

OLYMPUS : AN INTERNATIONAL EXPEDITION.

By W. J. ELLISON.

TWENTY-ONE persons left Marseilles in September last on board the *Patris II*, under the auspices of the French and Swiss Alpine Clubs, to climb Mt. Olympus. At the head of the party was M. Fred Boissonnas, who with Daniel Baud-Bovy first reached the summit in 1913. It included Baud-Bovy, his son, and a group of girl guides (whose agility won them the sobriquet of the 'gazelles') from Geneva, Dr. Etienne May of the G.H.M. of the C.A.F. and several others from Paris, Professor Ximenes, the Spanish expert on things Hellenic, an American, and an Englishman. M. Bourdon, who published an excellent series of articles on the expedition in the *Figaro*, says with justice: 'De ces ascensionnistes pas un n'était de ces grimpeurs de carrière dont la mission semble être d'escalader tout ce qui se dresse dans le ciel. Presque tous, au contraire, intellectuels ou artistes, se présentaient . . . avec plus de volonté que d'expérience, et il est trop évident que, s'ils se trouvaient un matin réunis au pied de cette montagne, c'est qu'elle s'appelait l'Olympe.'

In Athens we were joined by Mr. Agapitos, Mr. Johannides (director of the Neptos Steamship Company), and a party of Greeks organized by the Hodoiporikos Syndesmos ('Club des Marcheurs'), the Touring Club and the Boy Scouts Association. Moreover, the Greek Government lent its warm support to the expedition. M. Georgalas, director of the Geological Bureau, was appointed to accompany the party; while by the provision of motor transport, tents, a train of army mules with their 'agoyates,' and a body of light mountain troops ('Evezones') everything possible was done to facilitate the arrangements—even to the extent of the passing of a special Parliamentary decree for our convenience to allow of the boarding of a goods train by ordinary passengers in the valley of Tempe!

Two days and a night in Athens, with a wonderful moonlight picnic in the Acropolis, and (again by special procurement) at 6 A.M. on September 9 we were discharged by the Orient Express at the little seaside station that connects with Litokhoron. Omnibuses took us over an amazingly bumpy road to the village, where we had a scanty toilet, breakfast in the pic-

turesque café, and a highly interesting half-hour with the mules.

When at 8.45 A.M. the procession filed out of the village we were 105 strong—some forty-five 'tourists,' with fifty odd mules and their muleteers, a goodly patrol of Evzones (furnished, I feel, more by courtesy, and perhaps with a true Greek sense of the picturesque, than for security), and the trusty Kristo Kakalos, the chamois-hunter who had served with Boissonnas and Baud-Bovy on their original expeditions and is now the proud possessor of a printed visiting card bearing the words 'Hodigos Olympou' (guide of Olympus)!

The clouds were low, and only by an occasional break could we catch a glimpse of the mountains in the distance. As we set out, the rain began. Following the regular route described by Mr. Elmslie (in 'A.J.' 39, 86-99), we halted at Stavros (the Cross) at midday, and reached the monastery of St. Dionysius in the early afternoon. The tents were pitched outside the walls beyond the monastery and half-way to the Vythos, which provided a delightful, though distinctly chilly, bathing-pool. On the 10th we woke to rain, but as we mounted the clouds lifted. Boissonnas' original plan had been to camp on the high plain of Bara (approximately 2350 m.), whence the route to the top is comparatively short and easy. At Litokhoron, however, he was told that the complete absence this year of snow in the vicinity and its distance from the nearest water, made Bara impracticable. We were obliged, therefore, to make for Kalivia (the Huts), 1962 m., used by the English party of 1926; and it was there that our tents were pitched for the three following nights. Half-way from the monastery a part of the mule-train and their packs had to be abandoned; there too, at Prioni (the sawmill), the last running water was left behind. Fortunately the remainder of the mules, hired at Litokhoron and better used to the country, were able to continue with most of the tents and baggage to Kalivia; each day they were sent down to Prioni for water.

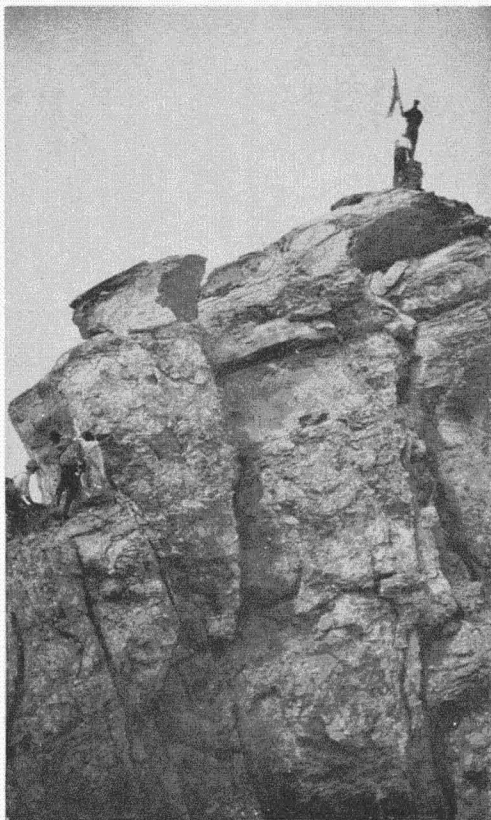
A fairish wind, a damp mist (which I gather to be customary), and the slope of the ground made the pitching of the tents and up-tilting of our stretcher-beds a matter of some discomfort. The temperature at night fell to nearly zero [C.]. Personally on the third night at Kalivia I learnt that pine-branches and the open sky were infinitely preferable to a damp and sagging stretcher, on a damp and dewy ground, under an over-ventilated hut, and slept for the first time in comfort and warmth. But dawn broke 'wondrous fair' over the still waters of the bay,

spirits were excellent, and everyone—or almost everyone—was up betimes on the morning of the 11th.

A careful scrutiny had been made on the boat of Marcel Kurz's *Le Mont Olympe* (see 'A.J.' 34, 173), and some of us hoped to effect the complete traverse of the mountain; but we had also hoped to bivouac at Bara. Camping at Kalivia, a beautiful spot but too far below the main peaks for practical purposes, involved some alteration of the programme, which only allowed two days on the mountain; it was decided to spend the first testing the merits of the party and visiting St. Elias and the Throne of Zeus, and leave the main peak to the following day. A little below the 'lower col' the party divided. The main group made its way right-handed to St. Elias, while a handful of the more ambitious, including Mlle. Evelyn Baron, the most experienced of the Swiss 'gazelles,' moving round the extraordinary circular depression that lies to the N.E. of Stefan, and, taking the main gully to the gap Stribadha, reached the Throne of Zeus (2909 m.) without difficulty about midday. Three of the Evzones with their officer accompanied us as far as the last, a rather giddy-looking, passage. A brief examination of the arête leading down from the summit to Porta led us reluctantly to abandon any hopes of a descent by that route. The photograph gives a good impression of the beginning of the ridge, which inclines more and more steeply as it approaches Porta. Most careful reconnaissance from below would certainly be needed before any such attempt. Moreover, a much less ambitious descent on the N.E. ridge (referred to at the bottom of page 91 of Mr. Elmslie's article¹) gave ample evidence of the thorough rottenness of the rock, which I can best compare to the Aiguilles Rouges to the N. of the Chamonix Valley, and of the need for extreme caution in any descent by *rappel*. We reached Kalivia for a late but welcome tea.

The 12th broke clear and warm; the drifting clouds of yesterday had gone, and everything gave promise of a brilliant day. Moving almost due W. from Kalivia, after a stiff and tedious scramble in the sun up steep paths between the trees, and then over loose scree, Skolion (2905 m.) was only reached for a brief rest at 1 P.M. The view was superb. (The photo shows the 'gazelles' and others, with Kakalos at their head, making for

¹ There is some confusion here. The ridge referred to in *A.J.* 39 is not a ridge on Stefan but a ridge leading up to Mitka from the gap Stribadha.—W. T. E.



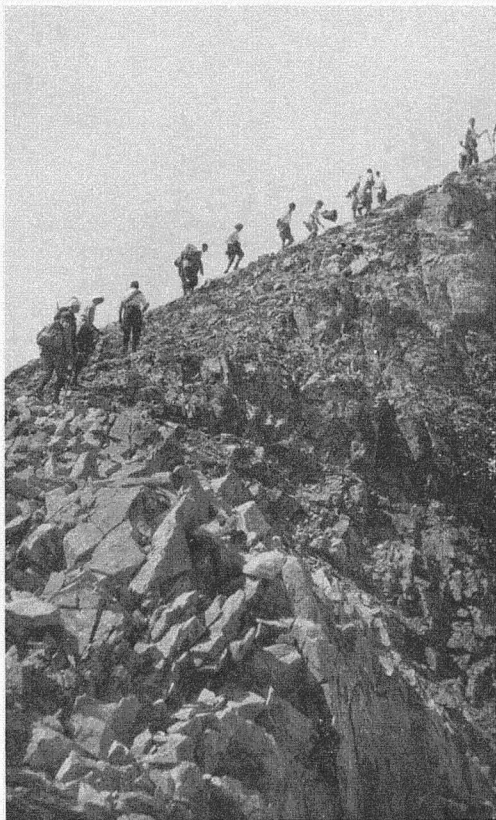
Phot. W. J. Ellison.

THE GREEK FLAG ON THE THRONE
OF ZEUS.



Phot. W. J. Ellison.

AT THE FOOT OF THE THRONE
OF ZEUS.



Phot. W. J. Ellison.

THE ALLIED ASSAULT ON SKOLION.



Phot. Boissonnas, Geneva.

THE UNCLIMBED ARÊTE LEADING
DOWNWARDS FROM THRONE OF
ZEUS TO PORTA.

lunch!) From there to Skala (2866 m.) is straightforward. While the bulk of the party rested, Brut, the cinematograph operator whom Pathé had sent with us, insisted on some *varapping* by the less amateur performers for photographic purposes on the crags of the Tarpeian Rock and the Virgin. Here I had the good fortune to discover half-buried on the crest mid-way between the two points the bottle with the inscription that Boissonnas and Baud-Bovy had left there in the fog in 1913. Here too I discovered to my shame, on seeing the film reproduction, the advantage of cord soles over Tricouni boots on sloping *dalles* and narrow *arêtes*.

Our gymnastics over, we returned with all speed to Skala to fetch those who were anxiously waiting to reach the main summit. We roped² and descended to the deep depression on the crest-line to the S. of the main summits, and in another half-hour were at the top (2917 m.). In all we were twenty-five, including ten of the 'weaker' sex. Captain Demesticas, with three fellow-Greeks, scorning the use of ropes, was (as was only proper) the first to arrive. Boissonnas, indefatigable in spite of his whitened hair, was there with his Swiss 'gazelles,' Baud-Bovy with his son Samuel, Etienne May and his friends from Paris, while the only Englishman of the party had the honour of arriving amid the enthusiasm of her fellow-countrymen with Miss Euphe Nomides, the first Greek woman to set foot on the summit since the days of the Goddesses. Greek, Swiss, French, and English flags were proudly waved, and two important rites accomplished. At the request of the Greeks, M. Boissonnas renamed the point 'Pantheon' instead of its previous inadequate appellation Mitka³ ('the Point'); and in the name of the C.A.F., S.A.C., and Alpine Club formally baptized the newly-formed Greek Alpine Club. Long may it live and flourish!

The remaining rite could only be accomplished after our return to camp in the glory of the sunset tints, with the aid of the champagne that we had, perhaps wisely, omitted to take

² Ropes were more by way of moral support to inexperienced—in some cases totally inexperienced—climbers, than of necessity. For the first time a 35-m. rope that I had carried painfully with me for possible *rappels* justified its existence: it carried nine persons, including Boissonnas—*père, fils et fille!* But the slope is steep and covered with loose and tumbling scree, and the rock treacherous.

³ This name, 'Pantheon,' seems to be rather a pity, reminiscent of Rome and Paris rather than of Homer!—W. T. E.

with us to the top. Speeches, songs, and the rhythmic dancing of the Evzones followed in the flickering light of the camp-fire. Olympus had been taken by storm, without slip or incident to mar the success of the undertaking.

'Rosy-fingered dawn' peering forth behind Mt. Athos over the bay of Salonika and casting her first shafts of radiance on the white pinnacles behind us, called us back from romance to the crude facts of our programme. It was hard to leave.

As we reached Litokhoron that evening the rain fell. The Gods had truly been good to us! A walk through the Valley of Tempe, with a bathe in the Peneius; a visit to the famous monasteries of the Meteors; a most hospitable reception on our return to Athens by the three Greek Clubs that throughout had treated us so well; and once more the *Patris II* and our respective homes, with a sense of real gratitude to the organizers of the expedition and the Greek Government that had helped so much to make it a success.

Somewhat vaguely the expedition had among its objects the investigation of the region of Olympus with a view to *sanatoria* and ski. Since these mean roads, hotels, and the other amenities of civilized existence, all lovers of the mountain will rejoice to know that in the event these objects were almost entirely forgotten!

OFF DAYS ON AN EMPIRE TOUR.

BY L. C. M. S. AMERY.

THE following extracts from my diary, covering a few days in the South African Drakensberg round Mt. aux Sources, and in the New Zealand Alps, may possibly interest members of the Club. For mountain beauty entirely of its own kind, both of form and colour, as well as for the scope it offers to the rock climber, the Drakensberg deserves far more attention than it has yet received, and is well worth the voyage to South Africa for its own sake. Nor do I know a more delightful mountain centre than the comfortable and cheery little mountain hostel at Gudu. As for the New Zealand Alps, their fame is well known to the mountaineering world. All they need is more huts and more trained guides to open up an unrivalled field both for climbing and for Alpine ski-ing, summer and winter. Meanwhile the Hermitage, under Mt. Cook, on the E. of the main range, and the Glacier Hotel at Waiho at the