

little mound from which I could see the lights of Southampton. They are very pretty though not equal to the peaks in the Tyrol!

‘Now I go on quietly in my study and leave it as little as possible. To-morrow, I go to Oxford, to be made a Dr.! It is a pleasant little compliment, though not very intoxicating.

‘I condole with you upon the railway invasion of your house. Well, we had the good time when the Alps were civilized without being mobbed; and in that as in other ways, I am learning (?) that I must comfort myself by remembering the past instead of anticipating the future. I will not tell you to give my kindest regards to Mme. Loppé, because she will, I hope, read this to you and take them for herself. I am, with kindest regards to both,

‘Your affte. friend,

‘L. S.’

Twenty-six years elapsed between the first and the last letters, yet every one of them lays stress on one all-important fact. In spite of his many activities, even at times of deep sorrow or when he was suffering acute physical pain, Leslie Stephen always kept his thoughts on mountains and mountain-eering, and ever remembered with delight the seasons he had spent in the Alps.

CLAIRE-ÉLIANE ENGEL.

ORTHODOXY AND HETERODOXY.

BY JOHN POOLE.

(Read before the Alpine Club, May 14, 1935.)

THIS paper has been prepared on the same principles applied in the planning of my after-dinner speeches: that is to say, I like to have the longest possible notice beforehand, then do nothing whatever about it until the extreme last moment, when I accomplish it all in a rush. I may say that this does not prevent me from complaining bitterly whenever I am asked to do anything at short notice.

We all know the story of the Bishop who was asked to explain the difference between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and who replied, ‘Well, orthodoxy is my doxy and heterodoxy is anybody else’s doxy.’ That, of course, is no more than another way of saying that one man’s meat is another man’s poison; and I dare say there are yet half a dozen further ways in which the same thing could be said. But whatever form of words you choose, it seems to me that the theory which it expounds is

one which is based on a very firm foundation and is applicable to a good many things besides theology and dietetics. It is certainly applicable to mountaineering. Captain Finch (to name an eminent ice and snow specialist) enthuses about ice and snow, and speaks disparagingly of rock.¹ That is his doxy. John Poole (to name an obscure rock-climbing protagonist) dotes upon rock, and is prepared to speak disrespectfully about snow. That is *his* doxy. Which is right? And which is heterodox? You cannot say anything is heterodox until you first settle upon what is orthodox. Nothing is abnormal until you have determined the normal. Is there any such thing as a normal mountaineer? I submit that there is not. Mr. A. P. Herbert in one of his 'Misleading Cases' sets out to prove, and apparently succeeds to his own satisfaction, as he certainly does to mine, that a legal proposition based upon the conduct of a reasonable woman is untenable on the ground that there is no such thing as a reasonable woman. I claim that there is no such thing as an orthodox mountaineer, because there is no such thing as a normal mountaineer. I concede that there may be an *average* mountaineer, but that is not the same thing. Orthodoxy is tested by normality, not by averages. There is a distinction. In a highly complex subject like mountaineering, I submit that orthodoxy is even more difficult for the average layman to determine. Of course there are certain practices in mountaineering sufficiently accepted by the vast majority of mountaineers to have become recognizably orthodox, and it follows from this that a departure from those practices would be properly described as heterodox. For instance, a man walking with others on a crevassed glacier will be following the orthodox practice if he ties the loop of his climbing rope round his waist. And if he ties it round his neck he will be following an unorthodox practice, although I can think of some people for whom it might not be a bad idea nevertheless. But following an orthodox practice in a number of separate instances does not cover the whole field of mountaineering activity, and, I repeat, there is no such thing as an orthodox mountaineer. We all have our own doxies.

It is interesting to speculate upon the extent to which one is entitled to comment on the doxies of other people. The learned Editor of the ALPINE JOURNAL is very fond of it. Indeed, I know of no one who enjoys it more, unless it be the President

¹ Captain Finch, expert on rock as on snow, has stated that rock-climbing can be learnt comparatively quickly, while a lifetime may not suffice to unravel all the secrets of ice and snow.—*Editor.*

of the Club. I suppose that is his doxy. But if all the people whom he has criticized could be banded together to express a united view on him, *that* would make very interesting reading. According to my personal doxy people should be left to do as they like so long as in doing so they do not interfere with the comfort of anybody else. When Franz and Toni Schmid climbed the N. face of the Matterhorn they were merely expressing their own doxy. Why not let them? They did no harm to anybody else. In fact, they did a little good, for I was fortunate enough to watch them doing it and they thus provided me with an experience which is now to serve me in good stead, since it will enable me to keep this paper going for several minutes longer than would otherwise have been the case. I agree that the benefit is all on my side and not on the side of my audience.

On a morning in August, 1931, I was going up the Hörnli ridge of the Matterhorn with my wife, my two brothers and a guide, Alexander Pollinger. We were climbing on two ropes. When we were on the Shoulder at about 7.45 a.m. we thought we heard a sound of hammering somewhere on the N. face. We listened and heard it again quite distinctly. In my ignorance I did not know that the N. face had not been climbed up till then. Alexander then told us that there were two men on the face, and that they had been out since the early hours of the previous morning. We had no binoculars, but we shaded our eyes and searched the N. face. We soon found the Schmids, one above the other some hundreds of yards away from us and just about on our level. The top man was apparently hammering in a piton and the bottom man was apparently hammering one out. We then saw the leader taking the rope in as the second man advanced. We took a photograph, which has since appeared in the JOURNAL.² Alexander yelled 'Geht's gut?' A reply came back and a short conversation ensued, but I took no part in it as my German is of the drawing-room variety and does not work at a range of nearly a quarter of a mile. However, from what I was then told by Alexander and from what I have since read, I gather that we must have seen them just at the point when they had despaired of continuing vertically and were about to choose between traversing left towards our ridge or right towards the Z'mutt ridge. Alexander counselled the latter and, having seen them start in that direction, we continued to the summit. On the return, some three hours

² *Loc. cit.* 44, facing 70.

later, we saw them again from about the same point. This time they were a little higher and considerably farther away from us horizontally. They were too far away for any further conversation, although we could still hear them hammering away at pitons. We went on, but some time before we reached the Hörnli hut a severe snow and hail storm came on. We all thought the Schmids would be held up on the face and either die of exposure or fall off and be killed, but we saw them again a few days later in Zermatt and they autographed postcards for us.

Such is my only claim to fame: I personally witnessed the first ascent of the N. face of the Matterhorn.

I seem to have abandoned the theme on which I started this paper, but I make no further excuse for resorting to personal reminiscence as padding. It was not my own idea that the paper should be prepared, and those who have urged me into it must take the consequences if I ramble from my text.

That part of my doxy which makes me prefer rock to snow has led me into some strange places. I infinitely prefer sound rock to loose, but I do not always get it. I remember a particular day in Dauphiné when we climbed Le Fifre. If I had known as much about the mountain then as I know now, I should have tried something else. There were four of us in the expedition, and we left the Temple-Ecrins hut and made our way up the moraine and glacier to the Col des Avalanches. There was no incident up to that point, except that we walked in blissful ignorance by a route which the guides told us a few days later was notoriously dangerous that particular season by reason of falling stones. The view from the Col over the other side was one of the most startlingly magnificent I have ever seen. It was one of those days when you walk steeply and arduously up a slope and then on arriving at the top look out before you and below you and see a boiling mass of white cloud like a storm-tossed sea with the tops of the peaks sticking up out of it. We ate a cold chicken while we watched. Then we roped up in two parties and proceeded to attack the cliffs of the Fifre at our right; ³ my wife going with me on one rope and the other two men going together on the other rope. I think I ought to say at this point that I am probably the worst route-finder in the Club, and I accordingly chose a line of attack which was subsequently found to be hopelessly wrong. I had got only about three or four hundred feet above the

³ *I.e.* the N. arête and W. face.

glacier when I attained a point of excruciating difficulty. A vertical ascent was impossible, but there appeared to be a faint hope of working out a route on the right. I saw it would be a long way, so I tied on to the limit of my 100-ft. rope, got my wife securely planted on a ledge held by the other two men and started on my traverse. I was carrying an axe in my hand, and I found it necessary to abandon this about half-way. I left it in a little niche and my wife picked it up later. As I went along the traverse I remember noticing an enormous bulge of rock about as big as the Alpine Club Gallery, and I had grave doubt as to its stability. However, I touched it gently first with my hand and then with my foot as I climbed upward, and, looking back on the events which have since happened, I believe that if it had at any time come away during my journey I should have been perfectly safe because I was never doing more than merely touching it and I never placed any reliance on it. However, so far as I was concerned it did not come away, and I successfully made my way to the top, right at the very end of my 100-ft. run-out. I then took a firm stance and called to my wife to follow. She did so, picked up my axe on her way and brought it along by a loop over her arm, together with her own. When she came to the great bulge she trod on it and it came clean out, leaving her dangling on the rope. Fortunately all the smash was below her, so that nothing fell on her. Actually, except for the noise, I should not have known that she had fallen, because the rope went round two or three corners between her and me and I felt nothing. I did, however, hear a terrific crash, followed by a succession of lesser sounds as the broken bits of the bulge, each about the size of the Secretary's office, went hurtling down on to the glacier. From where I stood I could not see my wife, but by leaning away from her and craning my head round a corner I could see the glacier some 400 ft. below, and I saw first one boulder bound across it and then another. As each boulder came into view on the glacier I wondered what was coming next. When all the boulders had finished careering down and the reverberations from the Ecrins opposite had subsided, I heard a faint voice from below inquiring whether I was all right. I replied that I was, and asked courteously whether she still had the axes. With great presence of mind she had managed to retain these, so she came up rapidly and we were soon united again. The other two men had to have a rope to help them up over the place where the boulder had come away. We proceeded from there to the summit without dislodging anything bigger

than a good-sized dinner-table, but in comparison this seemed like no more than the dropping of the gentle rain from heaven. We came down by more or less the same route, but on arriving at the place where the bulge had been we skirted round the recess, and were very glad to arrive on the glacier unscathed, although the latter showed obvious signs of the showers of rock which we had poured upon it. We went down to the Temple-Ecrins hut and then strode on to our hotel at La Bérarde. In accordance with a practice to which I am becoming accustomed on my guideless expeditions we arrived some time after dark.

My doxy wants to make me climb without guides. My experience teaches me that I ought not to do so. I remember practising this guideless technique on another occasion when I was staying at the Montanvers. I think even the Editor of the *ALPINE JOURNAL* would not regard me as being rash in attempting a guideless ascent of the Petits Charmoz after four or five seasons with guides. Nevertheless, I very nearly managed to get my party and myself into a mess. We left the Montanvers shortly after dawn, arrived subsequently on the Nantillons Glacier and proceeded up it to the couloir between the Petits and the Grands Charmoz. We successfully ascended the couloir by a quite enjoyable bit of rock-climbing and arrived at the summit ridge, along which we subsequently moved to the actual summit of the Petits Charmoz. We had intended coming down by the couloir between the Petits Charmoz and the Aiguille de l'M, but we failed to find a way into the couloir so had to return by the line of ascent. I cannot for the life of me think what we were playing at, but the fact is that by the time we arrived on the glacier again it was dark. This, if you please, in August. We moved cautiously off the glacier and got safely on to the path over the moraine. We were enjoying a thoroughly hearty repast when we were interrupted by an officious search-party of our own friends from the hotel, who insisted on sharing our meal.

One would have thought from this episode that any party of which I was a member would require something like a whole Alpine season to traverse the Grépon, doing it somewhat on the system by which Everest is attacked, by a series of camps taken higher and higher; with days, and perhaps weeks, between one camp and the next. Nevertheless, and whether you believe it or not, I successfully led a guideless party over that mountain a few days later only than the episode which I have just described, while the entire expedition went like

clockwork. I think I must have followed somebody else's doxy for the occasion.

It was in this same holiday that I experienced probably the most terrific storm I have ever been in. I was making another guideless ascent, this time the Grands Charmoz, with my wife and another amateur. The ascent went perfectly well, except that with my usual route-finding propensities I wasted a lot of time climbing one of the upper steps by the *rappel* route off. It was apparently perfectly good weather when we started down, and we got as far as the little tin shelter at the top of the Rognon without incident. We then had a short meal, but packed up rather hurriedly as the weather showed signs of changing. We had got about half-way down the Rognon when a tremendous storm of hail burst upon us. It was still the middle of the day, but it soon became as black as night. The hailstones were as big as pigeons' eggs, and they really hurt as they fell. My wife was wearing a thinnish waterproof coat with little more than a silk blouse underneath it. There was no time for her to put on a jersey and, in a few minutes as she bowed her head beneath the storm, her back and shoulders were so bruised by the hailstones that the marks showed for several days afterwards. This sounds like a rather far-fetched story, but I assure you it is literally true. As we stood, our boots were buried by the accumulation of hailstones so that we had to keep constantly kicking our feet about to find somewhere to stand. Lightning was playing about all the time in a most awe-inspiring manner. During a lull in the storm we finished our journey down the rocks of the Rognon, and then found that the way across the schrund on to the main glacier had of course been obliterated completely by the hailstones; accordingly we had to cut new steps in the ice, and it was a matter of some difficulty to get across. We were just fairly on to the ice when the storm broke again with renewed violence, and we had to stand there for about ten minutes until it died down once more. During this period the rocks of the main mass of the Charmoz on the other side of the glacier appeared to be struck by lightning. At any rate, there was a sulphurous smell and débris of rock came hurtling from the cliff in our direction, while some of the smaller pieces actually dropped round us and flew over our heads. Those who know the place—and probably most of us do—will be able to calculate what a distance this was. Fortunately none of the party was struck. All this business took a lot of time, and by the time we had got off the glacier on to the moraine night had fallen. The sky was full of cloud

and there was no light from moon or stars. Rain was falling heavily. Those who are familiar with the district will know that there is a rather difficult stretch of broken boulders to cross between the glacier and the fairly well-marked path to the Montenvers. We badly wanted a lantern to help us over. I had one of the folding glacier lanterns with me, and it seemed to be quite intact. I also had a good supply of candles, but my matches had got reduced to a sodden pulp. My friend's matches were in the same condition, but he was carrying in an inner pocket one of those little petrol-filled pipe-lighters. My lantern was in the bottom of my sack, and I knew I should have some difficulty in extracting it because the rain had wetted the knots so that they were very difficult to untie. Accordingly, before embarking on this task, I invited my friend to make quite sure that his petrol-lighter would work. He struck it one blow and it lit instantly. We blew it out and I proceeded to wrestle with my sack. After considerable labour I managed to extract my lantern, put it together and fixed up a candle. We then produced the pipe-lighter again, but it had exhausted itself by its previous effort and we never got it to light again all that holiday. Since then both my friend and I have perfected a method of keeping matches dry. We bring out a box of best English-made matches from home, wrap the box in a waterproof bag, put this into a waterproof tin box wrap it in a waterproof sponge bag—and then leave the contraption behind in the hotel. On the present occasion we had to continue to the Montenvers completely in the dark. The path meandering along the hillside had been washed away in places by the violence of the storm, so we roped and took turns pulling each other up after falling off the path.

By sheer strength of character I now turn myself away from this engrossing topic of personal reminiscence (I expect to return to it later), and resume for a moment the discussion of the theme on which I opened, though from a slightly different angle.

Let us consider the question of food. What is my doxy on that? I like English food, almost any of it. I dislike Continental food, almost all of it. The best Continental food is that which differs least from the English. Whenever I am in the Alps I am constantly in difficulty to find palatable food in sufficient quantity to keep me going. In my opinion most Continental food is simply bad. Foreigners' great fault is that they will not leave well alone. They get a piece of meat which might be all right, but before serving up they anoint

it with oil, sprinkle with chopped herbs, and, by the time it reaches the table, it has become practically inedible. Give me the roast beef of old England. Give it me plain, and give me plenty of it. But Heaven preserve me from the Continental apology for it! Curiously enough, although I have always imagined that Italy would produce food most typically Continental and therefore most unsuited to my English palate, I found when I was there last year that the food was better than any I had previously met in the Alps—that is to say, I could eat practically half of what was offered to me. My general average is about a fifth, and I can remember at least one occasion arriving back at a hotel after a long, exhausting day on a mountain when I went right through the *table d'hôte* without touching a thing.⁴ Perhaps I found the food so comparatively good last year because I was in that part of Italy so recently Austria—the Dolomites.

I am tempted to slip again into personal reminiscence. After struggling half-heartedly for a moment I yield to the temptation and recall a day on the Langkofel. I can link it up with that part of my theme from which I have just departed by describing the food which the hotel had supplied to us for the expedition. It was in a stiff paper bag like those given away at the London stores with the name of the firm on the outside. There were fresh, crisp white bread rolls, butter, jam, ham (my great stand-by), another kind of meat which might have been veal; cheese, eggs and a quantity of fresh fruit. There was also a piece of *Wurst*—quite small, yet powerful enough to cast its pervading influence over all the other contents of the bag. We took this out and gave it to one of the guides. He accepted it gratefully and took it home for his children.

In our party on this occasion there were four amateurs and two guides. We left the hotel soon after dawn by car and motor-cycle, the four amateurs and one guide in my car, the other guide and a temporary porter on the former's motor-cycle. We drove to the Sella Joch, parked the car and motor-cycle by the side of the road, just as we do in Wales, and set off across the meadows to the foot of the N. wall of the Langkofel. Here we changed into *scarpetti*, while the porter was sent off with a sack containing our six pairs of boots to deposit them at the foot of the ordinary way up, by which we were to

⁴ Few, alas, of our Continental friends have survived *one* meal in the average British inn.—*Editor*.

descend. We proceeded on our climb on two ropes, a guide to each pair of amateurs. I climbed with my wife behind the first guide. I do not know whether it is orthodoxy or heterodoxy, but apparently the local doxy in that part of Tyrol is for the guide to separate himself from his second man by some 80 or 100 ft. of rope, but to have the third man sundered from the second by about 10 or 15 ft. only. The guide then runs out a rope's length, takes a stance, and his second and third men climb up to him together. My wife went second and I went third. So far as my rope was concerned I did not seriously object to the practice, because it certainly saves time in climbing, and I worked it out on the footing that if my wife did not come off I should not be likely to do so, whereas if she did the guide would presumably hold her before she pulled me out. I admit that this argument will not prevail on a traverse, and the only consolation I could find in that event was that the combined weight of my wife and myself is less than twenty stone. My two friends with their guide on the other rope started off the same way, but for some time I heard them expostulating with their guide as to the rope-tying practice. I gathered that they regarded it as definitely heterodox. Their great difficulty in explaining it was that, although they spoke good German and reasonable Italian, the guide's explanations were all given in a local and incomprehensible patois—neither German nor Italian. I think it is called Ladinisch, but that is not what my friends called it. As the combined weight of the two of them was about thirty stone, there was considerable substance in their argument.

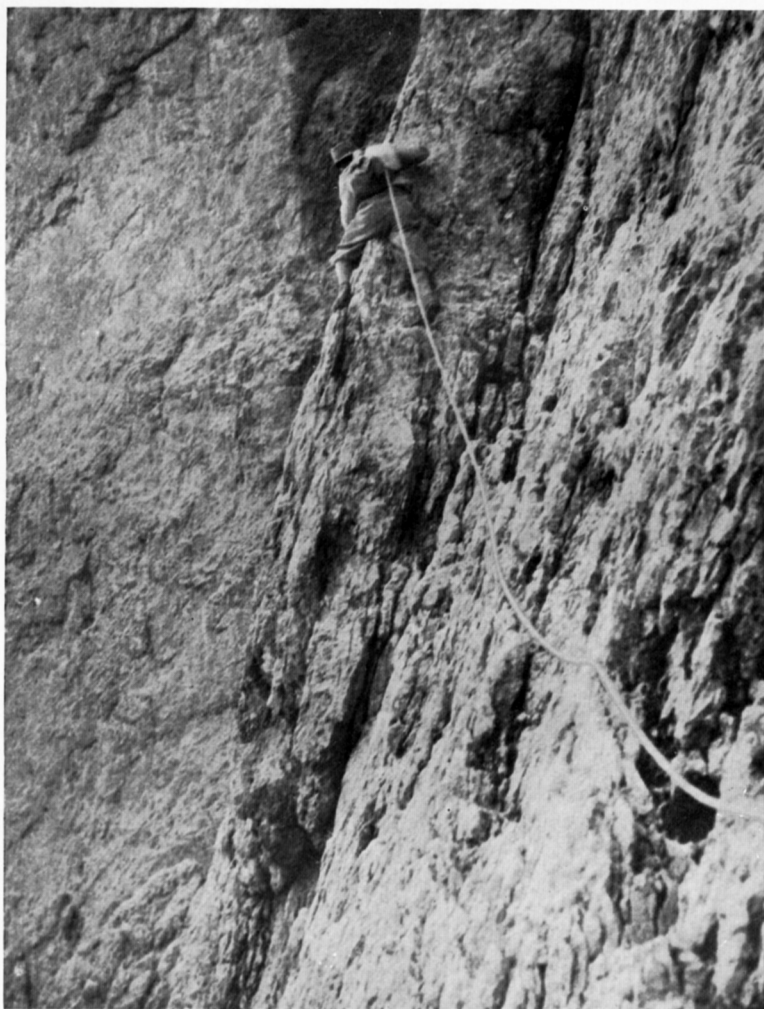
The route ran up a series of sloping slabs, but after some time we came to a practically horizontal traverse to the left. It was fairly awe-inspiring, and it was at this point that my friends on the other rope definitely went on strike and refused any longer to subscribe to the local school of thought in regard to roping. Instead they tied up at proper intervals according to our own practice, with the result that the climb took appreciably longer but, on the other hand, was distinctly safer. Even if I could remember all the incidents time does not permit of my recounting them. It is sufficient for me to say that eventually we all arrived at the summit in perfectly good order, except that the last man had received a knock on the head from a falling stone. He was not seriously damaged, but for the remainder of the holiday he took precautions against the worst consequences of further incidents of that kind by stuffing his hat with about a pound of cotton wool. The



Photographer unknown.]

LANGKOFEL.

[To face p. 270.]



Photo, John Poole.]

ON LANGKOFEL, N. FACE.

last few hundred feet to the summit were accomplished in mist, while practically the whole of the descent on the other side was handicapped similarly. The consequence was that we had to go rather slowly and, as in any case it was a very long day, it was just becoming dusk as we got off the final rocks and found our sack of boots awaiting us. We took off our *scarpetti*, got into our boots, but by the time we had moved off it was pitch-black night. The guides were in favour of spending the night at the Langkofel hut nearby, but the rest of us were desirous of getting back to the hotel if at all possible. By a majority of four to two the amendment was carried, and we accordingly set out for the Langkofel Joch. The path up to this was extremely steep with quite a fair amount of it under snow. There was absolutely no light whatever, even on the snow, and of course we had not a lantern between us. We struck matches from time to time, proceeding over the worst bits by their fitful gleam. On arriving at the Joch we were all pretty well exhausted and by this time smothered in densely thick mist. Moreover, it had started to rain. We completely lost what path there was, and after floundering about for a few minutes some of us had quite resigned ourselves to the prospect of spending the night out. However, although the guides had been ready enough to spend the night at the hut, they were determined apparently to obtain their revenge on us for insisting on a return to the hotel. Accordingly they prospected round until they had decided in their own minds upon a feasible route down from the Langkofel Joch towards the Sella Joch, so we all joined hands and made a long string of six, stepping gingerly towards home. It must have been a pretty sight, but unfortunately there was no one there to see it. After an hour or more of this sort of thing we managed to get below the mist, and thereafter it was all plain sailing. We arrived at the Sella Joch hotel and had a hearty meal of beer, cocoa and chocolate cake. Is this heterodoxy? Next we found that the guide's motor-cycle had no lamps on it, so five of us got into my car while the guide rode his motor-cycle some miles back to the hotel at Santa Christina in front of us. The idea was that we should light his way with my headlamps, but the road is so winding that we picked him up with the headlamps at infrequent intervals between corners and he had to do all his cornering in the dark. However, it did not seem to make much difference to his riding, and we all got down safely.

Well, although I could, I must not give way to this habit of

reminiscence any longer. I console myself with the reflection that when the Secretary commanded me to write this paper he instructed me to say something about the Alps. My anxiety to comply with his directions accounts to some extent for my flitting from subject to subject as I endeavoured to work in bits of Alps between bits of doxy.

Before closing, I should like to say but one thing more: that is, that if you do not like the title of this paper I could easily suggest another—'A Defence of Eccentricity.'

MOUNTAINEERING IN THE JOSTEDALSBRÆEN.

BY A. L. WOOD.

THE Jostedalsbræen, the largest snowfield in Europe, lies in Central Norway and to the N. of the Sogne Fjord with its steep mountains on either bank. On the E. lies the Jotunheim or 'Home of the Giants,' as the Norsemen of old named that region of rocky peaks and forests. To the W. there are the Sunn and Nord Fjords leading out to the Atlantic, while Sunnmøre and Romsdal with their black hills bound the Brae (glacier or snowfield) on the N. The great snowfield stretches from the S. in a N.E. direction, and its greatest length is some 50 miles. The average height of the plateau is about 4000 ft. and in most parts the snow lies unmelted throughout the year, its depth being some 300 ft. in many places. From this plateau there are a great number of glacier-formed valleys which debouch steeply to the lower valleys, and which in their upper parts take the form of huge icefalls or torrents merging into the vast snowfield above from which they are fed. In other places at the edge of the *Fond* or snowfield the melting snow gives birth to innumerable waterfalls and cataracts, the roar of which as they rush down and over the steep, black rocks is ever in the ears of travellers in this part of Norway.

There are six main routes across this enormous expanse of snow and ice, but though they are shown on the map (*Norges Geografiske Opmaaling*, 1910. 1 : 200,000) as definite paths, they are such only in the minds of the local guides, who depend for their direction mainly on the compass and landmarks such as peaks and isolated boulder-masses. The *Fond* cannot, of course, be crossed in winter and is open for travellers and for climbing for only some three or four months in summer.

Half-way up the Sogne Fjord and on its N. bank is the