

(22) On the four sides around base of tent was a canvas strip, on which snow could be packed and freeze to hold tent in position, and thus ice-axes at corners could be pulled out in morning for use, leaving tent standing without them.

(23) With the winter freight we took in three wall tents. One remained at 'Turn' Camp, and served as kitchen, dining and store room. Two were used, and finally abandoned at Cascades Camp, one as a store room and the other as kitchen and dining room. These added greatly to our comfort at both camps. They were about $10 \times 12 \times 3$, and weighed about 30 lb. each, and so were too much of a burden to take to higher levels. Without bottoms and with only flap entrances, they would not have been serviceable at high levels.

(24) These bags had two silk-covered eiderdown quilts, the inner one of $5\frac{1}{2}$ lb. detachable if not wanted, also ground sheet was separate.

(25) These air mattresses were real life-savers, and *invaluable* to our party.

(26) Fuel in pint, quart and gallon screw-top tins.

WITH THE G.H.M.

BY GEORGE S. BOWER.

Lorsqu'elle entra dans la ca-ba-ne
 Les habits trempés jusqu'aux os—
 Cette héroïque ca-ra-va-ne
 Avait l'air de sortir de l'eau.
 Ah! Comme c'est tris-te!

—*Song of the Pack.*

A COMPANY with such a war song could not but appeal to an English Jonah, and, thanks to the tolerant kindness of MM. Morin and de Ségogne, being equipped with the necessary thousand marks, I found myself, early this year, elected to membership and trembling under the shadow of an invitation to join their revels at Chamonix, with Morin as M.C.

My first expedition was made from the Couvercle, with Mme. and M. Damesme and Morin. We went to the Arête des Rochassiers, which is one of Morin's oyster beds. No pearls were found, but we opened to traffic the camel-shaped Pte. 3640 S. (Pte. Damesme in future). It was climbed, without

difficulty, on the side remote from the Aig. Mummery. The blade-like dromedary's head appeared rather precariously perched, so we merely hand-traversed along it, patted the head paternally, and returned. Rope engineering was not required for the descent. The return over interminable snow slopes below the Aig. Mummery was a lengthy and tiresome process. The hut was more than crowded: as I sank into the allotted gap in the company on the floor my neighbour murmured 'C'est juste'!

Our next venture, or rather speculation, was to go to the Requin Cabane with four days' provisions. All the shepherds' warnings were displayed next morning, so Morin and I, joined by Mlle. Morin, confined our activities to the ordinary route up the Requin, with variations on the final tower, including a deeply delved chimney followed by a seductive open crack, and finishing with a one-step on the summit slab, taking off from a lively block. We were very soon joined by a well-known editor, with MM. Chevalier and de Gigord. A joyous party assembled for feeding purposes on the shoulder after the usual conversational strain of the descent of the Fontaine chimney. It was pleasing to observe how editors readily conform to the gallant customs of the country!

For some time the air had been full of a dry mist, such as one might encounter on Scafell on a fine summer morning, but by the time we had descended low down on the glacier, snow began to fall. It fell all night, and it fell next morning, and we fell to on our 3 days' provisions and, after a colossal collation, fled down to the Montanvert, to extend the ring of gloomy grumblers around the glowing grate.

Everything was white and hopeless, so next day I went with Mr. and Mrs. Chorley and their guide to get some ski-ing practice on snow slopes above the Lognan. The most poignant memory of that trip is the walk up to the Montanvert from Chamonix late at night. Morin lent me a lantern, but I tried to dispense with it until I fell off the path into some prickly herb, whereupon I lit it, and re-lit it, and staggered on, now resting my ski-strained limbs on the friendly wayside boulder, now calling for milk at the wayside chalet, and finally effecting an entrance into the locked hotel by means of English imprecations.

For our next attempt, Morin and I were reinforced by Fallet, who had a day or two previously, with another member of the G.H.M., attempted the Charmoz by way of the very steep and forbidding hanging glacier which faces the Montanvert and, stopped by storm when near the top, had actually

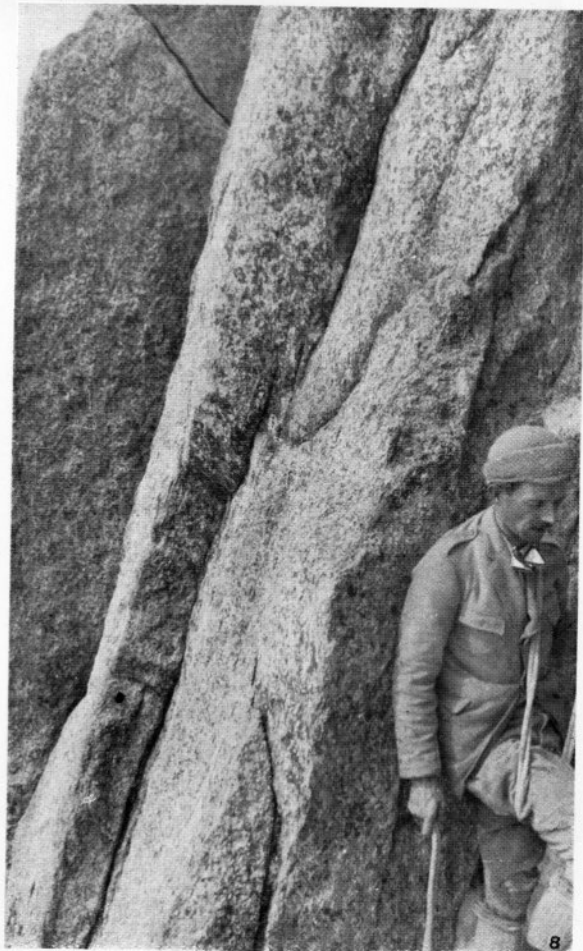
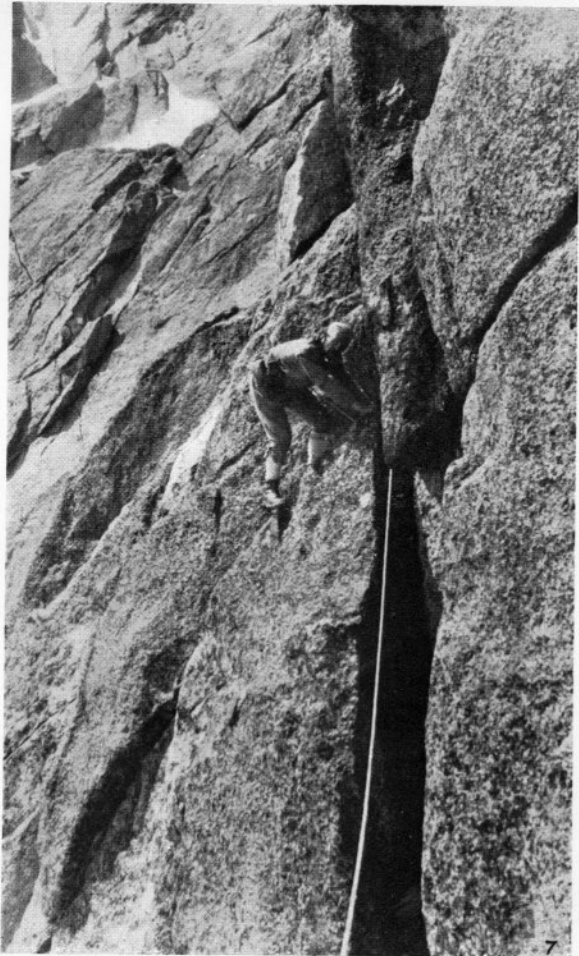
descended this terrible slope with only one axe, the other having been lost—and returned safely, after a remarkable exhibition of fortitude. But we were rained off at the Nantillons Rognon and Fallet had to return home. So that was that. Next day I went twice to the P.D.A.¹, to revive hope and faith, and rebuild shattered ideals with the richly vitaminous productions of that establishment.

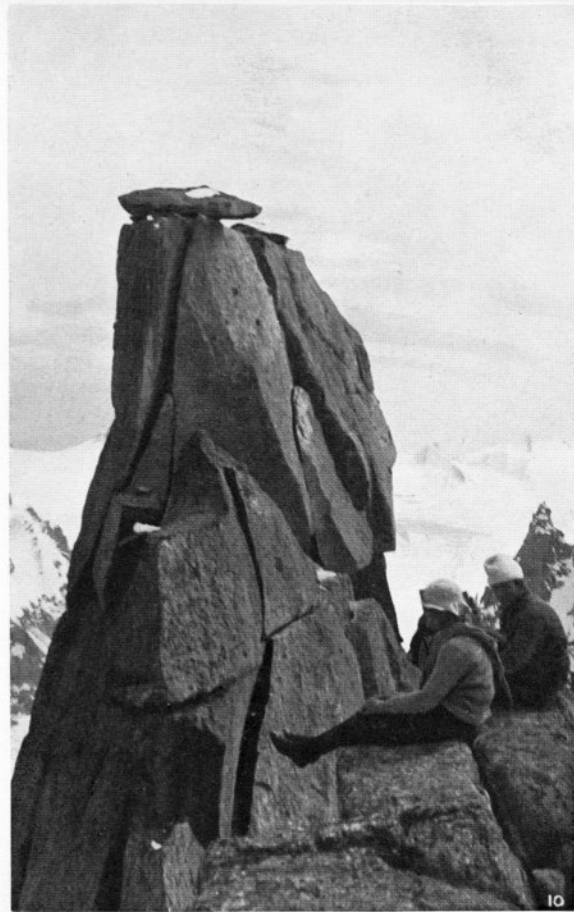
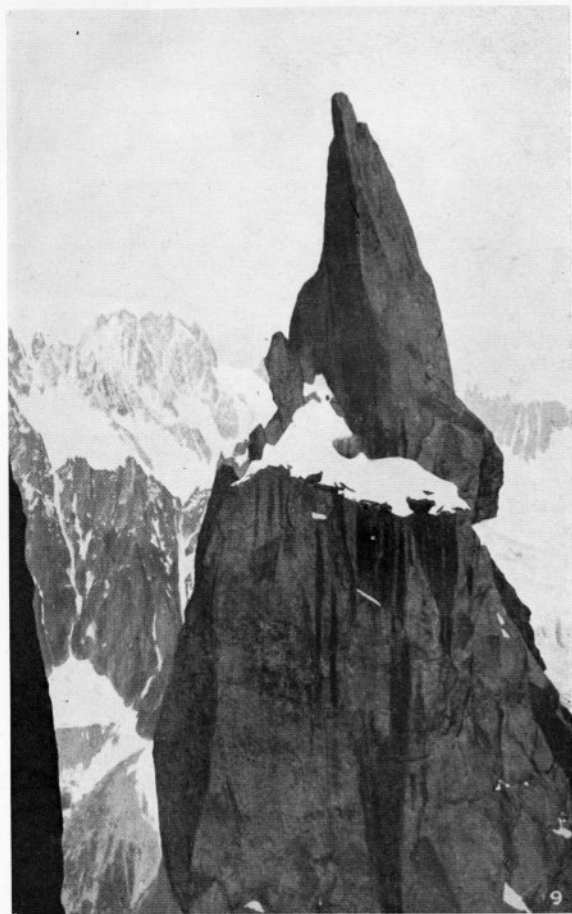
The following day the christian hour of 10 A.M. saw Jacques de Lépiney, Morin and me, accompanied by a diminutive but very willing young porter, setting forth for the Nantillons Col. The process seemed strange, and an inversion of sleep-walking, but our loads were very real. We sent the porter back from the Rognon and, the snow being mercifully tough, arrived at the Col at about 3 P.M. The purpose of all this? We thought at the time that it was to make another attempt on the Aiguille du Roc, or 'Crag on the Grépon' of Mummery's great book, but, looking back with the sense of perspective and historical values given by time, it appears to me that we were catspaws, dupes and puppets of a certain editor, who had invested in a Zdarsky tent-sack and, it seems, wanted it testing, so, with the art which disguises artfulness, he offered to lend it to de Lépiney for the purpose of this expedition. Anyhow, we dumped this invention and most of our other gear in a snowy combe at the foot of the Blaitière, and then Morin and I followed far away in the wake of de Lépiney up the S.W. ridge of the Grépon. We caught him up temporarily at the Brèche du Bec d'Oiseau, and looked down the gully leading to the foot of the Aig. du Roc. Like Robinson Crusoe we were horrified to see footsteps—in the snow at the base of the Aiguille!

We discussed at some length their probable origin and termination, to the great amusement, as we learned some days later, of their manufacturers, who were within earshot.

De Lépiney forged ahead again with his usual effortless speed, and waited for us at the Pic Balfour Gap. He then led us up the Pointe Balfour (second ascent), without performing the Indian fakir rope trick, and everybody, like Puss, wearing boots. The 'lisse' fissure of 6 m. yielded to the sweetly persuasive posture now internationally known as the lay-back. It was delightful sitting up there in the evening sunshine with no need to hurry away before the menace of night; these periods of calm, cow-like contemplation come too rarely in the

¹ [Pâtisserie des Alpes!]





Alpine lives of most of us, and are all the more precious when they *do* come.

On our way down the lower part of the ridge to the Col we searched for possible rock emplacements for our sack, but all were rejected owing to the risk of falling out of bed, so, by a process of elimination, we arrived back at our snow combe just as the evening glow was on the snow and Jack Frost coming out for the night. We crouched side by side in the bag, facing the opening, and, as successive brews of tea, soup, and chocolate warmed our veins we chuckled: 'This is the life!' and agreed that this was the twentieth-century form of bivouac with the sting taken out. Then we lay down for the night, side by side, the Blaitière and a star showing eerily through the small celluloid window.

Now I have no pretensions towards being a 100 per cent. full-blooded, hairy he-man, the sort of creature who, as Pigott says, lives on a diet of iron filings and who sleeps between tin sheets. No, I had brought a sleeping-bag as well. Even so, my feet were cold, probably owing to the fact that I kept my boots on. The others slept for a time, and then came remarks such as: 'J'ai froid aux pieds,' and 'Quelle heure est-il?'—the latter query being many times repeated. The air was full of body, and the walls streaming with condensation water. For the vigil before a difficult climb the sack is not to be recommended, but as a life and frostbite safeguard on a lengthy expedition necessarily involving a bivouac and the possibility of bad weather—its intended métier—it should be regarded as almost indispensable.

We left it at 6.30 next morning—without regrets—just as the guides were going to work on the Grépon. At the Bec d'Oiseau Gap we fixed about 60 m. of rope and line, and first Morin and then I abseiled the whole length of it down the unfriendly gully, with its steep bed lined with flour-like snow. Any other process but abseiling would have been unthinkable. We had no more rope available for this work, and were only about half-way down, so Morin and I dissuaded de Lépiney from coming down to join us, relying on the cold wind to which he had been exposed for some time to make him accept our advice. Getting up again was hard work for all of us, and we felt *claqués* even if not *dégonflés*, and in no fit state for anything very stiff. After Morin had done some useful pioneering work, I went up the Grépon *via* the Lochmatter chimney and the ordinary terminal crack, whilst the others came up the Knubel crack with the safeguard of a rope from above, and found it very stiff indeed. After abseiling down the ordinary final

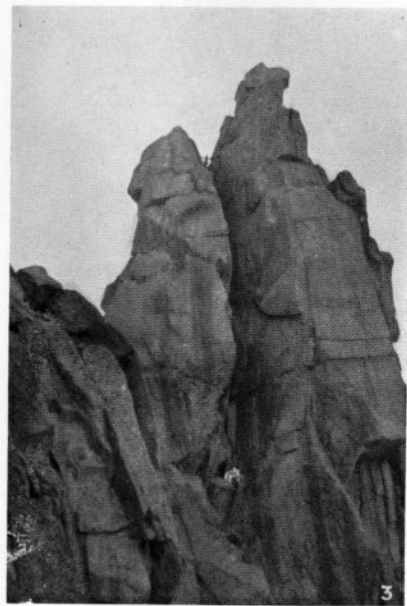
crack we climbed the elongated gendarme between the summit and the Grand Diabie (an unroped first ascent). Roping down the Dunod chimney, we soon arrived back at our camp at the Col, where no one suggested spending a second night.

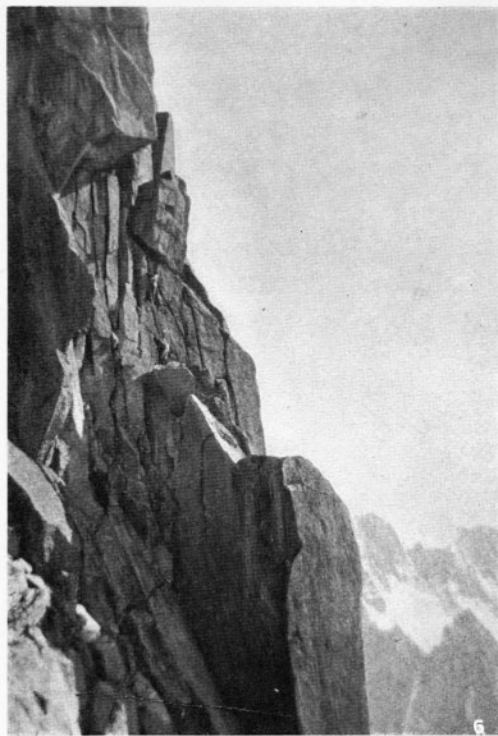
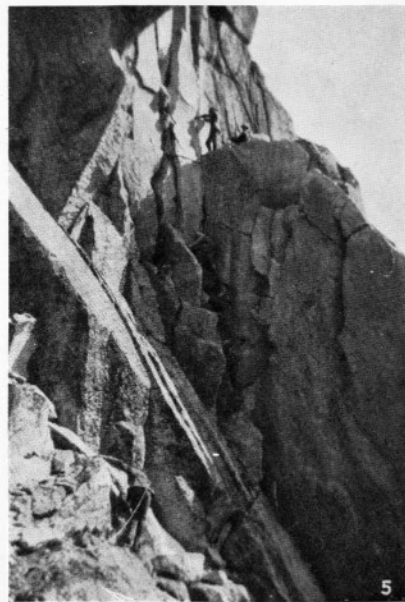
Two days later Morin and I walked up to that hut of huts the Rifugio Torino, lunching en route at the Restaurant du Requin. All that evening he made my blood run cold with bivouac stories, until I was almost afraid to go to bed. Next morning we started at 2.50, and arrived about dawn at the foot of Mt. Blanc du Tacul, led by our vagrant ambition, materialised in Morin. The ground showed abundant signs of the awful avalanche. With some difficulty a small rock buttress was gained and followed for an hour or two. Then, rounding a snowy corner, we were scandalized by the sight of a stretch of normally easy slabs almost covered with transparent ice. Our movements on such a chess-board were about as rapid as those of the pieces in a championship game, and on the farther side of the slabs it was found to be almost impossible to make our way down to the rocky bank of a huge couloir which seemed the only hopeful line to take. This couloir was an impressive sight, with its snow avalanches roaring and rushing continuously, like water, down a groove on its farther side. The weather was turning rapidly worse, so we decided to retreat, and escaped off the lower rocks in a flurry of snowflakes to the tune of distant thunder.

On the lower peaks it was raining and not snowing, and, to my eternal gratitude, Morin persuaded me to stop a night at the Requin hut, instead of returning in ballast to the Montanvert. It rained during the night, but was fine next morning when we set out at 6.30 A.M. for our previously planned route up the Requin. Available descriptions of the lower portion of Mayer's Route,² by the E.N.E. Ridge, seemed very obscure when compared with orographical facts, and preliminary exploration a week or so previously had led us to believe that the start of this route from the Glacier du Requin really *was* by the preposterous-looking gully with church-like chockstones, although we were loath to admit it even to ourselves. Morin on that occasion suggested cutting this out by ascending the E. face overlooking the cabane and joining the E.N.E. ridge very high up, and this, in effect, was what we now proceeded to do.

We took to the rocks almost at the left-hand (facing the slope) upper extremity of the little Gl. du Requin about an hour

² Cf. Vallot's *Les Aiguilles de Chamonix*, p. 181.





after leaving the cabane, and were immediately struck by the contrast with our expedition of the previous day. Then everything was grim and hostile. To-day butterflies fluttered among the flowers in the crevices of the friendly red rocks, the sun shone, we were fit, and life was very good. We moved upwards to the right for some distance to a terrace on the right (always facing the mountain) of a wide and shallow slabby couloir descending from the E.N.E. ridge near the summit. We kept to the rocks on the right of this without serious difficulty up to the ridge, and along this for a short distance as far as a sizable gendarme, where my ration of leading was exhausted and Morin took over. It was necessary to climb up a short crack and through a compressive cleft on to the other (the Plan) side of the ridge. Here things looked unpleasant. On this flank was a number of shelving, snow-covered ledges, which Morin thought had been traversed by Mayer, presumably in more agreeable conditions. In front, on the ridge, we were faced by a steep tower, so, reluctant to leave the sun and embark on an Arctic-like adventure, we turned our attention once more to the E. face.

I let Morin down a very steep chimney; he ascended an easier one on the other side of a gully and reported hopefully, so I joined him after roping down the steep chimney, an operation in which my coat took a leading part and caught, as coats do in novels, on a projecting rock, with dire results. After traversing some distance, expecting but still not quite certain of a happy ending, we were able to rise again to the crest of the ridge, a short distance from the finish of the ordinary way. The summit was reached at 1.15 p.m., and we basked and fed there for an hour, listening to the exhortations and conjurations of a guide, who was apparently afraid that his charges were hobnobbing with Morpheus in the luxurious recesses of the Fontaine chimney. During our descent of this cleft Morin's sling broke and he lost his axe. The sequel came during the descent of the glacier, when not Morin but I slipped in descending a steep snow slope. The guided party following behind (but fortunately out of sight) did the same thing, and when they joined us at the cabane, and asked Morin how we got down, were nonchalantly informed: 'Oh, we glissaded there.'

The following day I took a party up the Doigt de Trélaporte, and the next, after a final visit to the P.D.A., challenged my spare ropes (travelling by Grand Vitesse) to a race home. So far I have won by three months.

NOTES ON PICTURES.

PICTURES OF REQUIN :

- (1) Attractions of the Requin hut ! (Phot. G. S. Bower.)
- (2) Attractions of the Requin shoulder ! (De Gigord standing on left, Chevalier sitting on right, Madame Damesme behind him, Cordier leaning against rock.) (Phot. G. S. Bower.)
- (3) The Fontaine chimney on the Requin. The difference in height between the summit and the man standing at the top of the chimney is about 30 ft. The chimney itself to the snow patch at its foot is about 120 ft. and is done by two rappels, as there is a second starting place about half-way down. The chimney is *said* to have been ascended, but no account appears to be available. From the bottom of the chimney a descent is made down the slab so as to turn the *colonnes* or stone pillars seen in the right-hand bottom corner. (Phot. M. Y. Cordier.)
- (5) The man traversing on the Vire is at the bottom of the above slab. The men in the next chimney are doing the first pitch of the rock climb proper and their companions above are on a good platform, from which steep, short cracks lead to a sort of stomach traverse not shown, which is clearly seen on
- (6) under the uppermost, apparently detached, rock. The upper climber in this picture is just below this traverse. (Phot. M. Y. Cordier.)
- (7) Morin on traverse high up on Requin on new or variation route by E. face and E.N.E. ridge.

PICTURES OF GRÉPON :

- (8) Lochmatter chimney (on left of picture). It shows Morin finishing his abseil of the Dunod chimney. The severe portion of the Lochmatter chimney is just to the left of Morin. It is a double move. First, using a small horizontal finger crack on slab to left of Morin and exactly level with top of his head, the feet are swung over to the sloping foothold on the intermediate raised portion or rib, marked by a dot. Further finger-holds, rather low down (not seen in picture), permit of a second swing into the crack in the corner, which is not seen in the picture except as a line. The continuation of the crack is not hard. The traverse is the only, but *sufficient*, difficulty. (Phot. G. S. Bower.)
- (9) The Aiguille du Roc (= Mummery's 'Crag on the Grépon'). The height above the snow patch is estimated to be about or approaching 200 ft. The Aiguille has not been climbed, although several attempts were made this summer. (Phot. G. S. Bower.)
- (10) Jacques de Lépiney (on right) facing the final tower of the Grépon. The Venetz chimney ending under the block on the summit is well seen. (Phot. J. A. Morin.)