanical means of conveyance. Is it sufficient to have the good intention of going every yard of the journey on foot even though at the end one has to make the confession of Mr. Hilaire Belloc in his glorious Song of the Road on reaching Rome? To an enquirer, therefore, some indulgence might be given if he confesses that one particular journey on a Mountaineering Course he planned to include a ride in a train. From Buckbarrow to Goat's Water is a route that takes the walker over outlying spurs of the main mountain formation of the Lake District, with fascinating views on a clear day up to the valley heads. A study of the map beforehand will reveal that up the second of these valleys the adjunct of a railway noses its way. When the bitter experience of those who have gone before has proved that the journey is difficult to make comfortably in the day, and when one learns that the train which leaves Irton Road Station conveniently early in the afternoon to arrive at Dalegarth Station half an hour later is of a model type not frequently seen in England, the temptation to travel by it is very considerable. It runs on a miniature track and is drawn by an engine that would thrill the heart of every lover of models. Its carriages are open and seat four persons, two and two facing. As curious as the train itself is the custom that goes with it of collecting tickets at a point along the track mid-way between the last stopping place and the terminus. Here, in a bowery tunnel of leaves, the train stops while the guard makes his way along the line to see that every passenger has his bill of entitlement to travel on such a distinguished train. Fine weather adds enchantment to the experience, and

at this stopping place all the children alight to gather bows from the shrubbery, with a great deal of whistling and hissing of steam from the engine when it is time to move on. Just South of the station where one boards the train, and hardly more than a mile North of the terminus, there are inns where one can eat, respectively, the sandwiches prepared earlier in the morning by the Maitre d'Hotel at Buckbarrow in a very pleasant bar parlour, and all that goes with tea in a pleasant hospice of a land of relative prodigality. This can only be an interlude in an otherwise grimmer programme for anyone taking part in a Mountaineering Course. Later in the day we did not so forget our high calling as to fall into the trap, unseen apparently by many visitors to the Lake District, of calling at a farm house for a glass of water. But two glasses of milk each at the foot of the rise helped us up the Walna Scar Road, and a bar of chocolate sustained us for the final groping through the water-logged approaches to Goat's Water. In the dip of the hills that enfold this loveliest of tarns a strong light was waiving, and along its beam we picked our way to the encampment where the frying-pan sizzled in expert hands.

The Hatter.

laybacks and an interesting traverse to the right where an enormous belay is provided by a broken Pinnacle which gives its name to the climb. The stance at this point is somewhat unusually exposed. The final pitch traversing upwards to the left completes the climb — a most spectacular one with extremely fine exposure all the way.

Another visit to Idwal Slabs accounted for Cinderella, Piton, Javelin Gully, Javelin Buttress and Balcony Cracks. We were obviously in good form and as we returned to Gwern-y-Gof that evening George began "wondering" about the possibilities of doing Munich on the following day. Now the Munich Climb has a reputation ; it is big stuff ; there is a doubtful belay at the foot of the second pitch which is the crux of the climb. His suggestion, therefore, was greeted with a marked lack of enthusiasm. George said something about "just wondering," but late that night he could be seen in that typical position of his, poring over the guide book by candle light, and we knew that the guide was open at Munich.

Next morning the rising sun gilded the east face of Tryfan with a delicate "heavenly alchemy" and we set off without delay. By noon we had climbed Gashed Crag which must surely be one of the most varied and lovely climbs in North Wales, somewhat reminiscent of Bowfell Buttress. On the way down South Gully we had to pass the foot of Munich. Of course we never did pass it for George was up the first pitch before we could do anything about it. It has already been said that the second pitch of Munich is the crux of the climb. The belay is poor ; the exposure considerable. After 15 feet a narrow ledge is reached and from here you have to climb a thin vertical crack or turn a right-angled corner and go out on to the main face overhanging the gully bed some 200 feet below. George chose the latter route. After edging round the corner he had to step down to a foothold thus losing precious inches of height. With left hand outstretched and fingers bending round the edge of the corner to afford a sideways pull, the left foot to find a purchase on the roughness of the sheer wall while the right foot feathers up on the rugosities of the rock

until the fingers of the right hand overlap a mantleshelf at arm's length above the head. The left hand quickly shoots up to the mantleshelf and a heave brings the body to safety.

The second man decided to climb the Crack. This was the original route of the Munich climbers but they had used pitons on this pitch. After the narrow ledge at 15 feet was reached various unsuccessful efforts were made until finally by placing the fingers in the crack and leaning out backwards into space, some height was gained by shuffling upwards with the feet. The right foot was then heaved quickly up and out on to the corner edge where George's left hand had been, the left foot was brought up slightly and the toes jammed sideways into the crack. The hands shot upwards on to the mantleshelf, the right foot was brought back from the edge and the toes rammed into the crack just above the left foot. A pull and you are up. Teufel's Traverse was the next pitch and here again the pioneers had used a piton. The Crack at the top of the Traverse was wet which did nothing to make things easier for the leader who was in rubbers. The last two pitches were nearer the usual standard of climbing. The whole affair had been somewhat exhausting and we made our way slowly back to the hut where we devoted the next few hours to luxurious, unbridled tea-drinking and cigarette smoking.

Up the first Pinnacle Rib on the east face of Tryfan, over the summit and down to Llyn Bochlywyd for a swim and a sunbathe formed as delightful a day as any we spent in North Wales. On our way back home we reconnoitered Bochlywyd Buttress and within the next few days we had climbed Arete and Slab, Chimney Route and Marble Slab on that crag. Also on the neighbouring crag, the Gribin, we did the notorious Monolith Crack, Home Climb, Zigzag, Senior's Route and Slab Climb both Intermediate and Recess.

Most of our time was now taken up with the Mountaineering Association Courses but on off days we managed to do the Devil's Staircase on Clogwyn-y-Geifr (Devil's Kitchen) and Hanging Garden Gully. C. E. Montague's amusing article on this climb is well worth reading. Tennis Shoe on Idwal Slabs

(probably one of the most delightful slab climbs in Wales) was done in boots in the pouring rain, as also was Heather Weakness where one of the party was made to realise the folly of trying to climb while wearing a gas cape and carrying a spare rope round his shoulders. Some of us learn and live.

One day while climbing the North Buttress on Tryfan George gave more than a passing glance at Central Route on Terrace Wall. This route provides a direct entry into the Grove of Bollards. It is harder than the normal Belle Vue Bastion Edge and although only 80 feet in length it contains considerable difficulties in its middle 30 feet. Even at the foot of the climb a small overhang bars progress and must be tackled boldly. 20 feet higher came the crux — a large overhang split by a crack forming a corner and breaking the overhang on its right side. George made his way thus far but now found that a most strenuous and exposed move was necessary. With an undercut hold for the left hand and a side hold in the crack for the right hand, he balanced for some time before making a step upwards to the right and reaching for a good hold for the left hand which enabled him to swing into the crack above the bulge. The Slabs on the right provided one more delicate step completing what is probably the stiffest climb on Tryfan. Belle Vue Bastion, Terrace Wall Variant, Grooved Arete (Superdirect), Scars Climb and Long Chimney finished the best of the climbs on Tryfan.

Roof Route and Terminal Arete on the East Buttress of Lliwedd were the only climbs done on Snowdon, but George evidently dissatisfied with such a poor show, returned after the holidays and achieved his heart's desire by climbing Longlands on Clogwyn-du'r-Arddu an account of which will be found elsewhere.

Fell walking was not neglected. Merely to reach some of the climbs often necessitated many miles over the Fells. Pleasant memories are retained of a certain fell-walk, qua fell walk, over Pen-yr-Oleu-Wen (where whinberries were found as large as bulls eyes!) along the west of Ffynnon Lloer, over Carnedd Ddafydd and back to Gwern-y-Gof for a late lunch.

An excursion of more epic proportions took us over Tryfan, Glyder Fach, Glyder Fawr, Pen-y-Pass, Snowdon Summit (which we left at midnight), Bwlch Main, Bwlch cwm-y-Illan, Llyn Gwynant, Pen-y-Gwrhyd, up again over Glyder Fach, down Cwm Tryfan and back to Gwern-y-Gof. We had set out at 1 o'clock in the afternoon and returned at 7 o'clock the next morning!

NORTH WALL.

In a part of the Lake District little visited by rock-climbers we found our climb. We had been in that part before, many times in fact, but never had we contemplated North Wall as a climb or even thought it was climbable. However, we had gone at last with the sole object of scaling those vertical slabs, slabs which rose quite straight and high, and we were prepared to stay there a week if so long was necessary to finish the job.

None of the very comprehensive climbers' guide books mentioned that North Wall had been climbed before, and so we were fairly confident that what we were going to climb was nothing less than a new climb. We were pioneers. Of course, this meant that details of the climb could only be gained from personal experience, by trial and (an unfortunate word) error. Errors, however, we meant to avoid as none of us liked the idea of stepping off the wall's vertical face and touching nothing until terra firma at the wall's foot brought us up like — who know's what?

Whilst many preparations for the great attack were in train we spent out time in pleasurable amusements. We would go down to the farm for eggs and milk for a meal, or perhaps go right away to Ambleside or Grasmere, or again perhaps spend the evening in a fairly convenient hostelry so forgetting about the North Wall and the perils and labours that were to come. We were brought down to earth suddenly, however, when, on returning from a visit to Ambleside we found all the paraphernalia and impedimenta which we had ordered for our climb ready waiting to be used. Our easy time was over. On the morrow would start hard work, serious hard work.

Dennis was by far the most suited of us to direct an attempt of this kind, and so, without any dissentient voice, he was appointed leader. Dennis it was who would know where best to start the attack, what equipment would be necessary and everything that could ease the strain of the difficult task ahead and enable us to do what we had set out to do. We put our trust

in Dennis.

Accordingly under Dennis' supervision we assembled our equipment at the foot of the wall. Here he checked that we had everything that would be required, and then, when satisfied with our preparations, he commenced to climb the North Wall rung by rung until he was right at the top of the ladder. Then swiftly and expertly whipping a full mortar-board from off his shoulder he commenced to hurl mortar into the first of the many and deep gaps in the north wall. We continued this work for almost a week when the north wall of our Dunmail Raise Hut had completely abandoned its original dry-wall character and looked like it does to-day, well-filled with mortar and almost wind-proof.

So did we conquer North Wall.

L. J. Greveson.

IN THE STEPS OF ST. THEODULE.

ONE hundred years ago, many and various were the obstacles and dangers which were accepted as part of the journey to Rome. Since the readers of this journal are mountaineers, or would be mountaineers, in pondering the problems which faced the pilgrim of olden times it is to the crossing of the Alps that we turn. In those days, just as to-day, it is probable that this would be achieved by crossing over one of those Passes with grand resounding names : the Great Saint Bernard, the Saint Gotthard and the Simplon ; all of which had, and still have, hostels high up to rest and shelter the traveller. To-day those who travel by train will probably take the Rome Express ; a train which until it arrives at Milan forms part of the Simplon-Orient Express and so bears a name which serves to remind the traveller of what should be the piece de resistance of his journey. It is at the little town of Martigny that this route reaches the foothills of the Alps. If the railway continued straight on after Martigny it would have to climb the Great Saint Bernard Pass. Instead of doing this it turns left to enter the Rhone Valley, and runs through this Valley as far as Brigue from where it suddenly takes a bee line right through the heart of nature's most formidable natural obstacle in Europe.

We are in the Swiss Canton of Valais at whose Capital and episcopal See, Sion, the train will stop for a short while. Sion is a very ancient See ; it's first Bishop was a Saint Theodule who flourished as far back as the fourth Century ; the first Bishop of the Diocese which includes the Alps in it's territory. Should you study the map to see more exactly what type of country lies in this Diocese you will find, located between the Great Saint Bernard and the Simplon Passes, another way over the mountains named the Theodule Pass. Surely a Pass so named will repay investigation. How came it to be so called ? Without doubt, it must be after the first Bishop of Sion. Is it used

to-day ? Is it difficult ? Saint Theodule must have used it, and if a Bishop could cross the Alps that way, albeit a thousand years ago, surely we can do the same.

So it was with curiosity I sought to find the Theodule Pass ; a fascinating task I have yet to complete for I have still not succeeded in crossing the Alps by the route that Saint Theodule used to take. Not that it is at all difficult. The obstacles that I encountered did not exist in Saint Theodule's day. Indeed it is little more than a magnificent glacier and mountain walk which in the Summer any really strong walker could accomplish in a day. It is it's comparative remoteness and little known story that give it a fascination and charm all of it's own. If the Great Saint Bernard can boast of Hanniball and his legions and the Simplon of Napoleon and his army, then the Theodule has it's own tale to tell as well. Let us then follow Saint Theodule on his own way over the Alps.

A few miles beyond Sion the map marks a village named Visp where a long deep valley leads into the very heart of the Alps, to the now well known village of Zermatt lying at the foot of the Matterhorn. Many think that this valley is a cul-de-sac ; that unless one intends to climb a mountain peak the only way out is to return to Visp and the Rhone Valley. But this is not so ; the map shows also a track leading from Zermatt and winding round the foot of the Matterhorn, then climbing up a glacier, happily called the Theodule Glacier, to a height of 10,000 feet where it meets the Italian-Swiss frontier. From this point the path drops rapidly to the village of Breuil ; the first village in the Italian valley on the other side of the Alps.

A little research shows this route to be one of great antiquity. In the museum at Zermatt are to be seen Roman coins dating back to the year 200 B.C. which have been found at the top of the Pass. True, there is no record of any Englishman having used this Pass until the year 1800 when one George Cade crossed the Alps from Breuil to Zermatt. He tells how the people of Zermatt flocked to see the novel spectacle of an Englishman and a foreigner — to-day of course the whole

business of Zermatt is concerned with catering for the visitor from abroad. It is certain, however, that in mediaeval times the Pass was much used by merchants trading between Italy and the Valais. They would form themselves into small groups and travel together with their mules or horses, employing a local guide because of the uncertain nature of the glacier and the dangers from the weather. The opening up of new roads and the hostels on the other Passes in time rendered them more popular and the Theodule became but little used. The fact that it has not, in modern times fallen more or less into oblivion is largely due to its associations with Whymper who crossed over the Theodule on more than twenty occasions. One of these was the historic day just prior to his first ascent of the Matterhorn. Whymper tells us in his book 'Scrambles on the Alps' how he was staying at Breuil, planning to attempt the as yet unclimbed Matterhorn from the Italian side, when he discovered that an Italian party, including in it his own guides had set off without him, wishing Italy alone to have the honour of being the first to conquer the mountain. Angry at being so thwarted Whymper hurried over the Theodule Pass in order to try the conquest of the Matterhorn from Zermatt. The next day he began the climb which was to end in a victory as disastrous as it is famous. The story is well known of how, of the three Swiss guides and four Englishmen who succeeded in reaching the summit, only Whymper and two guides survived the descent. It is interesting to note that of those killed one was Lord Alfred Douglas whose brother became a priest — Father Archibald Douglas who was well known in the North being Parish Priest at Annan and then at New Abbey near Dumfries until his death a few years ago.

There is another association which must certainly be mentioned in this journal and that is the fact that it is extremely probable that Pope Pius XI used this Pass; the mountains in this area were, perhaps, his favourite climbing ground. He certainly stayed at both Zermatt and Breuil as well as in most of the climbers huts in the district. But, to judge from that

delightful collection of Essays on Climbing entitled 'Climbs on Alpine Peaks' by Abate Achille Ratti (the English translation of which is published by Ernest Benn), His Holiness preferred to go over the top of the mountains rather than round by the Passes, unless he was discovering new routes over the Alps as yet uncharted.

But it is Saint Theodule and his associations with the mountains that we are searching. The story of this is to be found in the legends and Alpine Folk-lore handed down by the people who live in the Valleys on both sides of the Pass. They were simple peasants living close to nature and perhaps this was why they had such a keen appreciation and understanding of the powers of the Devil and his assistants. They were convinced that high up and among the rocks and peaks and glaciers you were in Satan's territory; that it was inhabited by evil spirits and that the summit of the Matterhorn itself was the home of a particularly evil spirit if not of the Devil himself. Were not stones, even great boulders, thrown from the mountain at travellers on the Theodule Pass? Indeed to this very day falls of rock and ice and stone may frighten those who disturb the peace of this world of glacier and mountain. Is not such an incident described in the last issue of this journal in Ronnie Smith's description of climbing round Zermatt? But this contact of his, however alarming, with the evil genius of these mountains was merely indirect. St. Theodule himself had close personal contact with the Devil who haunts these hills. Not that it is surprising to find that the Devil wished to ensnare the first Bishop of this district; nor is it surprising to find that, since the Bishop was a very holy man, he had the better of the Devil in each encounter. The Devil's pride is such that he so often makes his corporeal visitations to very holy people and never learns that he has always the worse of these encounters. And he certainly did have the worst of it in these adventures which befell Saint Theodule on the Theodule Pass. The Devil should have known better than to draw swords with a man whose piety and miracles had made him famous in the Valley of the Rhone and specially in the Valley of the Visp.

Saint Theodule's reputation is great even on the Italian side. You can be told still, at Breuil, how, one day, when the Holy Man was on his way over the Pass to the Valais he called at a cottage and found that trouble had come upon the home ; a child had been bitten by a terrible serpent. The Bishop prayed and forthwith the child recovered. When he left the Cottage the Bishop, raising his hand, blessed the soil and commanded that all serpents and other reptiles should flee over the river. Immediately a great hissing was heard and serpents and toads and other unpleasant beasts were seen hurrying away.

With such events occurring it would of course, have been a great prize for the Devil if he could win Theodule over ; so great indeed that the Devil could not resist making an appearance in order to test Theodule himself. And so it happened one day that when the Bishop was climbing up the Pass, Satan appeared and offered to walk part of the way with him. Theodule agreed, and as they walked the Devil boasted that he was more powerful than a Bishop. Wishing to put the Devil to the test Theodule pointed out a great cauldron such as is used by the shepherds for cheese making, and promised that he would admit the Devil's power if he succeeded in carrying it on his shoulder up the glacier. The Devil then shouldered the cauldron and toiled up the glacier. As the climb became steeper near the top he slipped and rolled with his cauldron all the way down to the valley below.

Lest anyone doubts the authenticity of this story, or suggests, as the frivolous do in these valleys, that the good Bishop tripped the Devil up, I would point out that in the church at Crepin there is, or used to be, an old painting showing the Devil falling down the glacier, with the Bishop rubbing his hands with delight. To clinch matters, on the other side of the Pass, in the little chapel at Breuil dedicated to Our Lady of the Snows, there is a mural painting of the Bishop walking up the Pass with the Devil at his side. And this picture, I can testify, may be seen to this day.

Saint Theodule is even reported to have made use of the Devil on one occasion for what would to-day be described as an airlift. It appears that the Pope had given a great bell as a gift to the Cathedral to be built at Sion. The problem of transporting this bell over the Alps was not an easy one to solve. While Theodule pondered the matter, the Devil made one of his appearances, this time with an interesting proposition. It was to the effect that if the Devil transported the bell and Saint Theodule over the Alps to Sion in a single night then the soul of the Saint should be his. Theodule stipulated that the party must arrive at Sion before cock-crow, and to this the Devil with his stupid pride consented. And so the party took off ; the Devil, carrying the heavy bell with Theodule clinging to it, flew through the gap between the Matterhorn and the Breithorn, over Zermatt down the Valleys of the Visp and the Rhone to circle Sion well before dawn. Before the landing however, St. Theodule cried out in a loud voice : "Coq, chante ! Que tu chantes ! Oh, que jamais plus tu ne chantes !"

Immediately the roosters of Sion awoke and, despite the early hour burst into song before the airborne party had touched down. Thus, once more, Theodule's power over the Devil was shown. This even tis also, I understand, commemorated by a painting in a local village church, but I have been unable to trace it's whereabouts.

Well and suitably named then is this Pass, and surely worthy of the attentions of those who would prefer to avoid the beaten track and see for themselves the splendours and fascination of the Alps. No other place can surpass the Alpine and glacial magnificence of this the country of Saint Theodule and Achille Ratti.

It was shortly before the war that I made my first attempt to cross the Theodule Pass ; an attempt made on ski for the date was early January. Enquiry at Zermatt showed that there was nothing unusual in an excursion or pilgrimage over the Theodule Pass in winter. So, full of hope, my friend and I, set off with our guide on the six hour climb to the top of the Pass.

For the most part this was slow, steady work, climbing gently with skins, although occasionally the nature of the ground made it necessary to carry ski. Thus we went up, climbing sometimes gently sometimes steeply, amid the most magnificent mountain scenery with the Matterhorn itself drawing nearer and nearer. For good measure, when we reached the Theodule Glacier, the guide roped his party together. He must, after all, give his English clients full value and the glacier does indeed hide crevasses, though the guides know full well where they are. Fortunately he did not attempt to prove the advisability of the rope by taking us over a crevasse. As the afternoon drew on and the height increased to 8,000 feet, then 9,000 feet, the cold grew more intense and the wind far stronger until, by the time we reached the gap between the Breithorn and the Matterhorn, it had reached gale force. Here is situated the Italian frontier hut, and it was only with difficulty that we could stand upright and succeed in entering the hut; walking in wearing ski for to have taken them off outside would have entailed the risk of having them swept away by the wind; and the cold was such that anyway gloves could not be removed.

Now disappointment, even defeat, faced us. The Italian frontier guard who kept a lonely vigil in the hut stated politely but firmly that the frontier was closed. No matter what we had been informed down at Zermatt; no matter if passports and visas were in order; the Theodule route into Italy was not to be used that winter. At least not by bona fide tourists and pilgrims. Only by smugglers who went over at their own risk when he was not looking. He realised that it was now too late to return to Zermatt that evening and that Breuil was only one hour on ski away. But not even if we promised to return next day could we descend to Breuil. The only thing we could do was to spend the night in the hut. And so was passed the coldest night I have ever spent. In summer Whymper once spent a night in this hut and remarks of it in his diary: "It was hideously cold and damp. Slept in flannel shirt and sweater, and had hot water bottle, but it was far colder than

if we had been in a tent." And this was January and we had no hot water bottle. Sleep was well nigh impossible and food limited. We awaited dawn shivering under many blankets thinking of Breuil with its hotels and food only one hour away. The next day brought some consolation, for it dawned bright and sunny; we were thus able not only to make, but also to enjoy, the ascent of the Breithorn which gave us a further 2,000 feet of downhill running before the magnificent descent to Zermatt which included some 2,000 feet of perfect glacier running in powder snow.

I decided that I would another time attempt the Theodule Way — but the war came and only recently did opportunity occur. Having occasion to travel from Rome to England I took advantage of this chance to try once more the Theodule Pass. The time being summer little difficulty, if any, should be encountered; it would be merely a magnificent glacier walk, a wonderful prospect after the heat of Rome in June. And so by trains and 'bus to Breuil; there to admire the Matterhorn looking strangely different from the Italian side.

In recent years the Italians have attempted to develop Breuil as a mountain resort and have actually built a cable railway to the top of the Theodule Pass. Why these contraptions should be given the name of railway I do not know, for such a railway is in fact a cage hanging from a cable which is supported by a series of pylons built into the mountainside. This teleferic — to give it its technical name — must be one of the strangest of its kind in the world. No less than three different lengths of cable are required, each length necessitating a change of train or car or cage, before the passenger arrives at the summit. This is without doubt a considerably less tiring means of ascent than climbing up on foot, but let it be added there is just a slight feeling of insecurity accompanying this swinging from a cage fixed to a cable high above the rocks and glaciers. There are some who, maybe, would be happier on the ground. And to those who would spurn the use of such a means

of following the steps of Saint Theodule let me remind them that the Saint actually flew over the Pass hanging onto a bell — so do not criticise those who use this new means of quickly gaining the heights.

A disturbing rumour had been circulating in Breuil. It was said that because of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Italy the Swiss had closed all frontiers except the main railway routes. This rumour coupled with the non-appearance of the Swiss guide meant that it was with some anxiety that we made the ascent. The first warning that things might not be easy was a new hut built near the terminus of the cable railway ; clearly a Swiss frontier hut or guard post and one which certainly had not existed before the war. Enquiry at this post left no doubt. The scene that had taken place in the Italian frontier hut a few years earlier was re-enacted. No one was permitted to enter Switzerland from Italy on foot. Firm and polite was the frontier guard as had been the Italian guard the previous time I had reached the summit of the Pass. He had his orders and had not authority to let us through.

We stayed a little time on the summit of the Pass there ; just able to see Zermatt 6,000 feet below. I picked out the route over the glacier that we would have followed and tried to pinpoint the exact place where, so old documents inform us, there used to stand a statue of Saint Theodule to bring confidence and security to travellers as they made their way over the glacier. The fact that this statue existed, though never really doubt, has recently found remarkable confirmation. Guido Rey in his classic book 'The Matterhorn' relates that he was ascending the Theodule Pass when his guide found, just off the route at the foot of the glacier, two small pieces of wood richly carved. One of these represented a clenched hand in the act of grasping some object and the other was shaped like a small carved staff. At first this find was thought to be of no particular interest ; then Guido Rey remembered the story of the statue. He fitted the staff into the hand and realised that it's ornaments were those which usually formed part of the

crook to be found in statues of Bishops in the 15th Century. He then saw that he had found the hand of the Saint clenching part of the crozier. A precious relic of the olden days of the Theodule Pass.

I still intend to walk over the Theodule Pass. The joy of anticipation is the greater because I have viewed, even trodden on, all the ground to be covered. Maybe some of the pilgrims to Rome this year will think of making this detour. If so they need not be anxious. I am assured that the Pass is really and truly open, and I know of at least one English party who have this year travelled over the Theodule Pass in preference to the journey through the Simplon tunnel.

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