

Mountains and Mountaineering

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MOUNTAINS AND MOUNTAINEERING.

On Tuesday, 16th December, Dr. H. Rast gave a very interesting *causerie* on "Mountains and Mountaineering" at the Open Meeting of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9/11 Belsize Grove, N.W.3.

The President, Mr. W. Renz, introduced the speaker to the numerous audience by saying that he had not only climbed to the top in the medical profession, but he had also conquered many of the highest summits in the Swiss Alps.

Dr. Rast commenced his address with a question: Why does one climb mountains? He referred to opinions expressed by some of his friends, who regarded climbing mountains as beyond their understanding, "entailing nothing but toil, discomfort, deprivation and all kinds of hazards bringing no reward in the end".

The speaker answered the question — as far as he was concerned — by saying, "I feel that the contact with nature, with the elements, has something wholesome and healthy about it. Climbing gives you a sense of liberation, it is beyond good and bad, beyond financial consideration or politics." He said that he likes to compare the alpinist with the scientist in search of knowledge for its own sake, being like an explorer discovering new countries without thinking of practical gain.

"What you find on the mountainside", he said, "is an uninterrupted continuity of purpose, undisturbed, carefree, in perfect peace of mind, aloof from all the nasty things. Mountaineering calls for manly qualities, such as enterprise, courage, perseverance, decision and judgment. To climb conveys a sensation of fulfilment."

Dr. Rast then referred to the historical aspect of mountaineering, saying that the ancient Greeks cared little about nature or about mountains. The Romans used to cross the Alps, building beautiful roads, such as the Grand St. Bernhard, St. Gotthard, Grimsel, Theodul, etc. Hannibal from North Africa, after subjugating Spain, traversed the Alps in fifteen days in 218 B.C. in the face of seemingly insuperable obstacles. He came, with over 30 elephants, 9,000 cavalry and 50,000 men on foot, to attack the Romans in their own land. His troops, reared under African and Spanish suns, perished in their thousands amidst ice and snow. Many centuries later, Napoleon built the road over the Simplon (1800 to 1806), besides using the Grand St. Bernhard and the St. Gotthard. The purpose of this kind of mountaineering was simply to get to the other side.

The speaker said that it was chiefly at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century that the Swiss awakened to exploring the hills, although there had been pioneers before. These early pioneers were stimulated by Albrecht von Haller's poem, "Die Alpen" (first published 1792). The first Swiss explorers were mostly scientists who had a definite aim in mind. Horace Bénédicte de Saussure, physicist and geologist, of Geneva, climbed the Mont Blanc in 1787 with 19 guides; Studer, of Berne, mineralogist and botanist, Agassiz and companions studied the movements of glaciers.

Dr. Rast then referred to the "English epoch", which he said began early in the 19th century, when British mountaineers were roused by the works of



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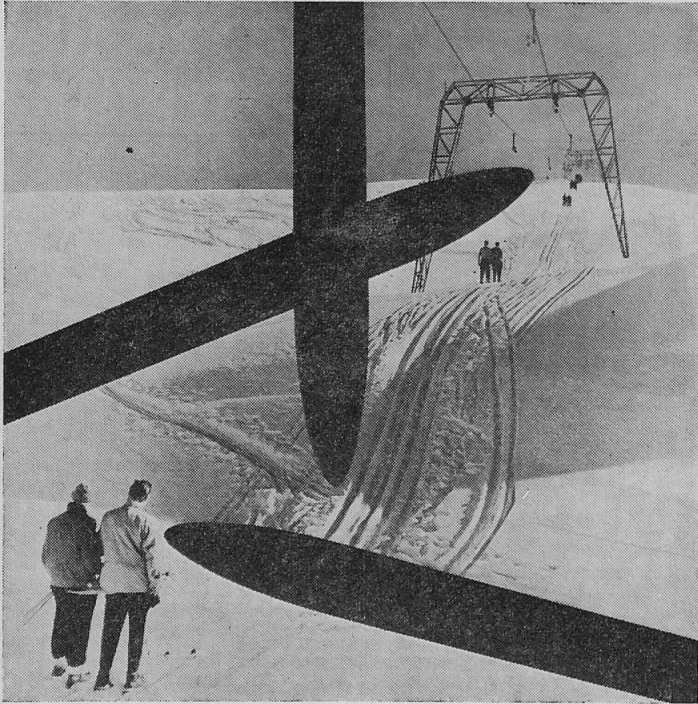
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Byron and later by those of Wordsworth, Ruskin and others. "Being real sportsmen," he continued, "the English raised unbounded enthusiasm and interest in our mountains, a fact which has endeared them to the Swiss ever since." The interest in mountaineering shown by Englishmen led to the foundation of the "Alpine Club" in 1857, which he said was "a rather exclusive Society admitting members only after closely scrutinizing their climbing experience". Three years later (1860), the Swiss followed with the establishment of the "Swiss Alpine Club", without, however, asking from its candidates any climbing qualifications.

The speaker then said that the early British mountaineers were looked upon by the local inhabitants as a somewhat eccentric lot. He quoted a passage from the diary of his great-uncle, who wrote in 1850: "There they come with their knickerbockers and checked jackets and climb for no practical purpose or gain, just for fun, quite odd. Although they keep strictly to themselves, they are friendly and we welcome their arrival. They are idealists, quite a superior lot of human beings."

Dr. Rast said that the influence of the English patrons was great and good, and the relationship with their guides was one reason why the guide of to-day has become a respected personality of some standing, a companion and not just a servant or kind of railway porter.

He then mentioned that at that time there existed neither picture postcards nor photographs, and foreign visitors eager to bring home souvenirs from their holidays would obtain them from local artists in the form of coloured prints, which explains why so many old Swiss prints are still to be found in this country.

Dr. Rast continued by saying, "Although the Swiss had already scaled many mountains, peak after peak fell now to the onslaught of the British. The first ascent of the Monte Rosa in 1855, the tragic ascent of the Matterhorn by Whymper's party in 1865, and of the 31 major peaks climbed during this Golden Age, 30 were first ascended by the British, mostly, of course, with Swiss guides."

The speaker said that the question "At what age should one start climbing mountains?" is often asked, and he answered it by saying "The earlier the better". He related, very amusingly, some mountain excursions he undertook at such early ages as six and eleven, and later on during school holidays.

Dr. Rast answered the question "Should one encourage guideless climbing?" with "Definitely yes!", saying that mountaineering is much more interesting and exciting if you have to make your own plans, find your own route, gain your own experience, use your own judgment and make your own mistakes. He then very vividly described some of his climbs, with and without guides, some of which were not devoid of dangers and narrow escapes.

As to "solitary climbing", when one goes entirely alone, he said that it has its fascination in enabling unhurried exploration; but one ought never to cross a glacier alone or climb alone slopes subject to avalanches. Whatever you do, whether you go alone or in company, there remain three chief dangers in mountaineering: stonefalls, avalanches and sudden unpredictable changes in the weather.

Dr. Rast then spoke of some of the equipment necessary for mountaineers, such as boots, ropes,

string vests, pullovers, windjackets, etc., and also of the kind of food required.

In concluding this very interesting talk the speaker made a personal avowal by saying: "I think mountaineering is not merely healthy, it does not only foster self-reliance and manliness amidst majestic scenery, but it helps me to discover my own self, to surmount difficult problems, to view things at the proper distance, in one word to find inner peace."

Dr. Rast was loudly cheered for his interesting and enjoyable *causerie*, and, after a short discussion, the President closed the Meeting, but not before having thanked the speaker for having for the first time addressed an audience of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, which he had done in such exemplary manner.

ST.

SWISS BANK CORPORATION.

The Swiss Bank Corporation announce the appointment of Mr. Max Homberger, hitherto a Manager of their Basle Office, to be a Manager in London with effect from 1st April 1959. Mr. Theodor von Speyr, hitherto a Sub Manager at the London Office, is appointed a Deputy Manager on 1st January 1959, and Messrs L. T. Fayers and G. S. Shaw become Sub Managers. We offer our sincere congratulations to these gentlemen on their new appointments.

At the same date the Bank lose several members of their Staff through retirement. Mr. Ernest J. Howell, who leaves the Bank after a period of service which is only five months short of the half century, has during his last few years with the Corporation been the Deputy Manager in charge of Staff affairs, having previously spent a long career in the Securities and Coupons Departments where he achieved wide recognition amongst his business associates in the City and abroad as a considerable expert on foreign securities and their many complications.

Mr. Max Merian, who also retires on 1st January, is a member of the famous Basle family, although he was himself born in Neuchâtel. He joined the Staff of the Swiss Bank Corporation at a relatively late stage, having previously served with Frederick Huth until the time of the closing down of that famous banking business. As a signature-holder of the Swiss Bank in London, his interest has been particularly devoted to the stock markets, of which he has a wide knowledge. His friends also know him as a writer of topical verse of no mean quality.

Albert Jufer, who also joined the Bank in more recent years, having first come to the Staff in 1940 after previous long service first with Lloyds Bank in Paris and later with the Banca Commerciale Italiana in London, has during his time in Gresham Street been associated with the Commercial Credits Department, while Mr. Max Sautter, who is also retiring and who is another member of the Staff to join at a relatively advanced stage of his career, after service with stock exchange firms, has during his banking time been employed in the Stock Department of the Corporation. At the time of his retirement Mr. Sautter is unfortunately in hospital recovering from the results of two serious operations. He is understood to be progressing favourably and our very sincere

sympathies go out to him, coupled with the hope of a speedy and complete recovery.

To all these gentlemen we express our best wishes for a long and healthy retirement.

C. J. BERNHEIM †

It is with deep and sincere regret that we announce the sudden passing away — owing to a stroke — of Mr. C. J. Bernheim, of 39 Aldersmead Road, Beckenham, Kent, on 28th December 1958, at the age of 69.

By his death the Colony loses yet another valued member of the "Old Guard", a likeable man of much charm. He and his wife were often seen at various functions of the Colony, and, throughout his nearly 50 years of residence in this country, he remained faithful to the land of his birth, which he loved very dearly, and frequently visited either on business or on holiday.

The deceased was born in 1889 at Farmenstorf (Ct. Aargau), where he received his first schooling. Losing both his parents at an early age, he continued his education at Chexbres (Ct. Vaud) and the Commercial School at Lausanne.

In 1907 he obtained a position with the firm of George Meyer & Co., straw goods manufacturers and exporters, in Wohlen, and five years later (1912) he was transferred to their London Office. At the outbreak of the First World-War in 1914, Mr. Bernheim was called back for the frontier occupation (*Grenzbesetzung*); on being released from the army he returned to London, where he remained, until his death, in charge of the firm's London Office. In May 1957 he celebrated his 50 years service jubilee with the firm. In the Second World-War he rendered voluntary service with the Civil Defence Organisation.

Mr. Bernheim had been a member of the City Swiss Club since 1929, and was a member of the Swiss Economic Council, a contributory member of the Swiss Mercantile Society, and one of the oldest subscribers to the "Swiss Observer". In all these Societies he made many friends, who will sadly miss him. He leaves a widow and a son, to whom we express our deep sympathy in their bereavement.

ST.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, 30th January 1959. We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: Willy Fischer (Meisterschwanden), J. J. Huber, P. Pfeiffer, H. G. Gattiker, E. A. Muller, W. Flory, H. Schlatter (St. Gall), M. Gédet, G. Ferrari, W. Wagner, Acme Transport Co. Ltd., H. F. Frutiger, Mrs. H. Chiverton, Mrs. L. E. Lloyd-Trachsel, R. Schweizer, W. Goldmann, W. E. Bion, E. Ritzmann (Arlesheim), F. Delaloye, E. Kuebler, J. Sieber, O. Jaeggi (Brussels), Mrs. J. Stanton, Jules Zimmermann, W. Walter, J. W. Bonjour.