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BORROWDALE



# JOURNAL OF THE ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB

No. 2.

1949.

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## EDITORIAL

**M**embers who received no copy of our 1947 issue need have no apprehension that they have been missing anything. It is the sorry truth that the projected issue never reached the press. As the road of ambition is strewn with the leaves of tottering journals and reviews, no doubt our apparent demise may have appeared to some as the outcome of too enterprising a scheme. It is true that a few timid members have been urging for financial reasons an indecently hasty requiem, but it is not they who have won the day. If a journal is worth printing at all, it is worth getting it up well—as well as our printers have done. The real reason for the gap of one year has been the excessive modesty of our members. The editor will soon loose the remnants of his hair, if he has to read any more letters of self-abasement in reply to requests for contributions. The more active our climbers are on the rocks, the more reticent they become on paper. There is no real excuse for this, and if the journal is to survive members must bestir themselves and let us have the benefit either of their reflections or their experiences.

As our membership list grows in leaps and bounds, it is obviously not possible for the editor who is unacquainted with a large number of the members, to send out invitations to contribute individually. Let it be understood that all articles for submission are welcome. This applies also to photographs which will reproduce well and have some climbing or topical interest. Communications should be sent to the address given below.

If we have to open with an excuse, we may conclude with a note of great satisfaction with what this issue has to record. The opening of Dunmail, the Cardinal's visit, the climbing course for foreign guests, the expansion of membership and the great improvement in the standard of climbing, are all heralds of a bright future for the Club.

Avondale, Kingussie,  
Inverness-shire.

## CLUB NOTES

**"P**ERSICOS odi, puer apparatus." Certainly, after the pomp and magnificence of the Blackpool Congress, the day at Langdale when the Cardinal visited our Hut, must have delighted His Eminence by its simple charm. The keen and sparkling air, the sun-drenched landscape, the towering Fells shot with autumn tints, these things were showered upon us by a lavish Providence and greatly contributed to the success of the day.

The Cardinal was staying with the Bishop of Lancaster and it had been arranged that we should call there from Blackpool to lead the way to the Hut at Langdale. On the previous night, Brother Joseph and Denis Martin, quite exhausted after the heavy programme at the Congress, set out by car for Langdale after the torchlight procession. Neither of them seem to have had a very clear idea of how they made the journey, and it would almost seem that at times the car must have had to make its own way along the winding roads. Brother Joseph recounts that he had just strength enough to gasp with astonishment at the transformation that the Hut had undergone, before he fell irrevocably asleep on one of the inviting beds.

To those who now enjoy the present standard of comfort in this Hut, it must be said that this raising of the standard is directly due to the Cardinal's visit. What struck one immediately upon entry was the neat array of two-tier beds, with spring mattresses and comfortable overlays. The wooden beds or engines of torture on which we had formerly precariously balanced our limbs, as though we had not had enough balancing them on the rocks by day, were now stacked in lengths of firewood to feed the furnaces. Opposite the door gleamed two white panels for hanging ropes and equipment, and on the left wall was a row of porcelain basins with running hot and cold water. As you went through the door leading from the dormitory a light, strategically placed, revealed a large frame filled with views and action photographs taken by Mr.



Donnelly. The kitchen is always dark owing to the small window, but it looked its best with a new coat of paint. The parlour was resplendant with a carpet and everything newly decorated. Father Atkinson's altar is a masterpiece that always elicits praise, and round the fireplace had been built a surround of rustic brick

Mr. Bulman, our honorary member and firm friend, greeted the Cardinal along with Mrs. Bulman and Mrs Black. In spite of its being an unofficial visit, Press photographers sprang from nowhere and groups were taken. The Cardinal and Bishop then inspected the Hut, and, I think, were surprised at the standard of comfort especially at there being electric light, hot water, and good cooking facilities with Calor gas. Brother Joseph had arranged refreshments . . . fruits, wine, coffee or tea and biscuits. The Cardinal was asked for his patronage which he gave most willingly, and indeed, we rather gained the impression that nothing would have delighted His Eminence more than a carefree few days on the hills and life in an Achille Ratti hut.

It was suggested since Scout Crag was so near at hand, somewhat after the style of the milestone buttress on Tryfan, that it should be climbed as a matter of interest for the party, many of whom were unfamiliar with rock-climbing technique. Brother Joseph and myself at once set out for the Crag and were roping up at the base by the time the cars had reached the rise on the road which affords a splendid grandstand view of the face of the crag. We certainly enjoyed the climb for it was just such a day as makes every moment sheer exhilaration, and we were able to see the flutter of their handkerchiefs quite plainly as we emerged from the final pitch to the summit. Unfortunately, this part of the proceedings which we should have preferred to remain strictly domestic, caught the imagination of the Press and so our modest difficult to the initiated, to the world at large became somewhat enhanced in severity. We were compensated, however, by the appearance of a leading article in the Scotsman by a writer who evidently

could not resist the unique flavour and *nuances* suggested by the event, and his article is a rich combination of appreciation both mountaineering and ecclesiastical. It is printed by permission on another page.

The spirit of the day was very much that of the buoyant spirit of a day out, vivid with colour that lives in the memory, but it had a deeper significance for us. His Eminence was quick to realise our aims and ideals and by his ready understanding and support gave great momentum to the Club. We are proud of our distinguished patronage as we are proud of the name of Achille Ratti which the Club bears, the Pope of Fides intrepida, and we hope that in the difficult days which lie ahead in the battle against materialism, the club will play its part through the arduous ways of the hills.

T. B. P.

\* \* \* \* \*

After the Cardinal's visit, the opening of our new Hut on Dunmail Raise has been the major event since our last issue. One moment we were happy in the thought that we had two Club Huts, and the next moment we were surprised into the knowledge that we had three. For most members it was just as simple as that! The worry, the negotiations, the financial problems had all been made into a personal affair between the President, the Secretary and a few zealous Committee members. All this took place in 1946.

The work was done under the Secretary's supervision and much of it by him personally. The labours over, Dunmail was ready for the Opening on Whit Monday 1948.

Club members came to the Lake District in full muster from all quarters. They had shivered overnight on their way from the uttermost parts of the South, but now they perspired and almost expired in the broiling railway carriages; others, exhausted by the heat, sank back in coaches and motor-cars en route from districts that mattered on the west coast: yet others battled fiercely with rucksacks cutting two inches into



their heaving shoulders as they struggled on foot across the blazing, shimmering mountain passes ; other again raised their eyes towards heaven in profane silence as their bicycle tyres burst in the heat.

But now all had assembled and were waiting near the front door for His Lordship the Bishop of Lancaster who was due at 3 p.m. Many of the Members present were meeting each other for the first time. Hitherto they had been only known to each other through the Hut log books or through exaggerated accounts expansively related by some third party round the Common Room fire after a huge evening meal, a time when exploits tend to lose some of their proportions. To-day, however, the humility of St. Francis of Assisi appeared to be more powerful than the Whitsun gift of tongues, for everybody seemed intent on minimising their prowess on fell and rock.

The Bishop arrived promptly and all the party were presented to him. Father Pearson then handed the key to the Bishop who opened the door, gave the blessing and conducted a tour of inspection in company with Bishop Halsall who attended almost incognito as an interested A.R.C.C. Member. Afterwards, addressing the members he said :—

"I have great pleasure in declaring this house open and dedicating it to Our Lady of the Snows. On a lovely day like this it may seem incongruous to speak of snow but these hills and valleys are not always so bright and cheerful, and I remind you that the feast of Our Lady of the Snows is in August. I rejoice to think that here we have a new Mass-centre from which the radiant virtue of the Mass will bring back the Faith to this countryside once hallowed by the steps of holy men who sang God's praise and who honoured His Mother. I pray to Our Lady to protect from both physical and spiritual danger all those who take shelter in this house, to be with you as you climb these Lakeland mountains and to stimulate your ambition to conquer ever higher peaks in that region of grace

where she appears in unique splendour as "*a mountain on top of the mountains.*" After the episcopal blessing the Hostel was opened for inspection by all and tea was served.

After tea the Annual general meeting took place, the proceedings of which were published in the Hon. Secretary's Annual Report. There was a record attendance of forty-one Members and although there was business for two years to be conducted, yet the Meeting was conducted with such dexterity that everything was conducted successfully in little over an hour.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the August of 1948, The A.R.C.C. entertained a party of French and Dutch climbers. A Complete mountaineering course was organised for them by A.R.C.C. members from Clapham College nobly helped by Messrs Bagnall and Abbott of Manchester, and Mr. Partridge of Liverpool. The Clapham College lads had spent three weeks in the Lakes at Easter to prepare for the course; they accommodated the visitors free of charge in their homes in London ; brought them to the Lakes ; handed over to the course all the food they had collected for the holidays, and put themselves entirely at the disposal of Brother Joseph throughout the Course. This is the kind of spirit we want.

There were about thirty on the Course and this number was divided into groups staying at the three huts. Every five days there was a change round and a general meeting, usually at Langdale, for a meal, discussion, sing-song etc. At one such meeting a six course-dinner was served to thirty-six hungry people at Langdale!

The French had gained their mountaineering experience chiefly on snow and ice. Most of them were very good on the Fells, as also were the Dutch. On two occasions they made the journey from Buckbarrow to Dunmail in one day, once in almost continuous rain. They had, however, no knowledge of rock-climbing technique and so had to be taught from the very beginning. They proved to be good pupils and by the end



of the Course one of them did a very fine lead on Needle Ridge. Most of them managed all the climbs in the programme including Middlefell Buttress, Scouts, Main Wall, B Route, Oliverson's Variation, Kern Knott's Chimney, the Needle and Needle Ridge. The course was a great success in every way and our visitors returned to the Continent much impressed by British mountains and with a respectful admiration of British mountaineering technique. They are determined to come again.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is no hard and fast rule by which the standard of rock climbing of a mountaineering club can be measured, chiefly because it is not a competitive sport (and let us hope never will be), but much can be learnt from a perusal of the Club's Log Books. Unfortunately log books do not tell the whole story ; in fact, the contrary obtains, for mountaineers have a habit of saying less as they do more and more. Eight hours of almost superhuman ordeal by a team of experts on Scafell would probably appear in the log-book as : 'C.B. Wet Boots,' whereas the description of the overhanging slabs and 'perpendicular Walls' of the Slab and Notch runs on for ever in the florid style of the novice. (This is rather a pity for the personal experience of others can be a useful supplement to the directions of the Guide in attacking an unknown climb). Although we have not yet reached the standard of deciding by a toss of the coin whether to tackle Central Buttress or Scout's for the day, we can nevertheless show enormous progress in the standard of climbing over the last two years. The laconic style of the seasoned climber is found frequently in the log books. 'Joas, Asterisk, Dipthong, E Route ; G. Partridge & J. Ramsay' just that for four V.Ss ! A team of three from Liverpool and Clapham mentions twelve climbs on Gimmer in one afternoon, mixing Ss and Vss with an abandon that might have made even Mummery's moustache twirl. Sepulchre, the Innominate, Kern Knott's Crack and Eagle's Nest Direct have all been led in one day by George Partridge who later led Pisch Direct on Scafell in pretty awful weather conditions.

Ronnie Smith from Bury who has recently been disporting himself in Switzerland still feels the attraction of Lakeland, and climbs with his inimitable artistry and perfection anything he is asked to lead, whether WestWall, MainWall or MorningWall. The firm of Harrison and Melling of Preston make regular revisions of the Gimmer alphabet with an occasional prowl on White Gill Slabs and Dow Crag. Members from Blackpool still persist in getting wet in the gulleys of Pavey Ark under the benevolent eye of the President, and H. E. Jupp of Birmingham who recently took a mountaineering course in France is regularly among the rocks. Poor Mr. Chapman of Newcastle always seems to arrive when the huts are deserted, but records the ascent of Keswick Brothers on Scafell, and some redoubtable climbs on Gable. New blood is coming from Northampton under the able care of Father Atkinson. P. Marjot from Chatham, whose previous climbing had been done entirely on Sussex sandstone, looked upon the use of 'jug-handles' in the Lakes as almost cheating. The seventeen pitches of Greater Gully at the end of Waswater were climbed by a team from Liverpool and Clapham, and two new climbs have been led by Club Members on Buckbarrow and one on White Gill Slabs. Both are reckoned to be severe. Members from Clapham College have stormed up climbs on Bowfell, Scafell, Pillar, Gimmer, Gable, and Pavey Ark in all sorts of weather conditions, gradually helping to fill the log-book with a litany of climbs of a good severe standard.

These random gleanings from the log-books do convey some idea of the standard of rock climbing achieved by the Club over the last two years, but what is equally important and revealing is the fact that we now have in the Club a large body of climbers who, although as yet unable to lead a V.S. are nevertheless extremely capable on V.D.s and mild Severes. These form the backbone of the Club. The majority of them still have some twenty-five to thirty-five years of climbing ahead of them and they can, and must, take their time before rushing on to harder climbs. Meanwhile we hope the Club will



continue to attract recruits from those with more modest pretensions. A genuine love of adventure in the hills is all that the club exacts from its members, for it is this which forms the foundation of the genuine mountaineer.

\* \* \* \* \*

The second Mass to be celebrated on the summit of Scafell was said by Fr. Bamber on August 5th., Feast of Our Lady of The Snows, 1948. A motor coach with the C.B.A. boys from Blackpool and several cars left Blackpool at midnight; a Ribble special called at Dunmail for the Laxton boys at 2 a.m. and picked up groups at Ambleside, and Chapel Stile. Brother Joseph had been spending the night under canvas between Esk Hause and the Pike. The parties that set out from Dungeon Gill Old Hotel at 3.30 a.m. were representative of many parts of the Country and different types of life. It was good to see so many from Ushaw and Upholland there.

It was still dark, aggravated by mist, as we made our way along the Mickleden, and the bright points of light from the electric torches could be seen like stars from those who were well up Rossett Gill as we approached the sheep-pen. Two or three of the Blackpool youngsters took the lead, and Brother Joseph's sleep was rudely shattered by their strident calls. They paid for their enthusiasm by having an hour to wait on the Summit of Scafell, not as one might have hoped in the cheering rays of the rising sun, but in the swirling cloud, low temperature and saturating mist.

There is always something inspiring about Mass on a mountain summit. Certainly, everyone there had made a tremendous effort, and though conditions were so cheerless, the warmth of devotion irradiated the scene. Most impressive was the number who had kept the fast for Holy Communion, young boys and men far advanced in years. A large percentage of those present were from Lancashire, descendents of a breed that for over a century had had to travel in the night to hear

Mass, suffer great discomfort, and be prepared to face death. Here, to, in better days was the evidence that the Mass is the centre of Catholic life.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the Dutch boys who was with us this year writes : "I am afraid there are too many impressions from a 14 day's stay in the English mountains, that it is impossible to choose one special object. However one impression that stays always was the meeting just before we went to bed at the local pub. Was it the effect of the casual glass of English beer or Aerated Limonade or the result of a nice day climbing, the excellent food or cold mountain water on the table? I really don't know. But the atmosphere was always extremely cordial, leading to the most international sing-songs and the general hilarity when the Rev. R. J. did try to beat the tune with his fingers on the bar table."

A welcome article from one of our French guests appears on another page.



## CHURCH ASCENDANT

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"THE SCOTSMAN."

MOUNTAINEERS of all creeds will salute the two Roman Catholic priests who scaled a vertical rock face in the Lake District on Monday in honour of Cardinal Griffin, who was present in person to watch them, along with the Roman Catholic Bishop of Lancaster. It must have been something of an ordeal for the Cardinal, who would have felt personally responsible if the priests, in an access of devotion to his person had fallen off. There is a touch of inspiration in the idea of climbing a rock pillar out of respect for a pillar of the Church. An example has been set which the Church of Scotland might well follow. The next General Assembly would provide a suitable occasion. It would be a simple matter for the delegates to adjourn, in solemn array, to Princes Street Gardens to watch two of the younger and more agile brethren shinning their way up the Castle Rock as a tribute to the new Moderator. Indeed, it might provide an even more devout spectacle if the new Moderator were himself to surmount the Castle Rock with his chaplains, if need be, in attendance. The moderatorial costume, if otherwise not very functional, is admirably adapted for the ascent of crags and pinnacles. There is something to be said for making such an ascent an annual item in the Assembly's agenda: if the Church were to scale the heights, in fact instead of in metaphor, the spiritual symbolism would not be lost upon the nation. It would mean, of course restricting the choice of Moderators, to divines who were supple of limb and sound of wind.

Mountaineering has always had a strong appeal to those in holy orders. All the great Alpine peaks, as well as the summits of our own bens, are familiar with the tread of reverend right reverend, and very reverend boots. It is rather remarkable that so many clergymen are content to make use of steps



NEAR THE HUT



when entering their pulpits. Some of them must yearn to rope themselves to their beadles and tackle their pulpits in the hard way. For all we know, they may satisfy their climbing instincts by making clandestine pitches of their steeples at night. It is natural that mountaineering should attract ministers of the Church. It is an elevated and uplifting kind of sport. Surprisingly enough, there has been little inter-denominational rivalry on the peaks. One would have thought that an annual competitive retreat to the Coolins would arouse interest among churchmen of various creeds. An ecclesiastical race to the top of Sgurr nan Gillean, with all Free Church incumbents as long handicap men, would be sure to raise interest on an œcumenical scale.



## ROSSETT GILL.

**M**OST hill lovers connect some feeling or association with all the hills they climb—the silence of Black Sail ; the dash down the scree-run of Great Gable ; the breeze that lingers on Gimmer Crag even on the sunniest days ; the masculinity of Scafell and Helvellyn ; the massiveness of Pillar ; the interminable trek up Skiddaw ; the familiarity and friendliness of the Langdale Pikes. The list is endless and differs considerably with different people, and with many hill lovers it is association that rarely finds verbal expression ; what Geoffrey Winthrop Young might have meant when he spoke of people having a 'feeling' for the mountains. You look for something that you would be surprised, often disappointed not to find.

You discover this feeling or association in so many various ways and experiences ; in the reflection of the moon on a tranquil tarn ; the smell of coming rain ; the almost intolerable pain in winter of blood returning to numbed fingers, or the torture of skin blistered by the summer sun ; the warmth of the first rays of sun after a night on the hills ; the brightness of the western sky after sunset ; even the very silence of the hills. In the same way you associate the view of Mill Gill with the Langdale Hut ; the perfect contemplation of Scafell on a clear morning with the Wasdale Hut. The Hut atmosphere of Langdale and Wasdale is something that is very different in both places and yet something that is very satisfying in each. The urn-cum-perforated saucepan shower bath manipulated from an upper stable window at Buckbarrow is a concomitant of the whole spirit and feeling and unspoiled nature of Wasdale, and contrasts with the modern H & C laid on at Langdale ; and yet both have their attraction.

It must have been some such *genius loci* that carried me with nimble step up the last few hundred feet of Rossett Gill and enabled me to look with new delight at all I saw around me. It was a comforting and satisfying sight, for I was seeing this

much maligned mountain with new vision. For years I had been accustomed to associate Rossett Gill with 'grind' only, and having often toiled up it, had no illusions about the view that awaited me. To find anyone who likes Rossett Gill is as rare as finding in a camping party a member with a passionate love of washing dishes. Hard things and worse have been said about it and the lack of reward offered to the grunting grumbler on his arrival at the top. It is time that we saw this from another angle. There is at least nothing to spoil the view. There is, for example, no railway station immortalising the name of Rossett Gill Halt (change here for Scafell) ; there is no autobahn, mountain railway, rack or funicular railway, skilift or similar feat of engineering such as spoils so many of the Alpine mountain ranges, where you can reach nearly 10,000 feet without climbing a single step. Here, on the contrary, he who would reach the 3,210 th. foot of Scafell from Rossett Gill must do so under his own steam, often enough a steam of perspiration ; but in that he treads the summit of Scafell as a result of his own efforts, he should be allowed the title of mountaineer for his persevering courage and fortitude. Nor is there any desecration of the silence of the hill . . . . that silence which is not a deathly paralysis or absence of sound, but instinct with life. There is always some sound there on the slope, whether it be the call of a bird, the tinkle of a stone on the scree, or the sigh of a breeze in the heather. And such faint sounds are more consciously registered on the ear than the din of a London bus passing a few feet away from the pavement. Then there is the grim satisfaction of something achieved, the kind of contentment with which the mountains can gild the most prosaic of efforts in retrospect. That toil and sweat up Rossett beside the headlong Gill is not without its compensations.

Ruskin said that the beauty of the mountains is best appreciated from below, but surely such appreciation is purely visual and too objective, and reveals only a minute part of such beauty. To feel the fulness of mountain beauty you must have lived among the hills and this will also give the right background



and local colour for those mental pictures of past exploits ; the long path of endurance ; the narrow escapes shared with others ; the thrill of first climbs ; a traverse ; a view from the tops ; the smell of a primus ; the magic of a meal. It is the total background of life among the hills that mellows all such pictures and feeling and converts them into hallowed memories. Viewed in this light even Rossett Gill has its moments !

*Brother Joseph, C.F.X.*

## MOUNTAIN GHOSTS

I had only been in the Wasdale Hut a few minutes when someone started talking about ghosts. I was sitting in the cosy little kitchen, after the walk over from Langdale, and was waiting for a meal which was a cooking on the Calor gas stove. "Yes" said one, "there is a ghost here." If he can bring me that supper quickly, thought I, at the moment I wouldn't mind if he were the genuine article, head tucked under his arm and all.

To pass the time I started to get reminiscent ; and thought back on past visits to the mountains and encounters uncanny experiences. I think I was really frightened twice.

The first time was not so long ago out in the East. Our Brigade was stationed near the foot of a mountain of no very great height, but of unusual shape. That is, it was so regular, that it looked as though giant hands had given it the finishing touches. It might almost have been a pyramid of Egypt ; it was covered with grass with here and there, smooth rocks showing through. It fascinated me, and I wanted very much to scramble up to the top. There was nothing about it to deter you from doing so (that is if you did not mind a long scramble under the merciless sun). But it happened to have a Buddhist shrine, about two thirds of the way up ; and one of the holy men of the East had his hermitage alongside.

The Army authorities had put the mountain out of bounds. It seems that one of the boys of the —Battalion had entered the shrine and stolen a jewel ; and feeling in the neighbourhood which was none too friendly at any time, was definitely hostile now. To save any sort of unpleasantness even if no knife in the back business, it was thought wise that we should keep away from the place.

However, on learning that we were moving out of the area in a few days, I decided one Sunday in August after my last Mass, to let Army regulations look after themselves for a while, and slipped off in the direction of the green pyramid.



There was a pretty little temple at the foot. No one was about there, and it was cool within. From this temple led an ancient flight of grey stone steps for two or three hundred feet in the direction of the shrine perched upon the side. At the shrine there were iron gates and a little bell which I rang. A small boy appeared with a big bunch of keys, and took me through the little court into the room where the statue of Buddha looked calmly into space. No trace on that placid face anyway of indignation about the stolen jewel ! From there I went to the hermitage and ascetic looking old man with long hair came to the barred entrance and we exchanged unintelligible polite mutterings. Nothing unusual so far. We bowed to one another and then I withdrew, and started on the scramble to the top of the peak. It was much more steep now ; the grass was slippery, and the patches of rock unpleasantly smooth for Army boots. It was getting late in the afternoon, but the sun was still dreadfully hot, and I arrived on the top with that feeling of sudden exhaustion which descends on you in the tropics. From the top I could see that the far side would not be practical for descending alone. The way back would be the way I had come. And it was then that this feeling of dread came over me. The sense of solitude was accentuated. I felt very much alone up there. I remembered more forcibly the good reasons for putting this place out of bounds. How did I know that there was only that small boy and a hermit in the place below me which I must pass to get down ? And this mountain itself seemed to grow more sinister, as the sun started to turn the evening yellow. Its exact and calculated proportions did not seem natural ; its silky green flanks looked treacherous ; and the shrines on its sides were manifestations of a pagan and perverted holiness. "The green eye of the little yellow god" business might have sounded funny in other surroundings ; but here ? If I did not return, I would only have myself to blame. And no one would think of looking for me up here. As I sat and fought with this rising panic "I noticed the grass moving beside me. I share our first parents' distrust of all snakes ; and this one was just sufficient to send me slipping and rolling

down that evil little mountain as quick as I could go. Back again at camp that night, with a mug of tea, and looking at the peak with its triangular shape silhouetted against the stars, I could be more philosophic, and laugh at myself for all these subjective fears. And after all that was in the East.

But here in Wasdale. What was this ghost ? Two of the climbers, for whom Gable seemed to have no terrors, was telling me that they had lit all the candles (the lamp was broken) and sat up late, because they would not go to bed with those steps walking round the house.

I drank a proffered cup of tea (the cook for the evening said the supper would soon be on the table, now) and thought of the other occasion, when I experienced that cold clutching at the heart that writers of sinister tales describes.

And this happened in the frozen North and not the romantic East. I had been staying with a young English friend named Gerald, on a farm. We were there for a ski-ing holiday, so that it was in the middle of winter. Below the farm was a large lake, and across the lake a mountain which dominated the scene. Gerald was not interested in this, as there were good slopes for running and jumping on our side. I wanted to get up it, so I mentioned to our hosts that I would go across there one day. I did not receive any encouragement. I was told I could not cross the lake ; it was not lucky to do so before the formal crossing had been made later in the month. Anyway the ice had not yet cracked, and it might not be safe. I had a look for myself, and as far as I could see, a squadron of tanks might have crossed that ice with impunity. So eventually they said they had arranged for one of the farm lads, called Olaf, to come with me. Olaf was a tough boy, one of the local communists, and he was pleased to get a day off for ski-ing. We skated the mile across the lake, carrying our skis on our shoulders. When we were in the centre there was a noise like thunder ; and a great crack spread across the lake, like a zig-zagging snake six foot in diameter. Whether it was a coincidence, or the



slight pressure of our weight which precipitated the break, I don't know. Olaf looked a little uneasy, though we were far enough away from the crack for safety. He regained his spirits on the other side ; and at a jump that was there gave me a sample of his skill. We made towards the mountain on our skis ; and at the foot ate our sandwiches. Then we started to climb on our skis with the skins on. By the time we were near the summit it was late in the afternoon. And then suddenly Olaf started to speak about returning home ; and dragged along slowly behind me. He said he was tired ; so we rested. But I could not believe that he had not double my energy. Then he pulled out his watch, and said we would be late. I told him that for the sake of a few minutes as we were so near the top, it would not make much difference. He shrugged his shoulders and followed on in silence. Then suddenly he turned and started to race down hill. I was surprised ; but reluctantly followed him. He gave no explanation and until he reached the lake was very subdued. All he would say was "We will go home." Back again at the farm that evening I told my story, and asked them what it was that made Olaf lose all his enthusiasm in a moment, and what was the sudden attraction at home. The farmer and his wife laughed. "Of course" they said "Olaf would not go with you to the top. No one will round here. That mountain is haunted, and if you go to the top, you are driven mad." I thought they might have explained this to me before we started. But perhaps in kindness to me they had sent Olaf with me to see that I returned to them in my right mind.

Our feeling of superiority to all this was soon to be shaken, when we were introduced to the "Vardoge." It was on the occasion of the birthday of the farmer's wife. We were having supper together with the family, when we heard a slight tapping on the walls of the house. Our host rose and asked to be excused, explaining that the guests had arrived. They were expecting to come over from the nearest little town to keep up the party. They were coming out on skis as it was a moonlight night ;

and the tapping was the noise of the skis being placed up against the walls of the house. He left the room ; but came back a few minutes later saying to his wife "Vardoge." He then explained to us. He realized that in England we did not have Vardoge, but here in Norway it was common. There was no one there. We had only heard in advance the noise that the guests would make when they did arrive. It was given as a sort of warning. They would be here now, he said looking at his watch, in about half-an-hour. It did not sound very convincing, even when half an hour later we heard the same tapping noise again, followed this time by the door being opened, and a party of lively young Norwegians trooping into the house. Later two elderly Russian ladies arrived by a horse-drawn sleigh. After the party had gone on for some time, the tinkle of horse's bells outside was the signal for the party to break up. The coats of the guests were brought in to the room to be warmed at the log fire ; and the farmer went out to see about the sleigh. He came back at once and apologised, and said there would be some minutes yet before it was ready. Eventually when all the guests were gone he turned to us triumphantly. "You see," he said, "it was the Vardoge again." We all heard the horse's bells? Well, as a matter of fact the horse was all the time in the stable. He reminded us that no other horse would pass that way. The farm was five miles from the nearest town, and the little road that led to it finished there. "Perhaps the horse shook himself" said Gerald, "and we heard the bells from across the stable." "No" said the farmer, "I went up there to see. The horse was asleep ; the bells and his harness were hanging up on the wall of the stable. "You will believe in the Vardoge, soon."

Gerald and I decided, after some arguments between ourselves to forget about it ; soon we would be behaving like Olaf. It was at the end of our holiday that this Vardoge business got me really scared and for a few moments I was ruled by superstitious fear. I had been out all day with a good skier, an



enthusiastic young Fascist this time. I had left him and returned alone in the evening. Gerald had been taking it easy, but had gone out in the afternoon to practise some jumping. When I reached the farm house I was met by the farmer's wife who was very agitated. "Where is Gerald?" she said. "Something dreadful has happened to him. I have been hearing the Vardoge. Of course I did not know when he would be back ; so I laughed and said that according to their reckoning he should be along in about half-an-hour from the time she had been hearing things. But the good lady was serious. She felt sure he must be dead ; and in spite of myself she infected me a little with her feeling of alarm. Anyway more to please her, than anything else, I made for the track which lead to the jumping site to which Gerald had gone. A little way from the house I heard some shouting, and then to my horror I saw a party coming along pushing Gerald's body on a sledge.

It spoils the story to finish it by recording the fact that it was not a dead body on the sledge ; that Gerald had only broken his ankle, and was lying quietly on the sledge as they pushed him home. I had to explain to him later the look of pleasure on my face when I found this out ; and he was not much consoled by our Norwegian friends who assured him the Vardoge had let him off lightly.

It would spoil the story of the ghost at Wasdale, too, were you to listen to any prosaic explanation about the movements of the animals in the adjacent barn, being mistaken for human footsteps. I tried to put this theory forward, but at that moment supper arrived—and it was a good one. And afterwards the subject of spooks amongst the mountains gave way to a more sensible discussion on climbing and practical matters.

Maybe, however, when you stay there again, in that old stone house, with its low doorways, and cosy little rooms (a very friendly Hut) you will find yourself listening for uncanny

sounds. The surroundings, the great bulk of Buckbarrow behind you, and in front the austere view of the Screes across the lake, and the pervading stillness, may help to release that superstitious dread, which in many of us slips at times past the control of our reason. Maybe, like the others you will insist that they are objective ; but as far as I know you will come to no harm,—unless, too pre-occupied with your thoughts about ghostly visitors you forget to duck your heads on your way to bed.

*G. Pritchard.*



## ENTENTE CORDIALE

Août 1948.

L' 'AIGUILLE du Great Gable. Un Français se balance mollement à un bout d'une corde, à des centaines de pieds au-dessus du vide ; l'autre est tenu par un Anglais, solidement "bilaid," le visage légèrement crispé par l'effort, légèrement marqué aussi d'un sourire ironique ; le Français avait lâché prise, l'Anglais l'a retenu. J'aime à commencer ces quelques souvenirs du Camp du Lake District par ce petit tableau qui me paraît suggestif.

Il nous révèle l'attachement des uns pour les autres . . par la corde, bien sûr, dans les rochers, mais aussi par l'amitié, comme l'avait exprimé le Père de la Langlade dans réponse qui'il fit aux paroles si bienveillantes de Father Pearson. Il est certain la différence de langue est une rude séparation,—bien que le Frère Joseph, de l'aveu de la tenancière de Dungeon Gill Old Hotel parlât fort bien l'anglais, et nous lui avouerons aussi que son français faisait notre admiration,—mais nous n'avions pas tous sa facilité, ni même celle de Max de Boysson—et les rapports en ont souffert parfois. J'ai plusieurs fois regretté d'avoir vu les Français dans un coin, less Anglais dans un autre. C'était inévitable. . . .

Mais nous avons admiré l'effort de nos amis de l'A.R.C.C. à combler cette séparation. Nous n'étions guère exercés au "Climbing;" quelle patience il a fallu à nos chefs de cordée pour nous hisser aux sommets! (Vous rappelez-vous, Chuck, comment vous avez tiré la "petite Poubelle" au haut de la cheminée Milbeck? . . . ) Nous nous confions aux cordes et aux mains qui les tenaient, et les deux méritaient notre confiance. Sûreté des pieds et des mains du Frère Joseph, de Charlie Lawrence, de George Partridge, pour ne nomer que ceux de l'équipe dans laquelle je me trouvais.

Effort à la cuisine aussi. Les Français sont terriblement exigeants, et les centaines de livres de pain, de sucre, de viande,



OPENING OF DUNMAIL



les torrents de confiture et les bombardements du National Butter et de Margarine (ô prononciation hollandaise! . . . ) n'ont pas été ménagés. Si bien que les Français ont plutôt engraisé ! Et le travail de certains des Anglais manifestait un dévouement étonnant. Ne les nommons pas, cela les ferait rougir, mais j'en connais qui ont sacrifié beaucoup de leurs promenades ou de leurs escalades pour nous préparer des tarts et assurer une consistance plus "française" aux repas. Nous avons su apprécier cela. Le Français aime à bien manger,—et régulièrement. Il est tout étonné de voir l'Anglais prendre ses repas à n'importe quelle heure du jour ou de la nuit, et de ne les composer la plupart du temps que de thé, de pain, de buerre et de confiture. Je pense que l'on comptait davantage sur l'aide française à la cuisine. . . . mais peut-être les Français étaient-ils déconcertés par les matières premières, soupes et sauces toutes faites, beurre réservé pour mettre sur le pain, boîtes de conserves boîtes de conserves. . . toujours boîtes de conserves . . . Peut-être croyez-vous à juste titre que nous ne pensions qu'à manger. Il me semble que c'est le changement de régime qui nous désorientait ; l'Anglais, en France, regretterait ses thés . . . ou penserait un peu trop souvent au vin français, qu'en dites-vous? . . .

Attachement les uns aux autres ; vous l'avez réalisé par votre gaîté. Il nous faudrait ici la photo de la figure épanouie de Daniel Hughes pour symboliser cette joie si pure et si franche qui explosait en ces soirées de sing-song, ou nous mimions ensemble "A Miner's Dream of Home" sous la direction de John Bagnall et où faisaient fureur "J'ai perdu le Do," "Sur les Monts," "Auprès de ma Blonde," "Chevalier de la table ronde," et "My darling Clementine," "Loch Lomond", "Star of the County Down", "At number 3 Old England Square" et bien d'autres.

Il est difficile pour les Français qui ne sont pas invités par l'A.R.C.C. de trouver une famille anglaise qui accepte de les recevoir ; mille raisons s'y opposent. Ces mille raisons se sont volatilisées quand il s'est agi que nous venions ; et vous



nous avez mis tout-de-suite dans une atmosphère de famille. Je ne saurais trop rendre hommage aux parents des élèves de Clapham College qui nous ont accueillis à Londres ; ces étrangers qui leur arrivaient étaient tout-de-suite considérés comme étant de la maison, on leur confiait les clés, le garde-manger, on les choyait. . . à l'un d'eux n'a-t-on pas fait cadeau d'une superbe paire de gants? . . . Même choses aux Lakes : ces inconnus venus du Continent, sont traités comme tous les autres membres du Club, ils sont immédiatement introduits en pleine vie A.R.C.C.

L'accueil anglais n'est pas chaleureux comme chez les méridionaux de France, il est "confortable," il vous met à l'aise ; s'il est moins démonstratif, il n'en est pas moins cordial et prévenant ; pas de cérémonies à faire, vous êtes chez vous, faites comme chez vous.

Vous aimeriez savoir ce que nous pensons de vous? . . . Le jeune Anglais nous est apparu comme un garçon sportif, gai, généreux, mais peu intellectuel, en général, et peu artiste, du moins au sens où nous l'entendons ; peut-être a-t-il dans le fond de son âme un sens de la poésie de ses nuages et des mystères de la mer et de ses montagnes, mais les oeuvres artistiques ne présentent pas pour lui un attrait remarquable ; durant notre visite de Londres, les musées nous ont prodigieusement intéressés ; ceux qui nous accompagnaient ne semblaient guère partager nos enthousiasmes. Le jeune homme anglais pourra faire de bonnes études dans la partie qui l'intéresse, mais à part cela, les idées ne font guère corps avec lui ; c'est le "travail" dont on ne s'occupe plus durant les vacances. Le Français aime à discuter art, philosophie, religion même (et surtout, pourrait-on dire) lorsqu'il n'y connaît pas grand chose. L'Anglais vit aussi intensément, mais semble moins désireux d'exprimer ses opinions profondes. Le Français a tendance à se faire ses idées, puis à essayer de les vivre (d'où la diversité de nos partis politiques) ; l'Anglais est plus porté à trouver la solution vitale, empiriquement, puis, s'il le faut, à la traduire en concepts.

"L'impression la plus nette que j'ai ressentie en Angleterre," m'écrit Charles Borgeaud, "est celle de liberté ; liberté dans la vie quotidienne, liberté dans la vie de famille, liberté pour les jeunes ; pour les femmes, une liberté plus grande ; repas plus facile à préparer, grâce aux conserves, confitures. . . peu de vaisselle . . . ménage facile, cuisines et salles de bains mieux équipées qu'en France ; liberté des heures de repas."

Cette liberté m'a frappé moi aussi, sur le plan familial ; par contre sur un plus large plan, politique, social, économique, l'Etat a tout prévu et ne laisse guère d'initiative au particulier, ou s'il en laisse, il la contrôle de près.

A propos de la vie familiale, si dans la maison anglaise règne peut-être moins de goût pour le mobilier et la décoration qu'en France, on y trouve plus de confort et d'hygiène domestique ; partout l'on trouve des "Front gardens" avec de jolis gazons bien entretenus ; les jeunes enfants dans les villes sont plus au grand air que les nôtres.

Mais n'oublions pas nos profondes ressemblances ; nous nous sommes trouvés plus proches les uns des autres que nous ne nous y attendions.

Cette gaieté n'était pas factice, cette amitié était franche. Ce qui faisait la base de notre confiance réciproque était bien notre commune Foi, notre même Charité Chrétienne. Et le matin, à la messe, nos petites séparations de langue, de caractère et d'habitude, tombaient d'elles mêmes, nous n'étions qu'un seul cœur autour du Christ.

Vous êtes arrivés, Amis Anglais, à ce que nous nous sentions "at home" chez vous. Vous pouvez en être fiers. Nous ne l'oublierons pas.

A bientôt, nous l'espérons.

X. ROUSSELOT, S.J.