THEY were not supermen; they were college boys — five from Harvard, two from Stanford. Yet, unexpectedly, they lived one of the most breath-taking adventure stories of recent times.

It started as a romantic lark—it nearly ended in death. The mountain is officially known as Mt. Yerupaja, the highest unclimbed peak in the New World. Unofficially, it is known as THE BUTCHER. The name may have referred to its shape, like a butcher's cleaver, four miles edge-up. "But," declares the author, "it took on a second, more terrible meaning before the summer was over."

The summer was 1950. A veteran mountaineer had warned the boys that there was a twenty-five per cent chance they'd all be killed if they climbed Yerupaja. The President of the American Alpine Club called any attempt "fantastic." Yet, in true college-boy fashion, they gayly flew to Lima, unkinked their one-hundred-and-twenty-foot ropes in the Grand Hotel Bolivar, then by truck, mule and foot stomped through one hundred and fifty miles of Indian villages to their goal — the top of Peru's UNCONQUERABLE.

The rest is historic in the annals of mountain-climbing. The face of THE BUTCHER was steeper than a ski jump. Some of its ridges were wind-blown sharper than a razor. What started as great fun suddenly became great adventure — an adventure that almost cost two lives.

# THE BUTCHER

*The Ascent of Yerupaja*

*by* JOHN SACK

RINEHART & CO., INCORPORATED
NEW YORK TORONTO

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY IN CANADA BY
CLARKE, IRWIN & COMPANY, LTD., TORONTO



PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER: 52–7159

*To*
*My* MOTHER, FATHER, *and* LOIS
*and* SALLY

# FOREWORD

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT SOME ADVENTURES THAT HAPPENED to six friends of mine and to me on a mountain called The Butcher. Most of us were Harvard students at the time; but I think it's only fair to say that they were mountaineers and I was a newspaper reporter. While my friends were climbing, I was commuting primitively between Lima and the mountain, or pondering the various incoherencies that they sent out by radio, or writing hyperbolic accounts of their activities for United Press. The story makes it clear when I was with them and when I wasn't; however, I occasionally use the word "we" to mean "our expedition" even when I wasn't there myself.

I am deeply grateful to United Press and to its editors Henry Minott, Joe Morgan, and Milton Carr. United Press was the one wire service that saw the possibilities of the trip; its rivals insisted that "we can't buy this story because we've never done anything like this before." I also want to thank Louis Garcia of Panagra and C. A. W. Player of Pan-American and their excellent airlines, which were always eager to help; Albert Gildred, who ran interference through Lima's red tape; Martin Sommers of the *Saturday Evening Post;* Dr. Alfredo Alvarez-Calderon, H. A. Kursell, and Robert P. Koenig, who ministered to our flagging radio; my

many friends in Chiquian and Paramonga, especially Señors McCallum, Ramos, Balarezo, Armesto, Vallerestria, and Barclay; and four students—Joe Baublis, Larry Savadove, Bill Simmons, and Pete Solmssen—who sheltered a homeless waif.

Finally I want to thank the six men who lived this story and invited me to join it: George Bell, Chuck Crush, Dave Harrah, Graham Matthews, Jim Maxwell, and Austen Riggs.

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS



*The following photographs appear between pages 118 and 119.*

# BOOK I

ANYTHING THAT CAN
POSSIBLY GO WRONG,
DOES.

*—Ancient mountaineering adage*

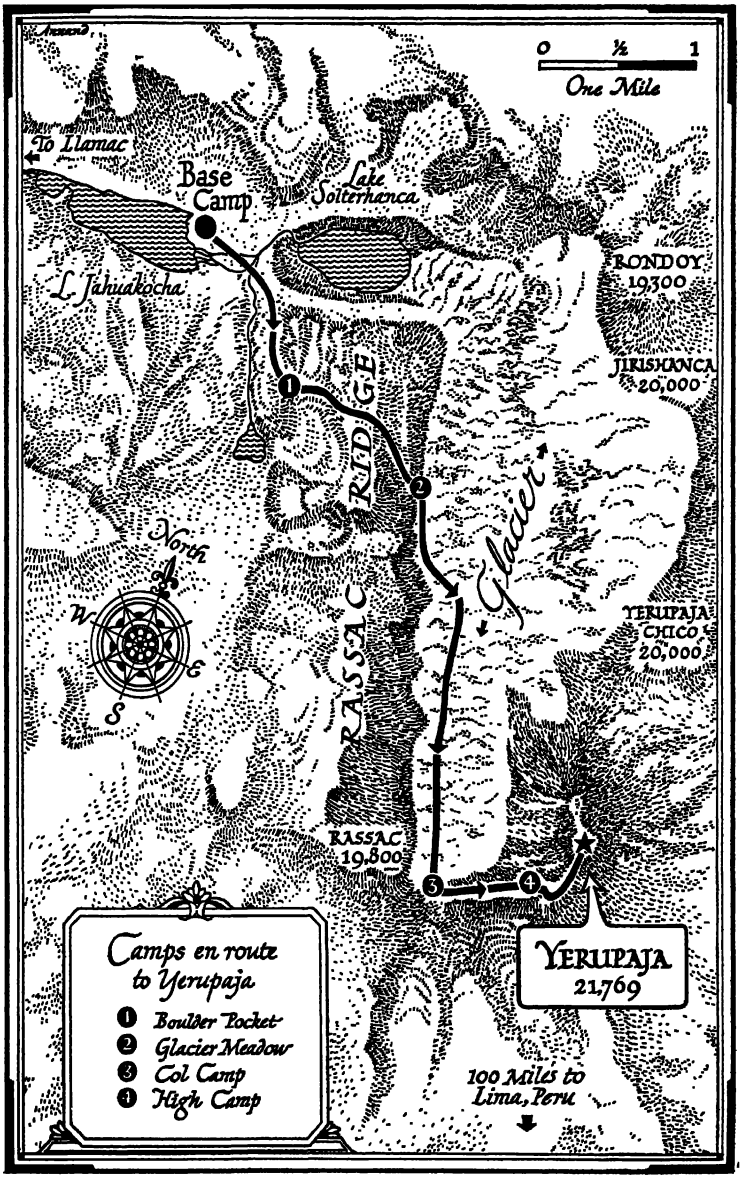
# I

THE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORY OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY IS like no other building at Harvard, and perhaps—for all I know—like no other building on earth. It is a world of its own, a Congo, a transplanted Mato Grosso. Two life-size bronze rhinoceroses guard the doorway: paunchy beasts, with ears cocked forward, and wide—if somewhat saggy—eyes glaring militantly down the approachways. Gilded spiders cling to the front door; on the brick walls, weird and unpronounceable animals have been sandblasted by some imaginative sculptor. A twisted boa constrictor darts its tongue at a giant tortoise, rampant. A gorilla hangs from a tree, making simian grimaces at a sable antelope just two rooms away. A giant anteater snivels along the fourth-floor lintel. Zebras rear up, ostriches inspect their right kneecaps, hippopotami glare moodily. Something called a nilgai leers blandly down on the courtyard, confident of its own inscrutability. Here are animals found only in the

jungles of Africa, or only in the sweltering tropics of India, or, I often fear, only on the walls of the Harvard Biology Labs: a "guanaco," a "beisa oryx," a "kudu," and what may be a "Prejvalsky horse" or a "prejval sky horse"—it makes little difference. To top it off, a six-foot moat surrounds the building; ostensibly it lets sunlight into the basement windows. But one feels it is also there to hold the savage beasts in bound, to keep them from nightly forays on the Greater Boston populace.

As you stand in the Bio courtyard, the horn-rimmed Harvard students and the Radcliffe girls, pedaling up on their bicycles, seem perilously out of place. The Biology Labs were built for a more adventurous sort of life. It is no surprise that 5000 live rats cavort inside, or that an insectivorous flower snaps at transient houseflies, or that rubber trees from Brazil and monkeys from India share the same corridor. And it is quite logical that here, during the winter and spring of 1950, a Harvard Andean Expedition should have plotted a trek into the backlands of Peru. But "Harvard Andean Expedition" is a deceptive title, calculated to seduce editors, delude customs officials, and win the hearts of generous food purveyors. It artfully evades the fact that the expedition was, after all, just six college boys—like the horn-rimmed specimens in the courtyard—six college boys who wanted to climb a mountain.

The awesome profundity of the title was lacking at the meetings in the Biology Laboratory. I remember one meeting I sat in on. Austen Riggs leaned back in his armchair and gazed wistfully out the window at the sentinel


0 ½ 1
One Mile
To Llamac
Base Camp
Lake Solterhanca
L. Jahuakocha
RONDOY 19,300
JIRISHANCA 20,000
RASSAC RIDGE
Glacier
North
W
E
S
YERUPAJA CHICO 20,000
RASSAC 19,800
YERUPAJA 21,769
100 Miles to Lima, Peru
Camps en route to Yerupaja
1 Boulder Pocket
2 Glacier Meadow
3 Col Camp
4 High Camp

rhinoceroses. "How about personal equipment?" he asked. "Should we each of us bring our own?"

Jim Maxwell scratched his chin and volunteered a reply. "I would suggest," he said, with all the precision of a lecturer at a mathematical colloquium, "that each person will need one cup and one spoon of small enough size to permit it to enter the user's mouth."

Jim was a senior at Harvard College, twenty-three years old. A wiry little guy, who looks nothing like the heroic mountaineer of moviedom, he seems more in character as the manager of the track team or a lab technician. As a matter of fact, he was both. But (like the rest of the expedition) Jim had hankered after mountains ever since he was a boy, when he browbeat some friends into holding a rope; and now (like the rest of the expedition) he was an experienced climber. Austen Riggs, who studied hemoglobins at Harvard, was a graduate student and twenty-five years old. George Bell and Graham Matthews had just graduated, while Dave Harrah and Chuck Crush were Stanford men. The expedition was their summer vacation; their goal was the top of Yerupaja, four miles above Peru. Even in that animalized biology building, the idea was somewhat breathtaking. Yerupaja was the highest mountain in the New World that no one had ever climbed. Many thought it never would be, never could be. Frank Smythe, the famous alpinist, is supposed to have said, "First climb Kanchenjunga, then Yerupaja"—a rather dispiriting comparison with the third highest mountain in the world, slayer of eight men. Another called it the Peruvian Matterhorn.

We often wondered what "Yerupaja" meant, not being conversant with the language of the native Quechua Indians. I spent some scholarly hours with a Quechua dictionary, and came to the conclusion that it stood for Top of the World or for Needle of Rock, or perhaps something in between. Later, in Peru, we were somewhat put out to learn from an Indian that a more rational translation would simply be Ice Mountain. The Spanish name for Yerupaja is more appealing to the melodramatic mind. It is "El Carnicero"—The Butcher. The name may refer to the mountain's shape—like a butcher's cleaver, edge up—but it took on a second, more terrible meaning before the summer was over.

Our scholarship turned up other literature about Yerupaja. Material in the local libraries might correctly be described as sparse. What there was, was usually written in German, a linguistic practice that we never failed to attribute to downright perversity on the part of the author. The great Peruvian explorer, Raimondi, had visited the Yerupaja range in 1874; with more enthusiam than geographical exactitude he described it as "giant mountains, covered with eternal snow, appearing to join heaven and earth." Yerupaja, at 21,769 feet, was head and shoulders the highest peak in the range. It wasn't mapped until 1936, by one Erwin Schneider and a redoubtable party of Austrians. Schneider's exploits in Peru have bathed him in other-worldly improbability; we could never quite regard him as real, only as a piece of folklore invented by the local citizenry to torment us less venera-

ble mountaineers. Yet Schneider failed twice to climb Yerupaja. And there were other expeditions—Americans and Europeans who gawked at the mountain from a safe distance, scrambled around its foothills, and launched abortive attacks on the summit—but none of them did any better. For the face of The Butcher was steeper than a ski jump; and its ridges, in many places, had been stropped by the wind to razor-blade sharpness.

It was an immoderate attempt, then, this Harvard Andean Expedition. But the Expedition was young, and not easily awed; and it knew it had the experience. Graham Matthews, for example, had climbed in Persia while he was in the Army; and almost everyone had spent summers in the Rockies and British Columbia. Their outlandish idea—to fly to Lima, to push by truck, mule, and foot through 150 miles of Indian villages, and then to climb The Butcher—had been brewing in their heads since 1948. And a mountain, once a mountaineer has thought of it, soon becomes an obsession—an obsession and a vision. In 1950, at a cost of $1000 per man, they agreed to make the trip.

I went to Peru with them, for reasons that have never been adequately understood. The expedition hoped to pay part of its way with newspaper stories, and I was hired to write them. Since this journalistic foray netted something under sixty-three dollars, it hardly seems a credible explanation. I also drove their truck for a few hours, talked to them by radio, and guarded their camp at the foot of the mountain from head-hunters, wild boars, and

other local chimeras. I had a lot of time to learn about Peru, about mountains, and about mountaineers, and to join an expedition that started as great fun and ended as great adventure.

# 2

AUSTEN RIGGS GOT IN SHAPE BY CYCLING EVERY AFTERNOON through two miles of Cambridge. In Salinas, Chuck Crush hoisted bar bells above his balding head. In Ithaca, George Bell lived 150 vertical feet below the Cornell physics building. He ran uphill to classes every day, impressing faculty members with this remarkable enthusiasm for promptness and so killing two birds with one stone. In Stanford, Dave Harrah trotted up and down the steps of the stadium. Graham Matthews took long hikes. Graham also went skiing on Mt. Washington, and tore a cartilage. For weeks he lay in a hospital, solaced only by his own caustic humor and the interminable visits of a Radcliffe sophomore. When he finally came out on crutches, it looked as if the expedition had flopped: members hunted high and low for a new man, even inviting one of my roommates, and finally decided to chance it with five. Then Graham's leg obligingly healed. Whereupon Jim fell out of a tree.

Jim is a part-time tree surgeon; this was his way of training for Yerupaja, a practical way of getting used to lofty—if not quite Andean—heights. Jim was alleviating an oak when he wrenched his right arm. He still could make the trip easily, but he had lost half the grip in his hand.

Meanwhile, events in Peru formed a depressing complement to these crises at home. Early in the spring, Peru had its worst earthquake in any reasonable number of years: accounts differ, according to the zeal of the reporter and the scruples of the local editor. Several hundred Indians were killed; the *National Geographic* dispatched a correspondent to investigate; the Peruvian tourist trade profited handsomely. For us, the quake served notice that the Andes might not be content to sit still while we climbed them. It also hinted that our own arrival in Peru would be considered as something less than earth-shaking, a suggestion with which the Peruvian Customs Office was heartily to concur.

All the elements seemed to conspire against our brazen plans for the summer. Soon after George and Austen landed in Lima as a vanguard to the expedition, revolution broke out. Students rebelled in Arequipa, Peru's second city, for reasons of chiefly scholarly interest. A general named Montagne had been nominated for the presidency, to oppose the incumbent Odria. Realizing that this lessened his chances for re-election, Odria placed Montagne in jail; such tactics failed to mollify Latin tempers, and the revolution swept to Lima. Censorship was clamped on. Planes were grounded. With sinking heart I

approached Lou Garcia of Panagra Airways; his behavior was heartening but enigmatic. "The revolution?" said Garcia. "Oh yes, ha ha. Don't let *that* worry you!"

As it turned out, Lou Garcia's optimism was well taken. South American revolutions, for all their fame, seem to be waged on a purely philosophical plane. To the man in the street, they are of no greater consequence than the butter-and-egg prices in St. Louis. Peru's revolution of 1950 didn't disturb us at all, except when we mispronounced the Spanish word for mountain and voiced that outlawed name of Montagne. Our difficulties were chiefly semantic.

There is an ancient axiom in mountaineering that helps in planning an expedition. It goes like this: anything that can possibly go wrong, does. So we didn't worry about injury, earthquake, or revolution, except as was necessary for the sake of appearances. During the spring of 1950, the expedition continued to lay plans in the jungly confines of the Biology Lab. We fabricated a stock of most wondrous stationery: in a type face solemnly resplendent, and with a giant Andean condor, who looked suspiciously like a turkey buzzard, soaring across the page and squinting hungrily at the salutation. Our letterhead suggested that the expedition was the greatest thing to happen to the Andes since the Upper Cretaceous Period. It won the rewards it deserved. Breakfast-food purveyors sent us their produce by the tubful, in the hope we would intimate, when we left the mountains, that the consumption of their cereal was in some measure responsible for

our successes. Rope manufacturers graced us with reels of nylon. An instant-potato company provided us with several bagfuls, with the suggestion that we prepare a serving for the local Indians—Peruvian Indians grew the first potatoes—and get testimonials from the Man Who Knows.

The American Museum of Natural History asked us to shoot some birds. There might be some new species down there, said the American Museum of Natural History. They commended to us one of Peru's most distinguished bird-stuffers, Señor Juan Ormea, with the suggestion that we take him with us to do the honors. This we later did, although it developed that Don Juan was not so distinguished as one might hope. The American Geographical Society asked us to make a rather intimate survey of the Yerupaja glacier: how fast was it moving? how deep its crevasses? how tall its moraines? was it advancing? retreating? or just squatting? With this information, correlated with similar data, the American Geographical Society hoped to learn, for example, whether we're in for another ice age. Presumably they could warn us in time.

There was an infinity of details to iron out that spring: prickly, scraggly, boring, enervating little details. Lighting, for example. Should we take flashlights (which burn out) or gas lamps (every now and then they explode)? Solution: flashlights and four dozen batteries. What kind of gasoline? It mustn't evaporate at high altitudes. Where can we get altimeters? Do they sell them in Peru? Jim will bring one suit of good clothes. Should anyone else? Do we want one or two vacuum mixers?

"What's that for, mixing vacuums?" What do we want and do we really want it and if we had it who would carry it, and who sells it and how come he just ran out of it last week?

Jim Maxwell and I worried about the transmission of news to United Press. We had bought a Signal Corps radio in Boston, a quite unfathomable gray object splattered with dials, meters, jack holes, and intriguing code letters. Jim was to carry it into Yerupaja and broadcast daily messages; I was to listen in Lima, although what radio I would use for that purpose had been only superficially determined. We now agreed on a code for transmission, under the assumption—it seemed almost self-evident at the time—that rival news services would assign monitors to our frequency in an attempt to intercept our broadcasts. Thus, if Jim announced that "Number two and number four have reached the top of number nine," I would know that Chuck and Graham had climbed the mountain, while our unhappy opposition puzzled over the possible significance of this communication.

Having invested heavily in the Signal Corps radio, we were determined to make every conceivable use of it. I had concluded some arrangements with the National Broadcasting Company for a spot broadcast from the mountain—arrangements that might properly be described as indefinite. Jim would speak from Yerupaja soon after the mountain was climbed: perhaps from the very top itself. I would pick it up in Lima and transfer it onto recording tape, which I would immediately dispatch to

NBC by some sort of overnight courier. Now, in Cambridge, I set about writing a script for Jim's use. The original is still somewhere on Yerupaja, but there is a carbon copy before me: it suggests that I was still somewhat overimpressed with the more hysterical possibilities of the climb.

BROADCAST

(Speak Slowly)

This is the Harvard Andean Expedition. We're talking to you from the middle of Peru, from our advance camp near the top of The Butcher of the Andes—Mt. Carnicero. The temperature up here is—. The wind must be blowing—miles an hour; maybe you can hear it too. Here, at—feet, the air is so thin that (give two or three examples).

Our camp up here is just a small shelf we've chopped out of the ice, with three mountain tents pitched on it. The mountain here is all ice; just three feet from our tent is an almost vertical ice cliff, dropping over a mile to the glacier down below. (Describe scene: cliff, wall, condors the only sign of life, the camp. Make it short.)

Above us is a narrow ice ridge, leading to the peak of Carnicero. And now we can say what we've been waiting to say for two years. We've reached the top. Just—hours ago we planted the flag of the Harvard Mountaineering Club on the top of Carnicero.

———and———made the first ascent. (Describe what they did, how they had to do it. Be clear; use similes.)

We got back to camp just ten minutes ago. We want our mothers to know we're all safe. Right now all we want is a rest.

This maudlin epic might still have been foisted on an expectant—if not entirely credulous—world were it not for a certain vagueness in our plans as to how we would convey a thirty-pound radio to the top of a four-mile mountain. I remember suggesting to Jim, also, that if the Andean winds did not live up to expectations, perhaps some of the other fellows might cluster around the microphone and breathe heavily.

For the radio, and for all the other expedition gear, Austen's home became a defenseless repository. We bought it in Boston, in Seattle, in Freeport, Maine; we sent it, willy-nilly and perhaps even maliciously, to Austen. For the imperturbable Mrs. Riggs, I have nothing but praise. To watch truckmen dump mountain tents, gasoline cans, boned turkeys, trench shovels on her doorstep; to see her living room bloat out with air mattresses, a nylon tarpaulin, half a mile of rope, one drum of instant potatoes, two cases of onion and cabbage flakes, 200 vinylite bags; and then, as the month progressed, to watch this repulsive monster spill into the hallway, ooze up the stair well, and bury the second-floor bedrooms with assorted jams, long underwear, Coleman stoves, boot dubbing, inner soles, beef liver—this would derange the most stoical of housewives. Mrs. Riggs faced her tormentors

with resigned impassivity. She is an unsung hero of the expedition.

Austen put the small boxes in big boxes. For the satisfaction of customs agents and insurance companies, he listed them, item by item, first bemusedly: "1 metal pole for Putnam tent. 1 tent for above pole," then perfunctorily, "3 cases Klim. 1 can banana flakes," and finally somewhat bitterly, "25 ice pitons. 2 pseudo ice pitons." On May 18 he trucked it to Boston Harbor and dumped it on the *Santa Olivia*, bound for Panama and Lima. Four crates. Eighty-six cubic feet. Fourteen hundred and ninety pounds.

We took out passports from the State Department. The State Department glued grotesque approximations of our countenances under that barefaced lie, "Photograph of Bearer." It further distorted our features with a notary seal, a most homely bureaucratic halo; whatever was left recognizable, soon disappeared under scrawly signatures and red-and-blue crosshatchings. We were expertly camouflaged.

We got shot for typhoid. A bank in Boston gave us arabesque letters of credit. We got shot for typhus. The Peruvian consul stamped our visas, punctuating his blows with rhapsodic outbursts about his native land, which he said he hadn't seen for twenty years. We got shot for paratyphoid. We bought plane tickets, leaving from Miami. We got shot for yellow fever. We got shot for smallpox. We got shot for tetanus. We were ready to Go.

# 3

GEORGE BELL AND AUSTEN RIGGS LEFT FOR LIMA ON JUNE 12, ten days before the rest of us. They were our *avant-garde*, our G-2. More precisely, their function was like that of the Bowery urchins of the 1800's who swept aside sidewalk rubbish in the path of oncoming tycoons. George and Austen would prepare an eager Peru for our visitation; they would brush the stumbling blocks from our way; they would hasten our arrival at the mountain. As we romantically imagined it, they would march through the streets of Lima beating a small drum and shouting, "Here come the courageous mountaineers! Barbecue your oxen and make ready your sister!"

George saw things a little more prosaically. "Most of the time," he explained, "we'll be shoveling potatoes out of wooden crates and shoving them into vinylite bags." He and Austen would pick up our gear at the dock and mother it through customs. They would repack it in loads

small enough for a man to carry, tight enough to fend off water and weather, sturdy enough to travel on mules. Then, renting a beach wagon or truck, they would cart it all to the Indian village of Chiquian, 200 miles away. The rest of us would land in Lima on June 23, hop a bus that went near Chiquian, and meet the beach wagon on a lonely dirt crossroads in the Great Desert of Peru. It would be the first time that all six members of the expedition were together. Then we would drive to Chiquian and, undoubtedly on the next morning, head for the mountain by mule. It all seemed so adventurous, so melodramatic, that we never quite realized its absurdity.

In Lima, George and Austen would also buy extra food, set up a bank account, hoard credentials and letters of introduction, and, almost incidentally, obtain permission from Peru to climb this mountain of theirs. To us, it seemed that nature had providentially created George and Austen for the sole purpose of dealing with Peruvian officialdom. Both of them were tall—preposterously tall. To the shortish Peruvian bureaucrats, we hoped they would appear awesomely tall, too tall to be refused, too tall to be argued with. George is 6 feet 4. Austen is 6 feet 6¾. One on top of the other, they are a shade under 13 feet—a rather interesting idea mathematically, if not strictly practicable. Austen's father liked to point out that great men were, on the average, taller than their subjects; and with a faith in this sort of philosophy we had sent Austen and George to Peru, to awe its authorities into submission.

As it was to turn out, we were sadly wrong. Peruvian functionaries failed to cower. Their sole contact with American youth, it developed, was with visiting basketball teams—gangly goons from the Midwest who put even Austen to shame. Perhaps this was why the Peruvian government interpreted our advent in Lima as the start of an athletic rivalry, and why our dealings with them were chiefly of the nature of pitched and sportive battles.

On the West Coast, Dave Harrah and Chuck Crush put their baggage into an overly spacious station wagon and headed for Miami. Jim Maxwell, Graham Matthews, and I left New York City by car on a drizzly June 19. The next morning we were in Florida, having driven all night and displayed only a token respect for the traffic ordinances of the local gendarmerie. That decrepit city, St. Augustine, depository of the oldest *everything* in the United States, doddered past us; in our haste we passed up the unusual opportunity, or so we were assured, of gaining eternal youth at the local watering place. That would have been a timely stop! To drink of the Fountain of Youth; to rid our teeth of those Georgia pralines, which had been deployed there for the better part of the morning; and at the same time to guarantee our imperishability on Yerupaja, no matter what terrors that mountain should hold! But no: we had a plane to make.

Chuck and Dave, looking distressingly like mountaineers, were waiting for us at Miami Airport. To Graham's consternation, both had begun growing beards—which

mountaineers need for more than ostentation, since they shield the face from wind and sun. We had agreed, though rather loosely, to shave every day until we reached Peru: hirsuteness is a matter of pride among climbers, and the impending contest had to begin on fair terms. It now appeared that Graham had been the only man to stick to the rules, although he gloriously overtook his rivals during the summer.

Chuck's balding head glittered above his beard; you had the feeling that his face had been attached upside down. It was the first time that most of us had met him. We knew that he was thirty-four; that he had begun climbing when most of us began walking; that since then he had done some spectacular ascents in the Sierra Nevadas and New Zealand. It turned out that Chuck was not so hoary as we had come to expect: his thinning hair and a billiard-ball chin that grinned out from his beard were the only signs of superannuation. Chuck is eminently good-natured, good-humored, and forgiving; there is no one I know easier to get along with.

Pan-American's DC-6 airliner was waiting for us, and it was doomed to wait a good while longer. For now the photographers, benignly unimpressed by the last-minute urgency with which we had been summoned, at least five minutes before, over the public-address system—now the photographers determined to pose us, for airline publicity, in various unlikely attitudes. Graham, Chuck, Jim, and Dave: they smiled, they waved, they gritted; they stood on the ground, they stood on the ramp, they stood in

the doorway; they struck, whenever possible, an air of heroic expectation.

"Who the hell are those guys?" one of the ground crew mumbled as we finally boarded.

Our plane dawdled down the runway, past the exhausted photographers, past the mound of burnt-out flash bulbs, onto still another runway that looked not much different from the first. There it stood for the better part of a minute, its motors roaring deafeningly—an eternal habit of pilots calculated, I feel sure, more to awe the bystander than to accomplish anything aerodynamically. Then it shot forward and slowly rose above the sand and stucco of Miami, bound for South America and winter.

A Pan-American luxury airliner, which incomprehensibly becomes a Panagra luxury airliner below Panama, is an example of conspicuous leisure. Luxury on this plane is not a privilege: it is a mandate, dictatorially and almost threateningly enforced by the stewardesses. Their philosophy can best be described as "We're going to make you comfortable, goddammit." As you take your seat you are tethered with what is deceptively called a safety belt; you are rendered immobile, eternally sedentary; your will to do anything for yourself is sapped from you. Whatever you could conceivably desire, in the most celestial flights of the imagination, the stewardess can produce; God only knows where she keeps them. For the *littérateur*, magazines; for the celebrant, liqueur; for the fastidious, an electric razor; for the diseased, Kleenex; for the *avant-garde*,

the Miami *Herald;* checkerboards for the aged, bridge decks for the sportive, kaleidoscopes for the kiddies.

My fellow passengers loved these pamperings. Panagra has the silly habit, for example, of rolling a red carpet to the plane at every airport: a rather short red carpet, not at all long enough to reach the terminal building. Usually it ends anti-climactically on some patch of concrete bordering the runway. At places such as Panama, where native attendants were untutored in the function of red carpets, it led off in a direction quite contrary to that of the terminal. Yet we noticed with amusement that passengers never failed to walk its full length, turning solemnly at the end—often at right angles—to reach wherever they had intended to go. Red carpets are a major come-on in Panagra's advertising campaign: stars like Dolores del Rio are forever pointing out that they "feel like a queen" in the process of boarding a P-G clipper.

They served a supper on plane that can best be described as highly categorized. My meal tray, as I remember, held twenty-two different receptacles. I took a dill pickle out of a cellophane bag, three pinches of salt from a cardboard box, one pat of butter from a bakelite canister, two toothpicks from a tubular sort of wrapping, even the silverware from a sterilized envelope. This system has some benefits, since most of the boxes are labeled with the name of their enclosures, and, in the dim light of an airplane, the traveler is afforded a greater insight into the nature of his meal. But here also lies the drawback. Many of the labels are in Spanish; some are mere pictorial ap-

proximations of the uses to which the box should be put, and are rather inscrutable; and others, printed in green ink on cellophane, certainly an impractical idea, are superlatively illegible. Because of this system, it grieves me to say, I poured a container of mayonnaise into my coffee; I also gulped four candy mints under the delusion they were air-sick pills. (Out of fairness to Panagra Airways, I must confess that I had no need for either.)

Morning was exciting. Our stewardess had engaged herself in the process of walking through the plane, entertaining her charges with the information that the Andes were now passing on the left; they looked very brown and very far away. It was our first glimpse of Yerupaja after two years of dreaming, but it was somewhat chilling to reflect that the summit was higher than the plane itself. Below us, the topography was most inexplicable. The sun glinted off a rolling, bumpy plain that might be the Pacific Ocean (but it wasn't moving) or might be the desert (but there were no roads). As it turned out, it was the top of a fog bank, a most horrible, drizzly, depressing fog bank that hangs over Lima much of the year, bringing misery to the inhabitants and increased profits to the purveyors of anti-histamines. The top of the fog was almost razor-sharp: we watched it rise past our window as our plane descended; the sun disappeared and the fog grew darker and darker, until we couldn't see the tips of the wings; then we dropped out through the underside of the fog, and the runways of Limatambo Airport loomed up through the drizzle.

Our reception at Lima was hardly calculated to brighten the day. But before launching into the mawkish tragicomedy of the airport, and at the risk of seeming somewhat obvious, I think it may be appropriate to make sure that the reader knows just where Peru is, who the heck lives there, and why. Peruvians and cosmopolites should excuse me for this rather skimpy and belated Baedeker. A friend, writing me during the summer, seemed to entertain the notion that Peru was on the west coast of Spain. So to begin with, Peru is not on the west coast of Spain. That's "Portugal." Far from it, Peru is on the Pacific Coast of South America, just below the equator; yet it is almost due south of New York, and Peruvian clocks run on Eastern Standard Time, or, in the more backward areas, a courageous approximation.

Peru is larger than you probably think, and most of what you think is Ecuador is really Peru, or at least the Peruvians say so. The country is divided into three parts, suggesting a comparison too trite to mention. On the coast is the desert, very narrow, very dry, but, again, very foggy. Then come the Andes, the highest mountain range in the world outside of the Himalayas, and the longest anywhere; finally what the Peruvians call the *montaña.* This doesn't mean more mountains: God knows, the Andes are enough; the *montaña* is the jungled "Green Hell" of the Amazon tropics. The Andes are the key to the whole thing, for, since the wind comes from Brazil and drops all its water as it rises over the Sierra, Peru is naturally split into jungle, mountain, and desert. It goes without saying,

then, that Peru is completely uninhabitable. This is one of those insidiously obvious axioms that later turns out to be wrong. About eight million persons live in Peru; absolutely none of them are Incas. Peru is one of those unlucky countries, like Greece or Egypt, whose history clouds its geography; in the public mind, present-day Peruvians are little more than faceless caretakers of an historic shrine. Actually, the last Incas died several hundred years ago, or at least began to call themselves Quechuas, and no one really misses them. The Incas built excellent highways that they hardly ever used; they built their temples from grotesquely shaped stones fitted together with absurd patience. On the other side of the ledger, they had the good sense to regard gold and silver as holy, but rather valueless, trinkets. Gold represented the tears of the sun; silver had something to do with the moon. This is probably all you care to know about the Incas. They were civilized in 1532 by a bastard swineherd named Pizarro, in one of history's major setbacks. Through Pizarro, Peru introduced to the Old World the potato and syphilis, two innovations of which current Peruvians, as I have gathered from conversation, are equally proud.

Nowadays there are two kinds of people living in Peru: the Spaniards and the Indians. An Indian, of course, is anyone who was there before the Spaniards came, and doesn't at all imply cannibalism, loincloths, or poison darts, as we found out soon after we arrived, more to our disappointment than our relief. Indians, especially the

younger ones, can be readily identified by their incessantly running noses; the aboriginal populace is in urgent need of plumbing repairs. Spaniards, on the other hand, wear mustaches, perhaps, for all I know, for their absorbent qualities. Peruvians are mostly farmers, but they do a lot of mining too.

As for climate, Lima is just 10 degrees below the equator, but the Humboldt Current flows up from the Antarctic and cools things off. Fish are plentiful in the tepid Humboldt, bringing immense numbers of offshore birds: I once watched an almost opaque belt of them, 100 yards wide and about thirty miles long. The birds live on islands of their own accumulated droppings; once an enterprising huckster, a man for whose salesmanship I have nothing but the greatest admiration, convinced the world that it was in almost calamitous need of this product. Peru began mining the stuff, selling it as fertilizer to joyous farmers, and for about fifty years the country's economy was literally based on bird manure. Until the exploiters grew too greedy for the birds' capacities, the deposits often grew 200 feet thick, which is pretty high.

# 4

THERE WERE A FAT PHOTOGRAPHER AND A SKINNY PHOTOGrapher waiting for us at the airport. Neither of them spoke English; our conversation was limited to the offerings of my pocket guide to practical Spanish conversation. The guide seemed practical enough, though not just then: it proffered sentences such as "Can you repair my water pump?" and "Do you have a chiropodist in attendance?" and things like that. It made no provisions for casual banter with newspaper photographers at airports.

There was a man from the Grand Hotel Bolivar, who blandly assumed that we desired no other lodging but his, and had already arranged for a bus. His innocence took us off guard; he made it look so simple, so obvious, that we soon found ourselves in hearty accord with the incontrovertibility of the whole matter.

Worst of all, there were Austen and George.

It was refreshing to see them, of course, unmaimed

and abroad after the imagined terrors of the so-called revolution. It was also the first time the expedition was together in one spot. But, we remembered, this historic event was mis-scheduled: it was supposed to take place 200 miles from here, at that lonely desert crossroads. We were to meet melodramatically, like Stanley and Livingstone, one group by bus and the other by beach wagon, shaking hands while the wind whipped dust into our grizzled faces. It was both annoying and unaccountable that we should be together at Limatambo Airport, what with George and Austen immaculately shaven and dressed in business suits—clothes ominously suggestive that our departure for the Andes would not be precisely instantaneous. With creeping paralysis we listened to their story.

Our gear was still in customs. It sat, three fourths of a ton, on the docks at Lima's seaport. Customs inspectors squatted around it, like Apaches around a council fire, guarding it against the encroachments of wind, fire, water, or its legal owners. It had sat there for two weeks; how much longer it would sit there—this was a riddle that could best be submitted to local soothsayers and gipsy tea-leaf readers, and one that they had as much influence over as we. It would sit there, for all we knew, until the worm-eaten dock doddered into the Pacific or, possibly even sooner, until we sent it back to the United States.

Austen and George told us why. They had gone to the pier as soon as they landed in Lima. Here it developed that Peru was dead short on dollars: there were strict laws on what you could import from the United States and

what you couldn't. Crampons, tent poles, instant potatoes, and dehydrated onion flakes—these were not considered among the essentials. Ergo, they must not enter Peru.

"But, *señor mío*," Austen had said, confronting the intractable customs agent with the best Spanish he could muster. "*Señor*, we do not sell the baggage. The baggage is not for Peru. It is for us. *Para nosotros. Para Alpinistos.*"

"Very good! Very good!" said the customs man. "In that event, then, it is all right. We can write for you a special permit." It would be quite simple. We could take our equipment inland, as long as we didn't sell it. Customs would make a list, and check it when we came back. Everything must still be there.

George and Austen had been a little leery. They were bound to lose a few items in the mountains—gloves, perhaps, or silverware. But that seemed rather minor. "Of course," said George, "there's the food . . ."

"*Sí, señor, sí.* The food. That is very good," said the inspector. "That is all right. You take the food in, you bring the food back. We give to you a permit. That is all right."

George's and Austen's jaws had dropped with puppet-like synchronization. "But, *señor mío*, we will *eat* the food! We cannot bring it back. The food: we will *eat* it!" The inspector looked puzzled. "*Señor*, the food is to eat. *Comida.* Breakfast, *señor, desayuno.*" Austen and George pointed to their mouths, they chomped their teeth, they patted their bellies. "We *eat* it, *señor.* Then there is no food left. We may not bring it back."

The inspector was inexorable. No, that would be impossible. "*Es imposible, señor.* If one takes American supplies into the country, one must return them. See, is it not written here in the law? I am only an officer of the customs, *señor.* I am to obey the law. But should you desire a permit . . ."

Peru's lawmakers, eager to attract American tourists, let them bring whatever comforts they desired. Even their favorite foodstuffs. But the eventuality that they might desire to eat some of their food in transit, this there was no provision for.

We heard this from George and Austen. Our feelings, you may think, were something akin to despair. Actually, the thing was so ridiculous we couldn't do anything but laugh. We were in high spirits that morning; we were, after all, in Peru, and just 200 miles from Yerupaja; and we were sure our bearded faces would soon mollify Latin bureaucracy, represented by the obdurate inspectors of the customs house. We piled into the bus and headed along the road to downtown Lima, past squat little advertisements painted on adobe fences. One of them ballyhooed Inca-Cola. This was something else to laugh at: that juxtaposition of the old and the new, separated by the flimsiest of hyphens, sounded too absurdly like the Peru of our travel folders. Then there was a big sign for "Crush," Peru's version of Orange-Crush and, as far as I can make out, the staple diet of a goodly number of natives.

"Hey!" Jim said to Chuck Crush, "it looks like they're expecting us!"

Our room was on the fifth floor of the Grand Hotel Bolivar. I threw open the windows as soon as we got there: an ill-advised idea. Lima's chilling, gloomy fog drizzled in. Across the ledge, with all the symbolism of Poe's raven, sat two vultures. I've learned, since then, that vultures are the only birds in Lima; perhaps this follows logically. They are the city's garbage-disposal unit, and do quite a commendable job. I would be happy to recommend the system for a trial run in New York or other of our metropolises, except that there are two sides to every question and two sides to every vulture, and the atmosphere of Lima is none the better for *that.*

Just a little dispirited, we closed the windows on a foggy, soggy, and most dilatory Lima, and prepared for an unexpectedly long stay.

It was a stroke of genius: one of us realized, in Lima, that the noun "expedition" came from the verb "to expedite." From that moment we would never "eat" or "sleep" or "buy"; we would "expedite." Dave went downstairs to expedite a sandwich; Jim Maxwell expedited us some hot water so he could expedite a shave; and every day we mountaineers would deploy through Lima—to the Ministry of Commerce, the docks, the airport—and expedite.

But South Americans, we found out, are singularly inexpeditable. They are not to be hurried; and we learned

this on our very first joust with Peruvian bureaucracy. Our expeditionary force on this sortie consisted of Austen Riggs, myself, and my uncle Albert Gildred: a native of Lima, an importer of jeeps and outboard motors, and hence skilled in the outwitting of bureaucrats. Our object was the recapture of our Signal Corps radio, which customs had impounded at the airport since our arrival.

The radio sat on a table in the middle of the office when we walked in. Around it, an inexpressible number of Men at Desks, neatly drawn up in rank and file like a British square. One of them manicured his fingernails; another gazed soulfully at an overhead window. A third ran his finger back and forth across his desk, slowly and raptly, like a truant schoolboy called on the carpet. At any given instant only one person out of ten seemed to be employed in what could be called a gainful project.

We were introduced to our expediter. An expediter, we were given to understand, is a knowledgeable young man, a free-lancer approved by the government; one must hire him to nurse one's baggage through customs—a process that is quite beyond the ability of the neophyte. Ours was a gaunt, frenzied fellow, much as we might expect. He had the air of a father after twenty hours waiting outside the maternity ward; he acted—and probably felt—as if each new assignment was an added horror on a life racked with misfortune. We saw him only in snatches. Now he was scooting across the office, a sheaf of disheveled papers fluttering from one hand; suddenly he was right behind us, glancing fearfully at Austen lest he

be lashed for his sluggishness, and immediately disappearing out a side door; then, from out of nowhere, he was leaning over a desk, anxiously staring at his watch while some worthy signed a paper. We watched our expediter with admiration.

The role of the Men at the Desks had now become clear. Each had his own peculiar talent: one was versed in the manipulation of Items 8 and 9, Form 177-B. Another had been cultured as to the use and ramifications of Paragraph 12, customer's alternate receipt. A third concentrated in the accreditation of Duplicate Release Voucher 140, Not Valid Unless Sealed by Special Government Agent. It was the task of our expediter to present the proper dotted line at the proper moment to whichever functionary had been hired for its disposal. This made for strict responsibility, but the system broke down when the next functionary in line was out for lunch or a shoeshine, which was invariably the case.

"One moment, *señor*. Just one more little moment." Our expediter dashes by us. He has been saying this now for somewhat more than an hour. We reflected that no one has yet asked us what our names are, why we are in Peru, or, for that matter, what is even *in* the big brown box we are trying to reclaim. By twelve-fifteen—the battle began at ten—our expediter has reached the tempo of a bolero. Like a Brownian particle in a glass of water, he ricochets across the room. Arms fly, pens screech, fingers wag, tempers flare, doors slam, papers fall: our customs office looks like the City Room on Armistice Day. Our

expediter reins up at the inspector's cage, pushes some papers at a lackey, and charges off down the hallway. The papers are carbon copies; the lackey is to stamp them. Blop, STAMP! Blop, STAMP! Blop, STAMP! . . .

The lackey stamps the carbons. All of them are yellow. All say the same thing. All nineteen of them.

But ho! Our expediter is again at our backs. "I sorrow, *señor, yo siete.* It will be impossible to procure your baggage at this moment. Our men are in need of lunch. However, should you be so gracious as to return this afternoon . . ."

We leap like tigers. Austen pushes into the inspector's cage and blocks the exit. I crouch under an overhead door. They shall not lower it! We leer menacingly at our expediter; he trembles and returns to his task. He is now a whirlwind, a fury! The Little Men grumble, they try to close shop. Many escape. Our expediter collars them in time; they sign. We run to the inspector's window as it is closing down. We sign ten papers, we pay sixty dollars for "deposit." We tip our expediter handsomely. He bows, he collapses! The radio is ours!

Our food, our tents, and our climbing gear, of course, are still in customs.

# 5

LIMA IS THE CITY OF KINGS, THE PEARL OF THE PACIFIC, THE City of Flowers. This, however, is in the summer. In the winter, which lasts about five months, Lima is a dreary chiaroscuro of fog and drizzle. Though it never really rains—a good downpour would wash most of the city into the Pacific, and has—the smog blots out the sun for all but a few hours each month. Whenever the sun breaks through, it does wonders to Lima. Tourists, who usually say what they're expected to, will tell you that Lima is a charming and beautiful capital. In the fringes and residential centers this is quite true. The broad avenues, the trees and parks, the modern homes, the white villas—these make the suburbs a handsome place to live, far above anything else in Peru, suspiciously far above, in fact. Lima outskirts are often like the best parts of Florida, if one can stomach the exhortations to "Vote!" on every palm tree.

But downtown is a noisy, narrow chasm of crumbling stucco. "Chasm" is an appropriate word: the streets are only two cars wide and the sidewalks are token; and the buildings, though usually no more than three stories, crowd in like the walls of a canyon. At night, when store fronts are hidden behind curtains of corrugated steel, the effect is even more abysmal. And night is the time of heaviest drizzle.

Perhaps the best to be said for downtown Lima is that it is quaint; at least, considering the vultures, it is surprisingly clean. The city maintains the requisite number of cathedrals and statues; but almost every building is in an advanced stage of dilapidation. Even the government palaces and ministries show profound hiatuses in the plaster work—a mark of bygone earthquakes, perhaps, or rain or revolution. Traffic dashes around at hair-raising rates, which the two or three policemen at each corner do little to temper. Much of the traffic is taxis, usually ten-year-old affairs that charge twelve cents for a cross-town ride—unless you're an American tourist, when rates are increased phenomenally and almost always successfully. A little electric sign in the front window, labeled either "occupied" or "free," serves to indicate that the vehicle is a taxi, but never anything more as to the true nature of the insides. Streets are necessarily one-way. One lane is usually allotted to the trolleys, Toonerville-type machinations with great gobs of humanity bloating from either end. For a Limeño, the proper method of boarding a trolley is to run behind it for a block or so, finally grabbing

on to the first protuberance that affords itself, which often as not is the collar of another Limeño. In this way, great terminal excrescences are built up: Lima trolleys from above have something of the appearance of dumbbells. I've spent several hours riding them—the fare is only two and a half cents—and have never made further progress than the front or rear platform, nor have I known anyone else to. The main body of the trolley, I imagine, is an engine housing or perhaps a periscope room.

During the rush hours, a few of the streets are blocked off, and a homewarding populace surges down them like college boys at a football rally. Except for pageantry, this to me was the most exciting sight in Lima. The individual people are a little harder to get used to. They are shorter than Americans and are eternally rushing under your elbows; this, plus the dark skin of the Indians and the mustaches of the Spaniards, makes Limeños look universally shady. A big factor in this illusion is Lima neckwear. Everybody—simply everybody—wears a scarf around his neck, the bight pulled over his mouth to protect him from the fog. When a sudden gust of drizzle comes up, Limeños bear a remarkable resemblance to certain inland turtles. The habit gets annoying when one is trying to understand their mumbled Spanish; but my chief impression of Peru will always be those small, dark natives, their jaws eternally cloaked in brown scarves and their eyes peering sadly like Kilroy over the top.

Too many Limeños are poor Indians who have come to the Big City. They push gocarts through the streets, sell-

ing wretched, gooey pastries. They whisper you over to a corner and offer for ten dollars a gold ring they have just stolen, or an Inca figurine; when you say no, they pursue for block after block, in the hope that you will be of different mind at Jiron Ayacucho than at the Plaza de Armas. Beggar women follow you with a bundle of rags in their arms, intimating that their undernourished babies lie within. Most of all, the poor folk sell lottery tickets: big, gaily-printed sheets of scrip, a government-sponsored numbers racket of immense popularity. It is quite impossible to walk the length of a block without being approached at least two or three times: by a little man with a hole-in-the-wall ticket shop; by the ragged beggar in the Plaza San Martin, whose body is cut off below the hips and who pushes himself around on a roller dolly; by the children who forever run screaming through the streets.

It's easy to look askance at a backward country, or make fun of it; that's not what I want to do. If its Peruvians were deprecating or joshing, that's only because Yerupaja is outside of Lima rather than Kansas City or London. Certainly Lima is more pleasant than most parts of New York, and such native foibles as their *chicha* beer, which is brewed out of whatever is available at the time, are easily preferable to Georgia pralines. As a matter of fact, Peruvians are an extremely generous people. In the squalid inland towns, the friendly and courteous Indians—sincerely courteous, unlike many of the Spaniards—sometimes make you wonder about the value of Progress. If they

are not suspicious of you as a foreigner, their only failings are *mañana* fever and a cavalier disregard of precise truth: ask a beggar if he has any mules to lend, and he'll rather say yes than disappoint you. As for *mañana* fever, this can best be described by the adage, "Never put off until tomorrow what you can put off until the day after tomorrow." But these traits were also observed, I understand, in the aboriginal United States of the early 1800's.

As far as I know, Lima beans have nothing to do with Lima. Nor do Peruvians drink milk, or water without purifying it, for fear of the prevailing bugs. Coffee is a staple beverage: this being South America, it is served with a pomp and splendor that the reader might expect but can hardly visualize. The coffee serving is infinitely more intricate than the rest of the meal combined. A haughty waiter appears, on his upraised palm a vast silver prairie, landmarked with pots, cups, cans, pitchers: a veritable coffee factory. There is a pitcher of hot water, of hot milk, of cream, of sugar, and almost incidentally, of concentrated coffee syrup. An endless number of permutations and combinations is now possible, depending on the taste and endurance of the patron. Most Peruvians finesse the water and cream, pouring the hot milk into an empty vat and adding thereto the coffee syrup. This is known as *café con leche;* our kind, or *café Norteamericano,* is obtainable by an appropriate synthesis of the water, cream, syrup, and sugar jugs.

Then there are Peru's fruits: improbable, homely pustules with a remarkable depravity of coloration. The

favorite in Lima is the chirimoya, whose appearance can best be described as disreputable: a great green gout broken out in a rash of unholy pimples. The sight of one on the dinner table—and it turns up even in the best hotels—is likely to drive the most famished starveling back to a hunger strike. Something else again is the granadilla. Superficially it resembles an orange: protective coloration, perhaps. Under the skin is a host of seeds—hard, bulbous seeds, and absolutely nothing else. Patient search discloses nothing in the body of the fruit that appears in any way edible, yet I have seen Peruvians pore over a granadilla for upward of five minutes, evidently with some enjoyment.

For us would-be mountaineers there was little to do in Lima but eat all this. We could spend only a limited amount of time expediting: Lima's business day starts off briskly at nine o'clock, peters out around noon, makes another brave start at three o'clock, and throws in the sponge around four-thirty or five. So we passed the time sitting in Lima's more fashionable cafés, and some otherwise, regarding the passers-by and experimenting with the menus. These were in Spanish but gave us little trouble, for we had our pronunciations down pat; the worry came when the food arrived, for the food was always in English, and endless disputations would arise as to who had ordered the steak and who the great green gout. We maintained a united front, though, for the Limeños. They recognized us on sight: our sweaty mountain clothes and grizzled faces were revealing. They gawked at us from the

trolleys; they peered at us over the brink of their scarves. Our faces and misspelled names grimaced from every newspaper; one published an editorial about us: approving, I think. As we tramped through Lima streets, we often heard—or fancied—the awed whispers of "*Los Alpinistos!*"

So we sat in the cafés, augustly: we sampled the native vintage, we looked warily at the chirimoya, we reconnoitered the granadilla; we waited. It began to be funny: the discrepancy between our life in Peru and what we had come for. "Yes, sir," said George, leaning back in his chair and fingering his third glass of Pisco wine—"yes, sir, just hang on a while, we'll lick that little ol' mountain yet."

Dave Harrah twirled the champagne in the bucket. "*Mañana*, boys, *mañana*. Tomorrow morning and we're off, yessiree, off to Old Roundtop."

We fancied that the rest of our lives—or at the very least the summer—would be spent in such a manner as this. Night after night, year after year, we should be seen at the genteel restaurants, sipping Pisco at the Crillon, the Trocadero, the Bolivar Grille. Impressionable waifs would press their noses against the window, exulting, "*Los Alpinistos!* It is the courageous Northamerican mountain climbers!" We would graciously decline invitations; priding citizenry would point at us in the street and whisper, "See! Is it not the brave expedition of the United States! They are to scale the Yerupaja!" Perhaps after five or so years of this it would be given out, not with-

out some encouragement on our part, that we *had* climbed Yerupaja a while back, although newspaper clippings of the event were unfortunately no longer extant. The admiring cry of "*Los Conquistadores!*" would gradually become the more common usage; we should live the rest of our days on our laurels, though some local historians might puzzle over the fact that, since our arrival in Peru a decade before, we had never yet checked out of our suite at the Hotel Bolivar, nor failed to appear any evening among Lima society.

More out of boredom than any desire to cultivate this impression, we made ourselves unduly conspicuous in Lima. We passed one evening walking Indian file down the Avenue Pierola, each man from three to five inches behind the other; the effect this had on the Limeños can best be imagined if you picture seven Peruvians treading on each other's heels down the length of Madison Avenue, sublimely indifferent to the world around them or each other's existence. Another night Austen Riggs discovered an interesting route on the southwest face of the Hotel Bolivar; he had reached the mezzanine floor by means of two toe holds and a chinning maneuver, when a gathering and partisan crowd in the street forced him to forego the remainder of the ascent. As we turned away, we heard some explanatory murmurs run through the onlookers: "*Los Alpinistos!*"

Before expounding on the further trials of the Grand Hotel Bolivar, a short digression on the fiscal life of Peru

seems to be in order, by way of introduction. Peru's dollar is the *sol*, or "sun," which once shone brightly but has now reached a crepuscular value of about six cents. From the aesthetic point of view, Peruvian currency is glorious to behold. The smallest bill is printed in black, pink, red, blue, and two shades of green; it announces its valuation exactly thirty-eight times. On the back is drawn a tableau as sweeping as it is unfathomable. Three seedy-looking men are leaning against the walls of what appears to be a cave; two are wearing derbies and the third smokes a pipe. One carries a wrench in his right hand and a steel tube on his left arm; another pours disks from one hand to the other. Round about is a variety of spikes, driftwood, and artistic scrawls. Peruvian postage stamps, incidentally, are equally vigorous in conception: they exhort the beholder to such quests as "Visit Our Interesting Museum of National Archaeology!"

But this, the reader may argue, is not a very scholarly diagnosis. All right then. Peru is what the economist might call a low-cost area. At first we were a little distressed, provincials that we were, by the prices on menus (grapefruit, 2.50, lamb chop, 8.75), and we never really reconciled ourselves to this idea of the *sol*. But it is impossible to spend any meaningful amount of money in Lima. My boardinghouse, when I wasn't in the mountains, cost $1.30 a day; reasonable enough, since it included three meals (breakfast in bed), maid service, and a gypsy named Celeste, who brightened the air with incessant Hungarian melodies.

We mountaineers failed to take advantage of the cost of living. Since we hadn't counted on our sojourn in civilization, few of us had brought any decent clothes. We slogged around the lobby of the Grand Hotel Bolivar in tractor-tread climbing boots; impeccable transients—businessmen and diplomats—started up from their newspapers as some plaid-jacketed, green-hatted whiskers trooped past. They were leery. They shied back. The Grand Hotel Bolivar stood up nobly under the strain—one of the waiters even begged us to take him along, as a dietitian-chef (we didn't). But the Bolivar's self-control was stretched near the breaking point when we began to carry in our equipment.

How did we get it from customs? It would be useless to tell the story. It is necessary only to point out that incoming baggage can be dammed up only so long before it must, of its own accumulating weight, drag piers, customs house, and seaport down beneath the waves. There is a danger point beyond which even lackadaisical Peruvian customs men may not tarry. And now they had new game to harass: the goony American basketball team had arrived in Lima, and dangled around the Bolivar in the aimless manner of one whose traveling clothes and shin guards had been "unavoidably detained" at a local airport.

So we had our permit, we had our gear, and we brought it, three fourths of a ton, to the Grand Hotel Bolivar. Frantically they tried to shunt us to the basement. To no avail. For one thing, we had several hun-

dred yards of rope to stretch out and unkink; our only recourse seemed to be the mezzanine corridors. Hotel guests sidled back to their rooms that afternoon past a great nylon snake, which writhed fitfully every few seconds as one of our party discovered new gnarls in its abdomen.

This was Sunday. Tomorrow we'd be off to Old Roundtop.

# 6

SOMETHING EXOTIC HAD HAPPENED TO GEORGE AND AUSTEN when they were alone in Lima. It was at the height of the would-be revolution, and so had all the mystery of counter-spies sipping cognac in a Bavarian café. George and Austen were walking downtown, when a weathered and rather seedy-looking Peruvian beckoned to them from up the street. He pulled alongside and slipped Austen a small white card.

"*Señor*," said the Peruvian—"*señor*, the name on the card, know you the man?"

Austen blinked. "What? Why, yes," he said. "That's me." He stared at the Peruvian, who looked quite happy with himself.

Introductions now seemed to be in order. The man set forth that he was Señor Juan Ormea, the eminent stuffer of the birds. We had been commended to him by the American Museum of Natural History; and vice versa,

for Don Juan Ormea, the Museum had told us, was peerless in the taxidermy of the Peruvian fowl. Right now this was hard to swallow. The man was of questionable stock: a cross, perhaps, between the first mate on a pirate brig and a Bowery panhandler. His patchwork clothes seemed to have been tailored by a continual process of trial and error; and it was always a moot point where his shirt left off and his trousers began. But Don Juan had strong arms, and humor in his eyes, and he could doubtless stuff a better bird than we, and Austen and George took him on. It was agreed that Don Juan would sleep at base camp, defending our food and immortalizing the local bird population.

Don Juan Ormea had a college-age son, Tomás: a friendly, mischievous lad who wrote letters to an incalculable number of young ladies along the Peruvian seaboard. Tomás would also come. Now it was Monday and three o'clock in the afternoon; our truck was loaded, we were ready to leave Lima, and the Ormeas were nowhere to be seen. We wanted to sleep that night at Paramonga, an American sugar plantation 125 miles up the coast. We waited four hours; the Ormeas strolled in, unabashed and innocent, sometime after dark, victims of *mañana* fever; when we reached Paramonga at midnight the whole town had shut up and we slept by the side of the road.

*Mañana* fever is, I think, purely a linguistic problem. It is impossible to express urgency in Spanish. The word for "now" is *ahora;* literally translated, *ahora* means "this hour." To say "right now!" —as in, "Look out! The careening locomotive is just two feet from you! Get off

the track RIGHT NOW!" —then the correct word is *ahorita*, "this little hour," which hardly answers the purpose.

Being imprecise in colloquial Spanish, we had told the Ormeas to show up at two o'clock when we wanted them at three o'clock—ten o'clock in the morning would have been the more proper idiom—so of course they didn't come until seven. Our wait was a nervous one. There had been rumors that day of an estrangement in the Far East, but we were too busy to look into it. In late afternoon I picked up a newspaper with a bold "GUERRA!" headlined across the top. We didn't know Spanish, but we didn't have to. The Korean War had begun; we were somewhat more eager to get to the mountains; we had ideas, perhaps, of entering the Andes as Harvard students and coming out as Indians. I remember we drove our truck away from the Bolivar, and crouched until nightfall on the outskirts; but whether this was a strategic retreat from the American Embassy, or only a concession to Lima traffic, I have forgotten.

Our truck was cavernous. It was a two and a half-ton Army job, built specifically to carry just about anything the Army wanted to put in it. We had borrowed it from the Inter-American Geographical Survey in Lima. Driving the truck was a problem of logistics: you never turned the wheel until you had considered what effect this would have, not only on the forward quarters of the vehicle, but also on its hindmost members—which, it always seemed, lagged a good three minutes down the road.

Then there was the gearshift. Our truck had more forward speeds than you could shake a stick at; as a matter of fact, three sticks was the necessary quota: a gear lever, a high-low transfer-case up-down crowbar, and a two-wheel-drive four-wheel-drive jimmy stick. By pushing these rods in sundry directions, and positioning them in certain assigned combinations, you could bring into play sixteen forward speeds, all of which we needed at one time or another. There was a little chart riveted to our dashboard: it listed some of the more popular combinations and explained what effect they would have on the speed of our vehicle. Driving was never dull.

Our trip north was along the Pan-American Highway, South America's great expressway: a two-lane bed of asphalt with frazzled edges, dissipating into the hilly Peruvian desert. We drove alongside the Pacific. Often the hills swooped down to the edge of the ocean, and the Pan-American Highway teetered on the hillside; great gobs of sand had spilled onto the roadbed, threatening to cut off intracontinental communication in the next stiff breeze. On the 125-mile stretch there were two road signs. Esso Gasoline had put them there, as an advertising stunt; they exhorted the beholder to travel more slowly, although for us this would amount to retrogression.

Driving at night, we missed Peru's desert scenery: Brobdingnagian ads whitewashed on the hillsides. Instead, we were entertained by Peru's after-dark motorists, who, either from malice or waggishness, saw to it that the highway was used by none but the stout in heart. In the

United States, when two cars meet at night, it is customary to dim the headlights. In Peru, such an encounter is the signal for guerrilla skirmishes, for battle by incandescence. The war games begin as soon as the opposing player is sighted; the object is to force one's antagonist off the highway, preferably into the Pacific (this is termed a *touche*); and so the sport is something like the American pastime of King-of-the-Mountain. In the daytime, one often sees tracks in the sand, where cars have rolled off the road and plunged into the ocean: mute testimony to the adroitness of the opposing warriors. You are driving north on the Pan-American Highway. Ahead, another car comes toward you—he dims his lights. Then they go on again, full blast! You flinch back! Now they are dim! And lo! now they are extinguished altogether; you peer into the blackness in quest of your opponent. A red pinpoint winks teasingly from his right fender. Then a blue one from his left fender. Now his radiator is grinning at you, with thirty Mazda teeth! Blackness again. You scan the road; your eyes widen; your pupils dilate. *Surprise!* Here he is now! —just twenty feet ahead, with floodlights pouring smack in your face! You slam on your brakes, you throw up your arm, you fall back in your seat; he toots his horn merrily and rumbles past.

After three or four times of this you get worried. You stop your truck. Perhaps there is a baby clinging to your front bumper. No. Perhaps your headlights are adjusted too high. No. You ascribe to Peruvians the most sadistic of motives. You curse them; you swear to beat them at

their own game. You, too, have entered the spirit of friendly rivalry. You dim, you flash, you extinguish; but the opposition breaks out weapons that you never dreamed of—optical fireworks and 300-watt Christmas trees—and you are soundly trounced.

Once off the battlefield, you seek out an English-speaking truck driver. What's up? you ask. What's the fight about? "Ah, *señor*, it is no fight. It is a greeting, an 'hello.' It is a sign of the friendliness between us" —but it is an impish sort of friendliness, you feel, that has sent you time and again trundling across the Great Desert of Peru, your eyes blinking and your direction quite inconsistent with that of the Pan-American Highway.

By pluck and good fortune, we got to Paramonga around midnight. Paramonga lies off the main road, a sprawling plantation of cane, mud cubicles for the workers, and a vile sugar refinery—I understand it also makes rum, since the smell would drive away the most fearless government inspectors. I've been to Paramonga several times since. Vultures hobble through the streets and so do Indian mothers, nursing babies and discharging bodily functions at odd corners, and a beautiful American blonde—God knows who—gallops around on a white charger. Here, too, is Peru's most aboriginal bureaucrat. He is a poor, illiterate Indian, but still a bureaucrat. He tends the gate on the approachway to Paramonga: a steel chain strung across the road. Whenever a truck comes, he trudges out of his hut and lowers the chain. When the truck leaves, he hooks the chain back. He never asks who

is in the truck, or why it is going wherever it is going—he hardly even looks up. If I could speak Spanish, I always wanted to ask him, "Sir, what is your task here?"

And very likely he would say, "*Señor,* I am the attendant of the chain."

"But *why* are you here?"

"Because, *señor,* I must lower the chain for the trucks."

"Then why is the chain here?"

"The chain, *señor,* is to prevent the trucks from entering Paramonga."

"But the trucks *do* enter Paramonga. You always lower the chain for them!"

"*Sí, señor.* I lower the chain! That is why I am here!" Whereupon he would no doubt look strangely at me, tap his head, and trudge back into his hut.

The attendant of the chain performed his function for us as we drove into Paramonga, and repeated it ten minutes later as we drove out. The town was dead asleep; we had no idea where the guest house was, and slept off the road in a dusty excavation. There were nine of us: the mountaineers, myself, and father and son Ormea. We were now beginning to question seriously the ornithological talents of Don Juan and his son Tomás. I'm a novice bird-watcher myself; early in the morning I asked the Ormeas to point out a few species for my life list. Tomás and I scrambled up an embankment and watched a bushful of them. Tomás looked on dutifully, but his comments were rather vague. After a few minutes something yellow

flew past us, and Tomás volunteered the information that it was a canary. He also identified a *gorrión*, which I put down religiously in my notebook; I didn't learn until two months later that *gorrión* is Spanish for "sparrow," of almost any species at all.

# 7

NOW WE TURNED INLAND, UP THE MOUNTAINS. OUR ROAD was made of dirt, about as wide as one and three-fourths cars: an unusual idea, but not in tune with modern ideas of highway safety. We would round a corner going east; an Indian-laden bus would round a corner going west—ho! it is the same corner! We screech to a stop. Our bumpers nuzzle each other playfully. Drivers shout back and forth in two or more languages: we bicker, we haggle, we wheedle; we hint of month-long blockades and war of attrition. In a fit of pique, the busman hurls a half-eaten chirimoya to the ground. That is his gauntlet; we shall settle by joust. We withdraw fifteen feet. We charge forward: our fenders paw gingerly at each other, like sparring partners in a gym. No, his armor is here invincible. We sidle off the road; we swoop down at him from starboard; he meets our parry with a resounding thwack. We rear back; we try broadside, hindside, inside-outside. Success!

We gallop past, we leave the lists. We proceed to the next corner.

Our road was only seventy miles long, but it led to a pass 14,000 feet high in the Andes. From here we could take a side street to Chiquian, the Indian village. Words like "Andes" and "14,000 feet" may fool you. Actually, we were on a desert, a mountainous desert, and the mountains—foothills of the Andes—were slag piles of dust and gravel. As for their shape, about all to be said is that they rose up on one side and went down on the other. These Andes were not snow but grit, and vultures flew above them. Trucks laid a smoke screen of dust that stretched about a mile or two down the road. There was green only in the valleys; and even here, long strips had been blacked out by forest fire.

This was the real Peru, not the false front of Lima. Square huts of baked mud, camouflaged against the desert; a shabby old man with a bundle of sticks on his back; "*Jesu Cristo Te Amo*" painted on a rock. A village was a row of ten or so adobe cubicles on either side of the road. The houses doubled as billboards, and two grammatical symbols could be found on every one, blackwashed in sweeping stencils. The first said "DDT"; it had been painted there by the homeowner, either because of a local ordinance or personal pride. The other said "Odria." This is the name of the President of Peru, who was later elected to another six-year term because of the enforced lack of opposition candidates.

Odria's name was painted on every sty, kennel, and

cottage between Lima and Chiquian; and there it shall stay for the next fifty years because, as I said before, all the cottages are made of mud, and it would be impossible to mop away the paint without simultaneously mopping away the cottage. This helps, in a way, to institutionalize Odria's dictatorship. So do the Army posts in every town, no matter how small, and often where there is no town at all. It is the duty of the truck driver to stop every few miles at the local Civil Control Guard, there to register his name, number, goods, passengers, and other Necessary Information. The Civil Control Guard, as you see, has a function similar to that of the Attendant of the Chain. Its data are collated in Lima, where it can be proven, beyond any reasonable doubt, that Señor José Valensuella drove his bus from Chiquian to Paramonga on the afternoon of May 22, passing through the town of Conococha rather than cutting a beeline across the mountains, and ending the trip with the same number of passengers that he began with.

But we knew nothing of the Civil Control Guard, and buzzed past each outpost like teen-agers on a joy ride. I wonder how many soldiers ran after us that afternoon, waving guns in the air (if they had guns) or even shooting at us (if they had bullets). Perhaps as many as stood by the side of the road, trying to hitch rides (they don't have trucks either).

Our road began to climb in earnest. It hairpinned back and forth up the mountains, coating every hillside

with capricious switchbacks. Here—where storms wash away the highway every year—where the Chilean invaders were forced to turn back—we putted along in a two-and-a-half-ton, serpentine Army truck. Army trucks have no doors, and we could look, if we cared to—and we hardly ever did—over the edge of the running board, 1000 feet down into the valley. I was at the wheel. Jim Maxwell had been driving in the morning; but now he felt sick—at first we thought it was the altitude—and he was lying on some duffel bags in the back. We didn't know it then, but Jim had a 103 degree fever.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the motor boiled over.

I have just a nodding acquaintance with the innards of an auto. For the sake of conversation, I can name most of the appendages, tumors, and afterthoughts to be found under the average hood; I can also describe, with some accuracy, what each contributes to the forward motion of the car; if prodded, I can even recall a personal anecdote about many of them. But repair is something else. I haven't the delicate ear and the perfect pitch of the mechanic; to me, the flabidal, *flabidal*, FLABIDAL signifies little more than the wheezle-wheezle-frizzle-PHUNK. I marvel at those greasy-faced sages who glance, say, at a steaming radiator and then proclaim that this particular type of boiling is due to a badly adjusted thermostat, rather than clogged pipes or a broken pump. The rest of us were as ignorant as I. But we were quite willing to speculate. In these days of conformity, engine trouble is

always a welcome springboard for discussion, a platform for the lively interplay of ideas. We sat around the engine like medical students around an operating table, frowning into the murky bowels, searching for we knew not what. We each had our own pet theory. I leaned toward a Water Pump Hypothesis, since water pumps have always been a particular bother to me. Austen advanced the opinion that motors must be adjusted for high altitudes, though we weren't sure just how; and he added, as sort of an *obiter dictum*, that water boiled easier in the mountains. Don Juan Ormea, playing it cautious, announced as his considered opinion that the motor was, indeed, boiling. At last one of us, more given to the scientific method than to philosophy, noticed that the fan belt was missing from its usual orbit. We found it, sprawled like a dead and mangled snake, in the intestinal regions of the engine housing. It had split open; we didn't have another one.

Chuck sewed the belt together with wire. We chugged ahead for another 100 yards. It broke again. The motor boiled over. The condition of the fan belt now suggested its possible use as a substitute for Shredded Wheat; but it seemed to have little value in an Army truck or any other vehicle, except possibly to strain the gasoline.

Things like this can discomfit any expedition, especially when the closest gas station is sixty miles down the road. But we were particularly chagrined. We were, as the newspapers pleased to put it, in a valley of death. Its only other inhabitants are small sand flies, abroad at dawn and sunset, when they fly about biting people and infecting

them with the germs of verruga fever. Verruga is a painful kind of disease: it swells up the lymph glands and brings death in a few days; no cure is known. More than 5000 railroad workers died of it once near the town of Oroya, and for a time the disease was known as Oroya fever. Then a Mr. Carrion decided to study it, and he died, too, and it was called Carrion's disease. Under any name it is usually fatal to white men.

We had known about this verruga valley and, having no great desire to found a Harvard disease, had taken care to cross during the heat of day. But we had dawdled —stopped to take pictures every now and then, not to mention movies or the abortive bird hike with the Ormeas. Now it was late afternoon, and we were stranded deep in verruga country: our motor bubbling merrily as a teakettle, and our fan belt quite at sixes and sevens. Looking back on it all, I guess another two hours in the valley would have killed us. At the time, we weren't much worried. The reader—who was weaned on lurid lectures and the *National Geographic*—the reader may see something romantic in scrambling among the Andes, something dangerous in trucking across the Land of the Mystic Inca. Not so when you're doing it. Admit it! We were just a bunch of Harvard students, dressed in dungarees, driving a truck along a hot road. That's all it seemed like at the time. The pedestrians had only one head, which grew above their shoulders; the scenery was new to us, but quite plausible. And the idea—the silly idea—that there should be insidious little bugs lurking in the sandhills, waiting to

bite us dead with some exotic fever, this (just a few weeks after final exams) was absurd.

Still, we felt it was to our advantage to leave the valley in short order. I wanted Jim Maxwell to splice a piece of climbing rope into a loop, and then we'd use it as a fan belt. Jim learned his splices when he was a Boy Scout, and I thought it would make a good yarn for *Boys' Life* or something. But now he was very sick, and in no mood to humor the press. Chuck Crush tried his hand at splicing. After about five minutes of this it was agreed, by everyone but me, that a fan belt was one thing and climbing rope another, and it was not possible to treat them as interchangeable. Thus an ingenious news enterprise came to an end.

Chuck exhumed the old belt and made a few passes at it with a sewing needle; but nothing short of reincarnation could help it now. We flagged down passing trucks. They came about once every ten minutes. They were produce trucks: middle-class Indians filled them haphazardly with wood, sheep, chirimoyas, mail, potatoes, cows, and dozens of other Indians, and joggled them to the coast. For some reason, each truck owned an inordinate number of fan belts, none of which fit. We bought them up anyhow; I dare say we cornered the market. We had fan belts of every possible mold: too big, too small, too skinny, too obese. At five o'clock, with the sun slipping ominously behind the mountains, we elected the least of these half-dozen evils, and draped it around the motor. The fitting left something to be desired. Our belt flapped around

gaily, nudging our water pump every now and then, and sometimes our generator. These would give up a spin or two, and then sulk by themselves until the next nudge. And so we chugged merrily up the valley.

"Jack," someone said to me, "she's boiling again." He pointed to the temperature gauge.

"I guess we better hold up," I said. "She'll cool off." We stopped ten minutes. We started. We drove ten minutes.

"Jack, she's boiling again." Conversation kept on in this vein for the better part of the evening; we proceded through Peru much in the manner of the Third Avenue Local. Don Juan did little to cheer us. "*Despacio! Despacio!*" he'd shriek—whatever that means—and flap his hands wildly at the road. The pitch of his hysteria served to indicate those parts of the highway which, Don Juan felt, were most likely to slump from under us and avalanche down the mountainside. By nightfall the motor was looking better.

"She's stopped boiling, Jack," someone said. "The temperature's all the way down." This was good news to hear, although rather hard to account for.

"I guess it's the cool air," I said innocently.

Driving without water, of course, had its results. The motor got hotter and hotter and locked, and finally the truck scraped to a stop about eleven o'clock. We were a few hundred yards below the pass, and at last out of the disease zone. None of us got verruga. But Jim Maxwell, who was sick before we entered the verruga country, was

worse than ever—what from, no one knew. For the rest of us there was *soroche.* The French call it *mal de montagne,* which can vaguely be translated as Sick of the Mountains. A traveler who is Sick of the Mountains is not necessarily bored with alpine scenery; he is dizzy and nauseated from lack of air. Mountain sickness is a lot like seasickness. You feel that your stomach is lodged somewhere in the neck region; and food, at the very least, loses much of its tang. At 14,000 feet, we were not particularly Sick, but only Somewhat Indisposed of the Mountains.

On top of this, our battery was dead—for the generator had been getting little help from the fan belt. The unchecked wind was sharp and cold. There was nothing to do but slither into our sleeping bags, marvel how the Big Dipper pointed below the horizon, and wonder which the hell was the Southern Cross, and go to sleep.

# 8

WE WERE IN CHIQUIAN THE NEXT EVENING. BY NOW WE had a fan belt more in keeping with the shape of our motor; the motor itself had unfrozen; we had filled the radiator from a nearby lake; and we had gotten a push from a truck big enough to push us. Chiquian, twenty-five miles from Yerupaja, was where we would change from truck to mules. It is an Indian city hidden in the wrinkles of the high Andes, a stale leftover from the Inca empire. Like a Shangri-La, Chiquian lies deep in a mountain pocket—almost a mile deep. Our truck was out of oil and had to coast in, and we spiraled down the hairpins like a runaway roller coaster. Austen and Graham (they told us later) stood poised by the tail gate, ready to leap for land when the truck took off. I sat in the front and was scared stiff.

Few Americans have ever been to Chiquian. Unless you're a mountaineer or an Indian, there's no sense going

there. At the end of a twenty-mile dead-end street, it lies on the way to nowhere. The city itself was not designed to draw the tourist trade. Pigs, cows, and little children run wild through the streets. Houses are perfunctory little cubicles of one or two stories; they are built of baked mud and—like everything else in the town—have the color of badly scuffed shoes. During most of the year, Chiquian's baked-mud homes can be found in Chiquian. During the rainy season, many of them vacation at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, in a more amorphous form. By this time, their inhabitants have prudently left. They can be found once again in Chiquian, building new homes out of baked mud.

The rains have their good points. Were it not for this annual douche, Chiquian would soon disappear under its own accumulated sewage, a prize and a mystery for archaeologists of a future century. The city is too high for vultures and too low for condors, and had to build its own sewer system—a gutter down the center of every street. Natives use them as garbage drainpipes, as sidewalk *pissoirs*, and occasionally as a source of drinking water. This economizes plumbing to an unusual degree, but has done little to abate the recurrent plagues of typhoid.

Chiquian also has a bank, which doubles as a dry-goods and confectionery shop. Besides buying ponchos and salted nuts there, you can actually cash traveler's checks—a tribute to the infiltration powers of the American Express Company. On the other hand, natives stole two of our checks before they were signed, and I am sure they

are still serving as legal tender in the streets of Chiquian. Chiquian has a post office, a sometime pig sty whose dual nature we discovered only after several days. Then a villager pointed to one of the crevasses in the adobe wall, and on close inspection we noticed the word "*Correo*"—Mail—scratched near by. A letter dropped in this slot would lounge there for two, three, four days before anything was done about it. But Señora Ignacia Mejia de Reyes, the Madame Administrator of the Mails of Chiquian, was an aesthetic soul who kept only the gaudiest of stamps; and the floral displays she arranged on your envelope were worth waiting for.

Living in squalor, Chiquian's people are the friendliest and politest I've known. They were thrilled that a *Yanqui* should visit their city, and they all tried to help us. Even Señora Reyes, the postmistress, in a fit of charity invited me to her cottage and offered our expedition (1) an egg or (2) a banana. Indian kids—drippy-nosed but always smiling—followed us adoringly through the streets. They called us "Truman" (pronunciation: Troo-mahn') or "Rita Hayworth," which were used interchangeably. Besides this, the only English they knew was "Gud-by, meestir" and, among the more scholastically advanced, "Meestir, your seestir." Whenever we walked through Chiquian, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, troops of them would follow us shouting "Gud-by" and increasing all the time—a baffling sight.

Most Chiquianers are farmers, who have checkered the mountainside with terraces and irrigation ditches. If

native diets are any indication, they grow potatoes and one heck of a lot of rice. Some of them work for foreign landlords and are paid off in liquor; others receive money as an intermediate step. A few natives own trucks, and drive things and people back and forth to the coast. Two Chiquianers sell ice cream in the hot streets. Each owns a wooden cart and a large block of ice, which he pecks at for a few moments with a spike; then he packs the shavings into a snowball, atomizes it with any of four or five artificial flavors, and sells it for a few *centavos*. The city's other amusement is soccer, Peru's national sport. As guests of honor one afternoon, we saw the sixth grade soundly thwack the fourth-grade Supermen (they wore decals on their T-shirts). The victory, like all Indian soccer games, was no surprise. The fourth grade can beat the third, which is as things should be; the third grade can trounce the second; and the first grade can look forward to something. Chance—so bothersome to American betting pools —is dispensed with, and the best man always wins.

Chiquian was building a movie house when we arrived, and films are shown to a squatting populace every Tuesday and Friday. On these days Señor José Armesto goes home and charges an auto battery on his gas generator; then he carries the battery across the street to his theater and wires it to the projector. The resulting power is usually enough to differentiate light from shadow on the screen, and to produce suspicious undertones from the vicinity of the loud-speaker; but the movies are Mexican and not worth seeing anyhow.

The theater is at one side of Chiquian's main plaza. At the other side is the county jail, a barred patio where unpleasant persons of both sexes sneer at passers-by and play guitars. On the third side is nothing in particular, such as a gas station. The church and city hall are on the fourth side. Here is where Chiquianers voted soon after we came. We stayed home that day, expecting any moment to hear from down the street the cannonades and death cries of voting South Americans. Actually Election Day was quite peaceful, maybe because wary lawmakers had scheduled it on a Sunday, or maybe because dictator Odria was the only man on the ballot. Chiquian is fairly important politically; we would call it a county seat. It is run (I think) by a local boss—a Peruvian named, of all things, Neil McCallum. Señor McCallum is a friendly chap who helped us a lot; extracurricularly he is a cheese merchant, and drives the stuff to the coast every few days. Chiquian's chief official is the sub-prefect, who can be identified day or night by his accouterments of office: (1) a mustache, (2) a pair of pajamas, (3) over these, a topcoat. It is not from sloth that His Excellency strolls through Chiquian in his night clothes, even at four in the afternoon. His mustache marks him as a Spaniard; his pajamas as a man of distinction. All other Chiquianers wear ponchos. Ponchos are brown blankets with a slit for the head; you drape them over you like a bird-cage cover.

Actually, these South American Indians are not much different from the rest of us. I remember one incident especially, when three Quechua children showed up at our

bedroom. They were of grade-school age, and implied by certain flailings of the arms and legs that we were invited to an exhibition of soccer. Jim and I—we were the only ones around—followed them through corrugated streets to the stadium. Here they "discovered" no one had a ball. But no worry! There was always a ball at the school—and we were hustled off in a new direction. School was a one-room mud box with a thatched roof, and we were deftly pushed inside. It now dawned on us that we were accomplices to a monstrous plot, engineered by the school children of Chiquian. Class was in session, and Señor Soria the schoolmaster blinked up at us as we stumbled into his domain. He greeted us somewhat quizzically.

"There was this soccer game . . ." I began.

"Do you like soccer?" asked Señor Soria.

We hedged. We didn't know quite what to say. Sixty Indian eyes looked at us appealingly. "Well," I said, "yes, I guess we do—sort of."

Señor Soria pulled a soccer ball from the shelf and spoke to his class in Spanish. "School's over for the day! To the stadium!"

The conspiracy, worthy of a Tom Sawyer, had succeeded. In the eruption that followed, Jim and I were almost forgotten; then the kids remembered their manners and elected me captain of a team. It was a sign of gratitude we could well have finessed. In 11,000-foot Chiquian, a five-block walk leaves you panting and even a drink of water makes you catch your breath. Any exertion like soccer was sure to end in a mass demonstration of *soroche* by

all lowlanders present. Besides that, I know nothing about the game except you're supposed to hit the ball with whatever part of the body seems least practical; how these rules are amended or expurgated in the Andes, I had no idea. But the Indian kids crowded around and shouted, "Eleven! Eleven!"—a friendly prompting on the rules of the sport—and we chose up sides. Jim was still too sick to play, but the rest of us prodded the ball around in a conventional manner. The Indians played with the gusto of any schoolboys. They were very polite: they fed me the ball whenever I was remotely around, whether or not they were on my side. The game ended when the *gringo's* face turned purple; we won, *cuatro* to *uno*.

# 9

WE HAD MUCH TO DO IN CHIQUIAN. WE UNLOADED THE truck; our gear, which we once had packed for shipping and once again for trucking, was rearranged a third time to fit the whims and anatomy of a mule. We took long hikes through Chiquian valley, getting used to the rarefied air. *Soroche*—mountain sickness—is bad enough when you're standing still. When you're climbing a Yerupaja, panting for more air, it can be a rather trying experience on the alimentary canal—unless you spent a few weeks acclimatizing. Then there was the matter of the radio. We had been suspicious of that noble machine for some time now. Jim and I lugged it over to the basketball court and tied the aerial to one of the hoops; then we brooded over it like Irishmen at a wake. When the spellbound school kids pressed too close, we shouted them back with threats of "Elektricitarios! Elektricitarios!" which sounded as if it might be Spanish. This only fanned their excitement; but

whatever wonders they expected, never quite came off. After three hours Jim and I agreed that the radio was Temporarily Out of Adjustment, a malady from which it has not yet recovered.

We looked at Yerupaja. Even from twenty-five miles, the mountain loomed over Chiquian like a rising sun; it was bigger, whiter than anything else. We first saw it close up when our truck coasted into Chiquian valley, a full moon hanging over its summit as if to mark our goal. Now we spent hours in the town plaza, scanning the mountain through six-power glasses. Yerupaja is a narrow wedge—a butcher's cleaver—jutting up from the Andes. Seen face on, as it was from Chiquian, it had the profile of a circus tent. At the very center was the summit, four miles high. Then there were two lesser peaks at the edges, with sway-back ridges in between.

We knew this, of course, long before we came. We had also known about the cornices. Great awnings of snow and ice, they hung out from the sway-back ridges—sometimes 100 feet out, and we could see their shadows from Chiquian. They had been built up by the prevailing winds, sweeping across from the Amazon basin. It is easy to assume that a minute climber cannot bother so lordly an excrescence. But many mountaineers have been killed by fragile cornices; and whoever climbed Yerupaja would have to fidget several days beneath them, then walk several hours on top of them.

Our problem now was one of route finding. The face of the mountain is steeper than a ski jump, and looked

singularly unpromising. Dave Harrah and the rest of us swept it with our field glasses, guessing what was ice and what was snow, what could be climbed and what was—as mountaineers say—"interesting." In the end, our eyes always turned longingly to the summit.

We slept, in Chiquian, at the Grand Hotel Bayer. The Grand Hotel Bayer is hardly a hotel and grand only by contrast; but if you found yourself in Chiquian, it was the one cottage that felt obliged to take you in. Our suite cost twenty cents a night, American Plan; we shared it with about five hundred fleas, and were given a corresponding reduction in price. There were a few unyielding beds in the room but the fleas had gotten there first, and in deference to their squatter's rights we slept on the floor. The Grand Hotel Bayer also catered to five donkeys, who roomed across the patio in connubial bliss; and to a half-dozen soldiers, who spent a good part of their lives tossing coins down the mouth of a brass frog. This and an unstrung harp comprised the recreational facilities of the Grand Hotel. There also was a mediaeval type of toilet and a long table somewhere for dining purposes. Everyone in the hotel—except for the donkeys, who had different hours—ate together. Milk, of course, was out of the question; we drank *cidron*, a rather tasty tea with an alarming green hue. The meat had an exotic taste. One day, intrigued by the weird shrieks we heard before each meal, I wandered into the Grand Hotel's kitchen. Two dozen guinea pigs scampered back under the stove, and after that we ate less meat.

We amused ourselves at meals by watching insect flotillas navigate the channels of our soup bowls. A careful eye and nimble finger could usually remove them before they did any internal damage. But not at suppertime, for we ate at 9 P.M. by the light of an anemic candle. Because of this, supper came to be the most dreaded of all our meals. By dropping halazone pills in our water and currying all other foodstuffs, we preserved ourselves from all but the milder forms of dysentery. All of us except Austen and Graham were sick at one time or another in the Grand Hotel. I had Advanced Perversity of the Stomach; so did Dave, and an earache too. Jim was getting over his fever when the rest of us caught it. We never diagnosed the disease, but cured it with some miracle drug or another. It was a little like the flu; at least not verruga.

At our first lunch in the Grand Hotel, the Señor Proprietor had a juicy bit of gossip. President Truman had declared war on Russia, he said, and he thought we'd be interested. The Señor Proprietor had heard the news that morning, from a truck driver just in from the coast. We immediately tried to check it. The latest newspaper in town—because we had brought it with us—still read "WAR! On the 38th Parallel." Another paper might not come for three or four days; nor would another truck. There was no telephone, no teletype, one radio—but the owner was out of town. Chiquian's main link with the outside is a lonely strand of telegraph wire, which starts at the "post office" and snakes across the Andes to the Pacific. It broke down—as it usually does—the day we

arrived. We heard the war rumor on Thursday, July 29. For the next two weeks, until our radio picked up some squeaks from the Voice of America, we didn't know whether the United States was at war, and if so with whom, and why, and who was trying to stop it (if anyone), and would they? These are just some of the advantages of mountaineering.

As it turned out, Peruvians use the word "Russians" as a catch-all for Slavs, East Germans, Koreans, fellow travelers, and undesirables of any ilk. So even the best-informed natives could tell us, if they spoke Spanish, that "the Northamericans have sent troops to fight the Russians." Language was always a problem. George had taken a few years of Spanish in high school and Austen had accelerated through an Emergency Course at Berlitz, but the rest of us were quite illiterate. We had, of course, several Handy Guides to the Spanish Language (Revised), which we mulled avidly in Chiquian. First there was our Handy Pocket Dictionary, which was built to fit in a soap dish and whose pages looked like a gray pastel when seen from more than four inches. Then there was our Handy Guide to Everyday Conversation. It was a catalogue of "common" phrases and translations; I've always wanted to meet the man who compiled it. I picture him as a very proper gentleman in his middle forties, living in ease off his royalties. He is used to the comforts of life (Page 21: Lace my boots. Page 32: My bed is hard), although inclined at times to asceticism (Page 30: I do not want meals). Years of travel make him react quickly to

emergencies (Page 108: I wish to give blood. Bring a stretcher!), and yet his conversation still shows his genteel upbringing (Page 24: Where is the W.C.?). He is a gay one with the ladies (Page 22: You are very charming. I am pleased to have met you. Give me your address). But he appreciates the foibles of women (Page 46: Give me a rinse in blonde. I want my hair lightened) and treats them with courtesy (Page 42: Do not take us to any vulgar places. Page 30: A room with two beds). He also has a healthy respect for the law (Page 64: What time must I turn on my car lights?), at least most of the time (Page 58: Can you recommend a lawyer who speaks English?). The great sorrow of his life is his feet, which have troubled him since late adolescence (Page 48: I want a chiropodist. Page 46: Have you a chiropodist in attenddance?).

Finally we had our Handy Grammar, a noble treatise that purported to teach "Spanish at a Glance." It translated a few basic words, conjugated some of the more unruly verbs, and spent its latter pages praising the publisher's other works: a guide to palmistry and another to bartending, *How to Make Candies* and *How to Make Love*, and the *Egyptian Secrets of Albertus Magnus*. We had a firm grip on its meager offerings by the time we arrived in Chiquian; but there, to our dismay, conversation sounded like an amateurish attempt at be-bop. Chiquian is a city of 3000 Quechua Indians, and it had never quite occurred to us that a Quechua Indian would speak, logically enough, Quechua.

# 10

WHAT WE WANTED MOST IN CHIQUIAN WERE MULES. IN this Indian village mules aplenty could be found in any alley and often your own bedroom. Chiquian was glutted with them; they rented at fifty cents a day. But we couldn't let on we needed any. That would bring runaway inflation of prices—plus another inning in the national game of procrastination. We acted coy. We acted indifferent. We casually let it out that a smart entrepreneur could possibly foist a score of mules on us, souvenir hunters that we tourists were. These *gringos*, you know, they'll buy anything if it's a bargain. Our tacit attitude at Chiquian was: "We happen to find ourselves in your quaint villa. If burros are cheap, perhaps we shall climb the Yerupaja, there being little else to do. Otherwise, kindly forget it."

The word went out by grapevine. After a few days two shady individuals showed up at the Grand Hotel,

peering around as if they were casing up the place for future pillage, and asked for an audience with one of us. George spoke to them in the unsolicitous manner of one buying rugs from a Navajo. For a score of animals and a two-day trip across the mountains, he agreed, twenty dollars seemed like a fairly reasonable price; the beasts were to materialize at the hotel early Monday morning.

So Monday would be the Real Thing. Anyone can fly to Peru; and anyone can drive to a backwoods settlement. But not until you're on the back of a spasmodic mule, joggling along a conjectural footpath, are you really on a Mountain Expedition. Our departure was a two-day affair; the ceremonies began Sunday afternoon with a benediction from the local clergy. *El Padre* showed up at the hotel around 3 P.M.; he wore black vestments and a black hat; in his right hand he bore his token of office, from which he poured a drink every now and then. The priest was a genial sort of man, and necessarily grew more and more so with each passing minute. He understood we were attempting a most dangerous ascent, he said, and offered a few prayers in our behalf. It soon appeared, however, that the padre was not wholly concerned with matters of the soul. We had always suspected this somewhat from his beer bottle, which he flourished with growing abandon; but now he broached matters of a distinctly lay interest. He owned, said this ecclesiastic, a silver mine. It was a prodigious silver mine, a colossal silver mine, and not yet tapped. Perhaps we should like to buy it, no? Oh. Then perhaps we should desire a share? No, we said, we sorrow

much, but we cannot. In Chiquian almost everyone owns a silver mine, but silver mines cost too much to develop. The padre thanked us for our consideration and, after further libations, departed none the worse for his failure in business.

"He's a good padre," one of the villagers told me, "only he drinks too much."

Our muleteers arrived Monday morning with their wards, late, of course. Now here comes an embarrassing point. I expect the reader is waiting to hear some droll anecdotes about llamas; in fact, I imagine many of you bought the book for this very purpose. To tell the truth, I've never seen any llamas. They work out of southern Peru and seldom turn up around Chiquian. If you *must* be satisfied, I once heard that Indians tell the age of a llama by the droop of his lower lip, and we'll let it go at that. Our own muleteers brought seventeen burros and five *bestias de silla.* A *bestia de silla* is not necessarily a "silly beast." It is an animal purposed to be sat upon—where, or how, was never made clear. I guess you would call them "horses," more out of respect for their age than their genealogy. They were the sorriest-looking creatures in the Andes.

We also were introduced to our Faithful Guide. He was a satanic sort of gent with the hunted look of a mountain desperado. Wispy hairs trailed from his face in the most unexpected places; his eye had a sooty wash. When he spoke to us, it was always as if he had been captured in battle and forced to an interrogation. Our Faithful Guide

and his cohorts now proceeded to load the mules. We took movies of this event for the humorous effect: the film seems to be slowed down to half speed. These unhurried Indian muleteers used no pack boards. They simply tied our crates to whatever part of the beast offered the most surface area; when the crate fell off, they tied it back on.

So it was almost eleven o'clock when our expedition left. We had all recovered from the Unknown Misery and were in pretty good health—except for George Bell, who had waked with a 102-degree fever and thought he should stay back for a few days. Our exit from Chiquian was the grandest spectacle the town had ever seen. The caravan wove like a circus parade through the scuffed-shoe streets. At the head marched our Faithful Guide, sinisterly, circumspectly. Behind him the seventeen burros, listing dangerously to the side that bore the greater weight; and a handful of Associate Faithful Guides, who prodded them every now and then with a broken twig. Then *Los Alpinistos!* Some walking, some mounted on steeds, and in their midst of course the padre, quaffing from his mace and mumbling eleventh-hour paternosters. Then Don Juan and Tomás, obviously enjoying themselves but yet to see their first bird. And finally, for blocks behind, the school children of Chiquian, wide-eyed and shouting—accurately, for once—"Gud-by, meestir. Gud-by."

As a matter of fact, I wasn't there. I had left Chiquian at daybreak, driving our borrowed truck back to

Lima. It was two weeks later when I hired my own "horse" and Faithful Guide and followed my friends to Yerupaja. By then our well-oiled communications system was in dire need of a grease job, and the only way to get news was face to face. I became a commuter from Lima to Chiquian; during July and August I made the trip five times, which should stand as something of a record. My transportation included busses, trucks, jeeps, taxis, and *collectivos*, which are nothing but cars and leave when they're full. Peruvian busses are a venerable sort of rattletrap, with boxes jammed in the aisles to seat still more passengers. They shimmy across the countryside with windows locked, and it is expected that most of the passengers will be sick at journey's end. Occasionally—and it is not uncommon—a driver reaches his stop, turns around, and finds half of the excursionists dead from gas poisoning. On August 13 a truck from Cuzco to Sicuani rolled over a cliff killing twenty-one passengers and hurting most of the twenty-nine others; investigators said the driver was even drunker than company regulations allowed. In Peru, busses are a caution.

The produce trucks, shuttling between the coast and Chiquian, were much better. First-class accommodations were a claustrophobic little nook wedged behind the driver's cab; but you could always sit in the open back with the Indians, the suckling babies, the rams, and the cattle. But produce trucks, being what they are, never really get started. They drive a few miles, stop, load or unload, and then either start ahead or back up. They

get to Chiquian only because of the inescapable fact that, in the long run, they move forward a greater distance than they move backwards. Actually, Yerupaja is only 120 miles from Lima as the crow flies; but I am no crow, and the trip took most of a week. Peruvians would promise a truck ride and show up days late; others, it turned out, didn't even own a truck, but figured that if they ever came across one it would be nice to have a passenger lined up. Most of my time I spent learning how to get out of places: out of Lima, out of Huacho and Barranca on the coast, out of Paramonga. It sometimes took a day or so to find out, and it was exasperating business. I didn't know that in a few weeks Dave Harrah's life would depend on what I was learning.

Right now this tedium was necessary only to get news. Our Signal Corps radio had shuffled off its mortal coil. We had, of course, an Alternative Plan. Swift-footed Indian couriers would race from Yerupaja to Chiquian, bearing news of mountain adventures. Neil McCallum—the party boss and cheese purveyor—would promptly telegraph them to me in Lima. But this idea, too, as it turned out, was Utopian. And on that maudlin incident I'll close My Life as a Foreign Correspondent.

Neil McCallum sent his first telegram—his only one, as a matter of fact—a few minutes after the expedition left Chiquian. It was waiting for me in Lima. Necessarily in Spanish, the telegram began: PARTIMOS TRES JULIO A UN CUARTO PARA LAS ONCE, and went on in that vein. "We

departed July 3 at quarter to eleven." The baffling phrase was about BUENOS CINCO. The "good five" had left Chiquian for the mountains. The good five? Perhaps, the healthy five?`So! George Bell, with his 102-degree fever, had been too sick to accompany the others! And newspaper readers across America were soon appalled to learn that Bell lay in his Chiquian sickbed, racked with febrid pain.

A checkup confirmed the story. I was in Chiquian the next week, and asked about George. "*Sí, señor, sí,* one of the alpinists, he did not go to the mountain."

"He was sick, eh? Too sick to go?" I asked.

The natives stroked their chins. "*Sí,* perhaps he must have been sick. *Sí,* indeed he was sick."

"But now he is at the mountain?" I asked. For George was no longer in Chiquian.

"Oh, *señor,* no. He went to Lima. He had to go to Lima!"

"To Lima!" I almost shouted. "Was he that bad?"

The Chiquianers looked at each other again. "*Sí,* very bad. To Lima. Very, very sick."

I got back to Lima as fast as I could. Now the mystery thickened. George was nowhere to be found—he hadn't checked with the American Embassy or the Hotel Bolivar. No one had seen him. I alerted the staff of the Embassy; together we phoned Lima's hospitals. The Clinica Santa Rosa, the Dos de Mayo, the Arzobispo Loayza, the Clinica Anglo-Americana . . .

"Yes, sir, we have a card for Mr. Bell. A Colonel George Bell. He was released from the Clinica in 1936, after . . ."

I was worried. The Embassy was worried. We were quite convinced that death had overtaken George on the way from Chiquian to Lima, or that he had been done in by some foul highwaymen. Our only hope was Neil McCallum, who was due in Lima that night. I hurried to his home on the outskirts.

"Señor McCallum," I began, "something awful has happened. We can't find George Bell."

"George Bell? George Bell?" said McCallum. "He went to Yerupaja with the others, did he not?"

"No, *señor*. Remember your telegram?"—and I showed it to him—"Only the *buenos cinco* left Chiquian. Only the healthy five."

McCallum stared at the message and began to laugh. It now appeared that the telegram had lost something in translation, but even more in telegraphing. "The Madame Postmistress, she has erred," McCallum chuckled. "It should not be *buenos cinco*. It should be *burros cinco*. They left Chiquian with five burros—you know, horses."

I was mortified. That left only one question. Who were the Chiquianers talking about? Which mountaineer had stayed behind? Which mountaineer—apparently so close to death—had gone back to Lima? Slowly it dawned on me.

I had been searching for my own dead body.

# BOOK 2

# II

THE GRAND OVERLAND SAFARI OF ALPINISTS, BEASTS, PRODders, Faithful Guides, "horses," and resident ornithologists wound past the outskirts of Chiquian. We would ride two days—our expedition, that is; I didn't follow until a few weeks later. Then we would be at the foot of Yerupaja; and wherever the mules got tired, we'd call it Base Camp.

Our trail picked its way farther down the valley, around obdurate cows and past squatting Indian mothers who washed clothes in the rivulets and eyed us suspiciously from under wide-brimmed bonnets. During Schneider's expedition of 1936, these same Indians had asked him, "Have you come to cut our throats?" Now, as so immoderate a procession weaved past them, they found assurance only in our Faithful Guide and his native cohorts. After an hour we reached the River Chiquian, the grand canal of the town's sewer systems. Still, it was a

beautiful river if you didn't smell it too closely, rolling over the tops of boulders and catching its breath in whirlpools and eddies. At one point the river had cut a small gorge, exposing rich mineral earths of copper and silver; black and green lichens grew over it. It was a brilliant color display, a tribute to the latent beauty of mud and parasites. Elsewhere thin white fungi grew like skeletons from the rock. Sooner or later, of course, the River Chiquian reaches the Pacific; and until 1948 it was the only route inland. This was the trail that other expeditions had taken. Then the roller-coaster truck road was built, and Yerupaja became accessible to part-time mountaineers like us.

After two hours we left the River Chiquian and went upstream alongside a tributary, the Llamac. Once again we were at the bottom of a verruga valley, so deep that we hadn't seen Yerupaja for several hours. We would have to reach the village of Llamac by nightfall; but this time we were never in danger. Perhaps the mules, too, knew the drawbacks of tarrying, and moved briskly (for mules) along the mountainside path. God knows why it was a mountainside path; any sensible trail, it seems to me, would have stuck to the river. This one climbed in switchbacks up the side of the ravine, drooped back down to the Llamac, and perversely began to climb once again. I had read much of Andes mule trails, and I imagine you have too. I fancied—not without some promptings from the authors—that they were tiny ledges, perhaps a foot or two wide, clinging doggedly to a monstrous rock cliff

which was at least perpendicular, possibly even overhanging. Actually, a 35-degree slope was average; if you ever fell, you could be reasonably sure of catching yourself. The only danger was landslides, which have often carried away whole houses and the family within. Our Sure-Footed Beasts picked their way gingerly over a rock-strewn path on a gravelly mountainside. You felt they knew what they were doing.

Something else again were our Faithful Guides. All of these worthies carried a bag of coca leaves, from which they seldom abstained. They chewed the leaves and flavored them with a whitish paste applied, oddly enough, after the leaves were in their mouths. Far from being a wilderness Coca-Cola, coca leaves are the base for cocaine, which is considered something of a drug. By the end of the trip our Faithful Guides were considerably less sure-footed than our Sure-Footed Beasts, who did not chew coca leaves. Our guides prodded the mules with wayside twigs, which seemed to help a bit; they also yelled "*Ayla carachi!*" at regular intervals, which produced no visible effect. I imagine it is some sort of traffic direction, like *gee* or *haw;* if it is a Quechua cuss word, I beg the reader's pardon.

Llamac town is the poor man's Chiquian, and our caravan got there at twilight. It is hard to compare Llamac with Chiquian without seeming to gild the lily. In Chiquian, there is a lukewarm attempt at garbage disposal; Llamac has wide streets and a rainy season. In

Chiquian, you occasionally find a wall or a scoop of ice-cream colored white; in Llamac everything, but everything, is eternal brown. Brown streets, brown cottages, brown ponchos, brown people—several hundred of them, who viewed us Americans with something between awe and cupidity. We were some of the first white men in Llamac. It is something of a thrill—Intrepid Explorers and all that—until you realize that the billion who stayed away had a darn good reason.

The caravan, guests of the *gobernador*, slept on the floor of the town hall. We were bushed from the trip and got to bed early, but treachery was afoot. Around midnight a weird wailing noise, like pagan blood rites or the moan of a dying cow, floated into the hall from down the street. It was an uncanny sort of din and grew louder by the minute, when suddenly our Faithful Guide burst into the room.

"*Señores!*" he commanded. "Awake! Awake and follow me!"

We bleared up at him through the puckered mouths of our sleeping bags, agreeing that almost nothing in Llamac could be worth waking up for. But our Faithful Guide repeated the order, and shook us a little. We stumbled around for a few moments, then followed him out into the dark streets of the town.

He headed toward the wails, which—a little to our relief—came not from a sacrificial altar but from the local pub. We were pushed in. A handful of men were seated among flowing wassail in an advanced state of intemper-

ance, singing ancient Quechua hymns to some of the more heathen deities. It was not at all like an Yma Sumac record; the choral arrangement was designed more to affright the devil than to propitiate any heavenly spirits. We saw with dismay that the merrymakers were our Associate Faithful Guides—our packers and prodders —badly needed on the morrow.

Taking their salaries from us and their cue perhaps from the padre, they were celebrating; it is hard to say just what. Americans need an excuse for their revels, even if it's as inconsequential as Jefferson Davis's birthday or the victory of a lacrosse team. Peruvians will celebrate for no reason at all; they require no *deus ex machina.* When something *really* big comes along, they simply celebrate longer—their Independence Day lasts half a week. Our Associate Faithful Guides were celebrating only the fact that we had given them enough money to celebrate with, and were now quite pickled.

This could be an annoying delay. We literally dragged them from the bistro, and went to bed once again.

Somehow they were in fine fettle the next morning, and ready to start early for Yerupaja. We, too, had slept well, or as well as you can on the floor of a town hall. Llamac, alongside the river, lies at the bottom of a valley; Yerupaja heads the next valley over. Between the two valleys is a steep ridge and a winding mule trail, which we slowly began to climb. By noon we were at the pass, a windy 15,000 feet high, and Yerupaja loomed before us,

close and immense. We could see the whole white range—it is called the Cordillera de Huayhuash and, outside of the Himalayas, is undoubtedly the most formidable in the world. Nowhere—not even at the passes—does it drop below 18,500 feet. At the north end (to our left) was Rondoy, a shapeless mass guarded by hourly avalanches. Then Jirishanca, a stubby lighthouse of snow and ice and as "interesting" a climb as you could want. Next Yerupaja, and, out of sight, Siula. Yerupaja, massive and magnificent, was head and shoulders above the rest. For all our experience, our only reaction could be, "My gosh! Are we going to climb *that?*"

The mule train pointed toward Yerupaja and slowly dropped down the ridge into the valley. Sometimes it passed through a quiet grove of gnarled trees and bright red flowers, where last night's ice still hadn't melted. Sometimes it struck a hot rib of rock and resolutely tried to stumble its way through. Our Sure-Footed Beast would hunch his way up the rock over would-be steps; then he'd drop out from under us for a split second, and we'd be going down the other side. Often our Sure-Footed Beast wasn't so sure-footed as one might hope, and we had to get off an inordinate number of times as he bumbled his way along. Luckily, we never reached the stage where we also had to carry our Sure-Footed Beasts.

George and Austen walked ahead—it was faster to walk than ride—to seek a site for Base Camp. Yerupaja and the rest of the Cordillera dump into a single broad glacier, which ends at the base of the mountains; here it

spills into a lake of its own creation, named Solterahanca. The near side of Solterahanca is dammed up by a ridge of moraine, glacial debris of rock and gravel that had been piling up for ages. On March 14, 1932, the dam gave way, and about eight million tons of water swept into the valley. Such things happen frequently in the Andes. The result was several less Indians and another lake, Jahuakocha, a little bit below Solterahanca. At the far end of this lake, Austen and George founded our Base Camp.

Base Camp, at 13,400 feet, sounds pretty mountainous. Actually it was just like home. There was always grass under our feet. Cows chomped moodily by a meandering rivulet, where the glacier's meltwater ran from Solterahanca to Jahuakocha. Quechua Indians lived a few minutes away, in stone igloos built next to stone corrals. Although condors flew far overhead—black mountain vultures with the world's largest wingspread—there were hundreds of geese, ducks, and ground birds too. The lake was a natural sanctuary for sleek water birds of rectangular black and white; for eagles of brown, white, black, and gold; for blackbirds with yellow wings; and for a handful of species still unknown.

The homiest thing about Base Camp was the trees. We hadn't expected them; they would save us the trouble of Coleman stoves and gasoline, at least down here. There were, however, two theories on how to build a wood fire. Most of us agreed that a supply of wood was a desirable ingredient, perhaps downright essential. Don Juan, on the

other hand, contended that any fire could be maintained for an almost indefinite period by blowing heartily on the dead embers. Our method meant the greater heat, Don Juan's the lesser work. The debate began at our campfire on the first night, and was never quite settled. But it's too cold in the Andes to spend much time in those council-fire powpows. We had unpacked the mules and pitched a few tents; the sun had dropped behind the mountains at four-thirty and even around the fire we were shivering. At Base Camp the time to go to bed is six o'clock or—at the latest—seven. Which we did.

We had just enough time to celebrate first, though. It had taken a year to climb a mountain of red tape; now at last we were ready to try our hand on The Butcher. Jim broke out some firecrackers that he had bought at a Boy Scout stand in Connecticut. Indians and cows were dismayed that night to see Roman candles bursting over the Cordillera de Huayhuash. No one else paid much attention; the real purpose of the display was to give me another news story. It was the Fourth of July.

# 12

MOUNTAINEERS HAVE A MACABRE SENSE OF HUMOR. OUT climbing in a quarry, they babble incessantly of their own impending deaths, and of the various kinds of mayhem that might result from a loose rock or a Jim Dandy Rope Cutter. They shout instructions to one another: "Put your left foot in your mouth and spit it up to the next ledge," or, "Don't fall—you'll crush my egg sandwich."

At Base Camp the air was filled with this mountain humor. Graham's favorite tune dealt with skiing in New Hampshire; the ballader, having just skied across a girl and sliced her in half,

> . . . wiped the blood off my ski tips,
> And I gaily laughed,
> Thought I'd take the slalom,
> And I skied over to the Taft.

I saw my buddy take the slalom,
Like a ball of fire,
At the bottom his head was
Severed by a telephone wire.

Things like this made merry our life around Base Camp. One of the first things we did at our new home was hang out a jocular shingle. Graham found the skeleton head of a dead cow—the usual trade mark of places such as Death Valley—and jammed it on top of an even deader tree trunk. It was our totem pole from then on.

The rest of Base Camp was more useful than droll. We pitched three tents just a few yards from Jahuakocha. The largest had no right being in the Andes: it looked like the sandwich pavilion at a church bazaar. We could even stand up in the damn thing—except for Austen, of course—and four of us could sleep inside when it was empty. This tent might best be described as a very large something, which no matter how much you put in it there was always room for more, and no matter how little you put in it you couldn't find it. As a result, traffic through it was something immense, especially on week ends and holidays—mostly mountaineers searching for prunes or a toothbrush or a lost friend, who had disappeared within only a few minutes before. So many people tramped around inside that we had to sweep the tent daily with a whisk broom. With a fabric window to let in the morning sun, it was more like a boardinghouse than a mountain encampment. But we always slept there and stored our food there

too—except for one large and fragrant cake of cheese, which we unanimously agreed to leave outside.

Opposite the sandwich pavilion was a white tent with an indeterminate shape and no visible means of entrance or exit, labeled "COLOSSAL (*sic*) ENTERPRISES." Somehow Don Juan Ormea and Tomás managed to inhabit it. Inside there was also a heavy pine trunk, strongly padlocked and bolted from the outside, which at the end of the summer (the Ormeas told us) was jam-packed with local fowl, stuffed. To be honest, we did see father and son Ormea reconstitute a fair number of feathered friends, though not half so many as they could have.

Our last tent was the only one that looked in place; it was the popular mountain tent sold as Army surplus. We used it to store an unfathomable amount of oatmeal. How, or where, or why we bought this oatmeal, I have no idea; I only know we came in with bushels of it, and we left with bushels of it. For the whole summer it mellowed inside the mountain tent, and there was little room for much else. Jim managed to find space for the radio in the back recesses. Then he strung the aerial outside, providing the rest of us with clothesline, and tried for a few weeks to discover me in Lima. On the second day in camp he actually succeeded. I picked up a message that could be called a smattering of intelligibility panting for breath in a sea of rhubarb. It sounded like this: "Rhubarb rhubarb rhubarb the mules have gone back to chiquian we have sent out a rhubarb party rhubarb." After that, even the

rhubarb didn't have enough volts to get out of the Andes, and collapsed in a tasty heap somewhere short of the foothills.

Our radio was still good for listening, and the mountain tent soon became our recreation hall and amusement palace. After supper you crawled into its baggy orifice, sort of hipped the oatmeal to one side, and draped the earphones over your head. And there you lay for upward of an hour. Our favorite program was the Voice of Moscow, which came in quite clear; sometimes we could even get the Voice of America, a dishwater voice reading panegyrics from various irrelevant nations to the U.N. army in Korea. But usually we tuned in some Cugat music from Lima. So there we were, flat on our backs at 13,000 feet, the rhythm of a rhumba in our ears and the musty smell of oatmeal in our nostrils, and the fiery Andes sun extinguishing itself in the cold water of Jahuakocha.

You can see we were hardly roughing it. Our most gracious living in Peru was at Base Camp. Our sleeping bags were the warmest; our air mattresses were the softest; our pots, scoured with river sand, were the cleanest; and our toilet facilities, built from an old whisky crate, were honestly the most charming since Lima. New and exciting stomach maladjustments haunted me everywhere else in Peru, but never at Base Camp. Our food was delicious, especially if you liked oatmeal. If you didn't, you could always puddle some dehydrated bananas around in the cereal, and things perked up considerably.

The avalanches and icefalls that shook the ground every few hours never really bothered us. Nor did the cows, grazing and functioning well above our water supply. We had little trouble with that universal abomination, dehydrated food—apples, bananas, carrots, cabbages, and onions; we found we could resuscitate them easily. One of the best dishes I ever ate was cooked by Tomás from dehydrated apples and dried peaches. I choose to call it Apple Surprise, and Tomás's recipe goes like this:

Bring a pot of water to a boil, and let it boil for half an hour. I don't know why; Tomás said so. Pour in as much sugar as you can find and splash around for an hour or so. Then pour in a lot of honey and keep churning. Finally the dehydrated apples, and putter about for the next few hours, until the stuff has the consistency of one of the more popular glues. Unexpected results are guaranteed; if not, reverse the procedure and wait for further instructions.

On the other hand, there was our dehydrated milk, an uninviting white powder. Once water is removed from milk, it seems, neither cunning nor brute force nor the most intricate reactions of chemistry can persuade them to join again. We had an ingenious little gadget called a Vacu-Mixer that was supposed to do the job. We were to dump some powder in our Vacu-Mixer, sprinkle it with water, and convulse heartily while milk presumably sprouted within. Unfortunately, some sort of gas always formed as a by-product, exploding our Vacu-Mixer long before the reaction was complete. We had to be content

with a milk that looked like matzoth balls in clam chowder.

The only thing really bothersome about our Base Camp was its bathing facilities. Lake Jahuakocha had been a glacier just a few thousand feet upstream; its water was on the nippy side. Only one of us ever took a swim in it—George Bell, and he dived out faster than he dived in. The other mountaineers spent two months without changing their clothes or bathing. A hot bath at the Bolivar became one of the dreams of our young lives.

Between sunset (four-thirty) and sunrise (nine o'clock) the mountain air was as cold as Jahuakocha, and we necessarily spent much time in the intestinal confines of our sleeping bags. In between we managed to cook three meals a day and send out reconnaisance sorties. On the day after we arrived, we bid *adios* to our mules and Faithful Guides and began searching for a route up. Now take a look at the map. The tent-shaped face of Yerupaja was still high above us and quite a ways to the south. Between us and the mountain lay Rassac Ridge, a long rib of loose, crumbling rock—so high that only the peak of Yerupaja showed over the top. The glacier sat in the trough between Rassac Ridge and the Yerupaja chain, dumping icebergs into Lake Solterahanca just a few thousand feet from Base Camp. We wanted to pitch a camp at the top of the glacier, in the saddle—or col—between Yerupaja and Rassac peak. Col Camp would probably be headquarters for our stabs at the summit.

From the map it looks as if the fastest way to Col

Camp is to walk up the glacier. As a matter of fact, you *can* walk on the upper half of the glacier—and we did. But the lower half is an icefall. A glacier, after all, is a river of ice moving slowly downhill, maybe just a few yards a year. When a river drops down a steep grade, you have rapids of waterfalls. When a glacier does the same thing, you have an icefall. Great ravines split the surface; boulders of ice rumble across every few hours. Climbing up an icefall is as practical as canoeing up a waterfall, and we had to find a way to by-pass it.

One way was to walk alongside the glacier, around the bottom of Rassac Ridge. This would take us along the plunging shore of Solterahanca, where a few pathetic trails hid embarrassedly among the sagebrush. Graham spent many hours widening them with his ice ax, but they never were safe for mules. We would do better to climb straight up the side of Rassac Ridge, over the top and down the other side. Then we would reach the glacier above the icefall, and would walk on ice to Col Camp. This is the route we chose, and it's traced out on the map.

By going this way, we could enjoy the company of mules for another 1,500 feet up—a fresh and hardier brand of mules, used to such foolish exertions. We were five days getting them. And right here, to reward you for your tedious map study, we shall introduce our first villain. His name is One-Eye.

One-Eye was the only Indian living closer to Yerupaja than we. His hut and corral were at the foot of the glacial moraine, and because of his superior location he consid-

ered himself Grand Potentate of the valley. One-Eye always dressed in his accouterments of office; having invented the post and elected himself to it, he could jolly well choose his own uniform. It was much like a Hopalong Cassidy getup. He wore a clean shirt—something unheard of in the Andes—and leather chaps, buckled around his ankles. Because he had enough money to wear an apron, he wore an apron. He slung a bandana around his neck and when it got cold he pulled it over his nose, and over the top glowed his one sooty, evil eye.

As a matter of fact, we were camping on One-Eye's property—but that sounds absurd in the mountains. He visited us the first day in camp, to welcome us into his bailiwick and offer the services of the local government. We negotiated with His Excellency for a daily consignment of milk and eggs. One-Eye made an admirable sutler; and so, when we needed fresh mules, we naturally turned to his administration.

"*Sí, sí,*" said One-Eye, "my beasties are indeed the most strong in the valley. But they are very costly to maintain, *sí*, very costly indeed. I must charge you many hundred *soles*, no?"

We had to agree. His Excellency would return next morning at 5 A.M. with five healthy burros. He showed up at eleven with two. "Señor One-Eye," we asked—we never did learn his name—"Señor One-Eye, where are the other mules?"

One-Eye hemmed and hawed. "The other mules? Ah, yes. They should be right along, *sí*, right along. What has

happened to delay them I cannot conceive. But meanwhile, we shall load these two beasties, no?"

The "two beasties," if they were built for rugged climbing, seemed to have overexerted themselves. They were bony, scraggly little shrimps, who disrelished the idea of being loaded. Most suspicious, they seemed never to have seen One-Eye before. We dismissed His Excellency for the time being; he withdrew with his two courtesans and promised to come back tomorrow with even healthier beasts.

Meanwhile, Don Juan talked to the local citizenry and checked on One-Eye's character references. He learned that One-Eye, far from owning the strongest and costliest mules in the valley, owned no mules at all. But at the lower end of Lake Jahuakocha was a man who did, a friendly but ineffectual Indian named Naptali Sombrano. One-Eye was borrowing mules from Naptali at bargain rates, and renting them to us at a markup of several hundred percent. We agreed that it would be economically sound to deal with Naptali himself and thus avoid middleman's profits. But Naptali Sombrano was leery. His Excellency's government, he said, considered him definitely *persona non grata.* In fact, if Naptali and Naptali's mules showed up on One-Eye's property, One-Eye had threatened to maintain his territorial integrity by the use of small-arms fire. Naptali, bluntly, was scared.

The Ormeas reassured him. Were not the alpinists representatives of the United States? And would not the United States defend the rights of the small against the

militia of the strong? Naptali agreed. On July 9 he showed up with three virile mules—perhaps a little too virile, as became evident when we tried to load them—and we began our climb Up.

His Excellency the Distinguished Señor One-Eye never fired his threatened artillery, and we now doubt that he had any at all.

# 13

ALL HIS LIFE DAVE HARRAH HAS FRATERNIZED WITH DEATH. When he was fourteen he joined the Seattle Mountaineers to find sport in the hills; one year later he fell thirty feet down Mt. Constance and was almost killed. He and death rubbed elbows again in the Andes—in the verruga valley. They did so three more times before the summer was over. But "to quit mountaineering is easy," Dave has written; "I've done it a hundred times." The longest was involuntary, when the Army sent him to Europe. His job: to register graves.

Dave majored in philosophy at Stanford. He was rugged and well-built—with a strong will and a biting sense of humor. He was the healthiest man on the trip, victim of the Great Unknown Bug for only a few days. Because of that, he now became our most valuable expeditioner; whenever anybody did anything, it was usually Dave. Dave and Austen Riggs, a few days before, had

spotted a route over Rassac. Now the bug was picking on Austen, so it was Dave's job to lead the mules to Camp II. "Lead" is imprecise; rather he "propelled." Dave walked astern of the mules, urging them forward with one of the more stimulating ends of his ice ax. It was something of a chain-reaction. Dave prodded the rear-guard beastie, who nosed the middlemost, who provoked the van; and so it was Dave's turn again. Thus they pulsated up Rassac Ridge —Dave, George, and Graham Matthews, three sure-footed beasts, and the willing Mr. Sombrano.

Naptali was willing, that is, as long as he had his coca leaves. Among our other alpine equipment were several adult doses of this salad, wrapped in vinylite bags. We had bought it in Lima as favors for the Inland Savages. As it turned out, the Indians would rather work for coca than for money, and much of our payment to Naptali was in non-negotiable vegetable. That and ice axes. Naptali—whatever his mules must have thought of them—loved ice axes. An ice ax looks like a pick and, as you can guess, was designed to chop, sculpt, and demolish otherwise intractable ice and snow. But mountaineers have found it a Universal Gimmick: to hang pots, to slice cheese, even to stimulate mules abaft. Señor Naptali Sombrano used it as a walking cane. It was a piece of frippery that even One-Eye had neglected; and Naptali was loath to surrender it at summer's end.

The trail passed alongside His Excellency's fortress and began to crawl up Rassac Ridge. It was a long climb —mountaineers walk very slowly—and, thanks to the

mules, increasingly staccato. Nothing much happened except a few bulls. They poked rather ferocious heads out from the bushes, snorted suggestively at the alpinists, and, when nobody paid any attention, retreated into the sage looking as nonplused as it is possible for a bull to look. We met them many times during the summer; finally in August someone bothered to tell us they were wild. They had been wild for generations. They were the bulls one sees in the ring, not the corral. They gored cows and people, and the Indians were scared stiff of them. They were, I imagine, so used to watching people flee that our gay indifference left them at a loss, and they were stupefied into passivity.

I must apologize to the reader because these nonplused bulls—and oh yes, a fox somewhere—were the only wild beasts we saw all summer. I realize that it is the duty of every adventurer to meet several questionable mammals in the uncharted wilds, and to immortalize them back home in garish prose or on the walls of the Harvard Biology Labs. And I appreciate that a few chance encounters with some cows, however undomesticated, will fail to justify our expedition in the eyes of most readers. But alas! I have always been studious of the truth. We never saw a deformed black beast streaking across the countryside but it was our own mule, still loaded; we never watched mischievous eyes flash into our tent but it was Naptali, seeking even more coca; we never heard a blood-curdling wail rend the night but it was Graham, singing.

And so, the best I can offer is a rather pastoral description of the Wild Andean Bull, genus *Bos*. Andean bulls look, as was made painfully clear, like any other bull; but what they eat is still obscure. Whatever or whoever it is, they climb like hell to get it. We have observed the Wild Andean Bull sulking its way along the rocks and loose slopes where even the mountaineers fear to tread. But sometimes they outdo themselves, and fall. Then a dozen or two condors soar in, floating magnificently on ten-foot wingspreads, but as they touch the ground change —like Cinderella at midnight—into a scraggly and voracious sort of fowl, as ungainly as a picked chicken. In a few minutes the Wild Andean Bull is available to zoologists and osteomancers in its skeletal form.

And yes, then there was this fox. I spotted him while driving the truck back to Lima. A hitchhiker named Valensuella threw a rock at him and he ran away; but what insight this will give as to the diet, courtship procedure, habits, and whims of the Wild Andean Fox (or of Señor Valensuella, for that matter) I leave to the reader's discernment.

As for the not-so-wild Andean Mules, we have left three of them proceeding after a fashion up Rassac Ridge. Dave was getting more and more ineffectual in his role of *provocateur*. When it became obvious that he was not agitating the mules forward, but pushing them bodily, we deemed it best to stop. The party lapsed to a halt at 14,700 feet, at the edge of an alpine meadow, and promptly christened the place with the unappetizing

name of The Dump. Then they put the name into practice—a little too vigorously, since one of the crates had no sooner been unloaded than it maliciously took off downmountain for Base Camp, at a rate alarmingly faster than it had ascended. A flying tackle curbed its homing instincts.

Our site for Camp II was still 500 feet higher, a pocket of boulders and grass at the bottom of a red hillside of haphazard rocks—"scree." Dave, George, Graham, and Naptali left the mules to their own devices and backpacked up. We called the camp Boulder Pocket, which was a considerable improvement over The Dump. But it was nowhere as homey as Base Camp. Graham clawed a hole into the turf and pulled up a cupful of water every now and then, and that was our closest water supply.

There was, of course, the usual confusion of food, interlocked crampons, climbing impedimenta, and orange crates. Our Boulder Pocket tent was a new kind. It weighed just eighteen ounces (including the poles) and could be rolled up and carried in one hand; but all attempts to resolve it into a more practicable form ended in failure. We decided to forget about it until morning, and everyone slept out of doors. It seems almost superfluous to say that we had our first snowfall that night—only an inch but soggy and penetrating. Graham slept fitfully and caught some sort of chill. That left George and Dave to push upward the next morning. They left at eight-thirty with Camp III on their backs—a tent, two sleeping bags and air mattresses, a gas stove, and food.

Real life has a perverse talent for failing to meet the

demands of the movie scenario or the adventure story. If George and Dave had any notion of plot, they would have hustled over the top of Rassac Ridge and perfunctorily pitched a perfunctory camp. Perhaps they would have raced to the col that very night, to make way for the exciting part of the story. But no; nature is a poor script writer. In the movies, a mountaineer can materialize quite suddenly at High Camp, presumably placed there by parachute or act of God, eager to perform feats of derring-do for the audience. In real life he must bumble around in the foothills for days and weeks, guessing a route through scree and boulders and assorted dishabille, wondering whether he is going forward or backward or even up or down. So it was now. Rassac Ridge was in an advanced state of disrepair. It was tiled all over with crumbled rocks, many of them bigger than a man; it rose temptingly into minor peaks and false summits, dropped dismally into gullies and inscrutable corrugations. Tilted beds of stone groped almost vertically into the air. Somewhere through this was a route to Camp III, and a dozen others—equally circuitous—going right back to where you started.

You yourself have had this sort of trouble, and not necessarily on mountain debris. Perhaps you have driven into Boston over Longfellow Bridge, with the firm intent of gaining South Station by twilight. You know quite well where South Station must be; it is necessary only to by-pass some of the more flagrantly one-way streets. Yet hours later—perhaps days—you are still trying to evacu-

ate yourself from the confines of a rather odoriferous fish market, from the circumambulating highways in the so-called Fens, or from that escape-proof parking lot known as Washington Street. What can happen in so thriving a metropolis can certainly happen in Peru's untrodden wilderness, lacking the benefits of city planning. And Rassac Ridge, bluntly, was an unholy mess.

For six hours Dave and George climbed and looked around, backtracked, scratched their heads, and cussed. As the route unfolded, they piled stones into cairns, marking the trail for others. At one place there was a slope of rubble a quarter mile long. Anyone could cross it in all sorts of directions; and in the future, from the looks of it, we no doubt would. This was not to be desired. So Dave built two cairns at the start of the quarter mile; you squinted along the top like a gunsight and saw another cairn at the far end. Then you stalked toward it behind ever-fixed eyes.

Often Dave and George weren't walking, but climbing—crimping their fingers onto hypothetical handholds, and pulling their feet up to an equally implausible toe ledge. It was two o'clock when they finally topped the ridge; they descended a way and founded Camp III at 16,100 feet.

Life in the Rough has its own peculiar attractions; even when things get intolerable, you can get a chuckle over your own idiocy in staying there. It took an inexorable sense of humor to appreciate Camp III, because Camp III was simply awful. Water was a quarter mile

away, where we spooned it out of a creek. The wind whipped up dust and grit, and puckishly wedged it into our teeth and hair. Our beards became sieves, catchalls for airborne dirt, spores, arthropods, microcosms, and other local denizens. At night the wind somehow intruded its grit right through our tent and surprised us in our sleeping bags. If that didn't work, it blew the tent down. In desperation we called the place Glacier Meadow. But flattery didn't help. The wind, a week or so later, blew three days and three nights and bid fair to relocate Camp III somewhere else on Rassac; grizzled mountaineers, like mariners in a storm, held the tent at bay for ten minutes and tied it once again to Glacier Meadow. Even in days of relative calm, the air vexed us. At 16,100 feet there wasn't quite enough to go around. We slept with our trousers on—not because it was cold, but because taking them off was too much of an exertion: it left you panting for breath. Dave was developing a theory that one should not dine heartily at high altitudes. It had not yet found favor on the first night in camp; and he and George supped on canned veal, baby beef liver, Finnish cheese, and mincemeat. As if to confirm Dave's hypothesis, supper fell to the bottom of their stomachs like a lead sinker and —with so little oxygen to digest it—was still encamped there at daybreak.

But our miseries, after all, were no more than everyone has endured (say) in one of the more exposed baseball parks. There, too, I have curried sand from my teeth and invertebrates from my hair; there, too, I have lis-

tened to the rattle of various indigestibles against the walls of my stomach. And Glacier Meadow itself was a grandstand, with a view far better than that of nine alert but immobile young men. It was perched above the glacier, and opposite was the whole Cordillera de Huayhuash. At dawn the sun rose out of stubby Jirishanca, flames from a boiling cauldron. Then all day long we could watch avalanches scour the face of Rondoy; hear the occasional crackling of the icefall beneath us; and gaze wistfully at Yerupaja. The sun dropped early behind Rassac Ridge, and Glacier Meadow was switched into darkness. But the sun's orange and purple spotlight still played on the Cordillera across the glacier; then evening climbed slowly up the mountains, until it pushed the fiery crown off its last stronghold on the peak of Yerupaja. It was a magnificent sight.

Inspired by the view and bucked up by their success, Dave and George were in high spirits the next morning. They had pitched two camps in two days; they hoped they wouldn't see Base Camp again until Yerupaja was climbed. They made sure there was a route onto the glacier and returned to Boulder Pocket with encouraging news. What they found was not so encouraging. Graham was in a high fever, too sick to help his friends and too weak to descend to Base Camp. Jim and Chuck had carried loads from the Dump; but Jim wanted to return to the radio and Chuck—worn out from fever—couldn't go any higher. Austen, running a temperature, was still in Base

Camp. Everyone could be cured, sooner or later, by a liberal application of miracle drugs. Meanwhile, whatever climbing was done on Yerupaja would have to be done by just two men: Dave Harrah and George Bell.

*Austen Riggs.*

*Chuck Crush.*

*Graham Matthews.*

*George Bell.*

*Dave Harrah.*

*Jim Maxwell.*

*We loaded our truck in Lima.*

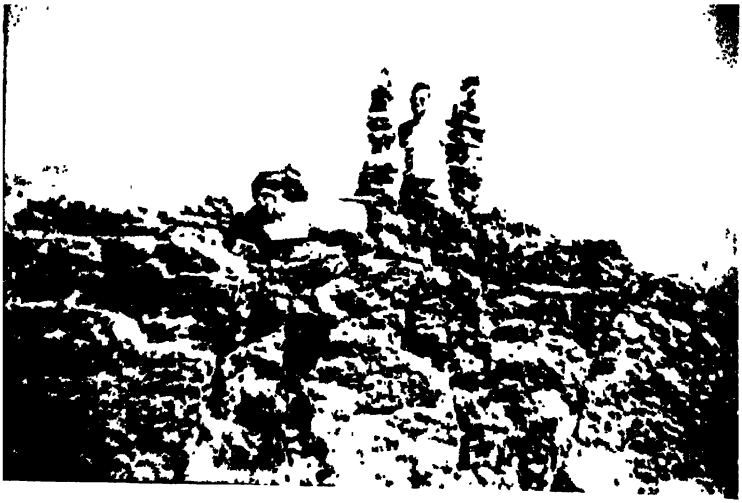
*Yerupaja loomed over the hidden city of Chiquian.*

*Indian mothers looked at us from under broad-brimmed hats.*

*The mountain looked bigger and bigger as we headed down the valley.*

*From Glacier Meadow we could see the clouds rise over Yerupaja . . .*

*. . . and the avalanche-scoured face of Rondoy.*



*Dave built gunsight cairns so we could find our way.*

*The glacier was long, hot, and tiring.*

*For a few seconds Jim stood on the summit.*

*Dave Harrah forced a smile on the summit of Yerupaja. A few minutes later, the cornice collapsed beneath him.*

*Sitting on an air mattress and strapped to a mule, Dave began a race with death.*

# 14

ON JULY 12—THE NEXT DAY—DAVE AND GEORGE LEFT Boulder Pocket with Col Camp strapped to their shoulders. They slept at Glacier Meadow. On July 13 they left Glacier Meadow and headed for the glacier itself.

Now the fact is, reader, you haven't the vaguest idea of what a glacier is like. You can hardly be blamed. Our homes these days tend to be built on solid rock and exhibit no noticeable inclination to slide downhill in the course of a week; the sun, although it parches our soil and warps the shingles on our roof, has never been known to evaporate either. No doubt this is for the best. But since you have never experienced these goings on, you find it quite hard to visualize their consequences. Your picture of a glacier is not the true picture, but closer to how a large cake of ice would behave back home in Minnesota. Since high school you have heard that a glacier is a frozen river of ice, moving imperceptibly downhill. So you imagine a

gentle river valley, somehow filled quite high with ice, which on close scrutiny seems to be moving—by gosh—imperceptibly downhill. Or perhaps you have learned that glaciers are not above having streams and lakes on their surface. So!—you chuckle—glaciers aren't much different from the rest of the earth after all, only rather slippery in stockinged feet. Certainly the skiing must be excellent.

But this is only one of your glacier images. You have still another, which is quite incompatible with the first, and therefore you try not to think of the two at once. This is the glacier from Close Up, as described by the more exuberant adventure writers and journalists. It is a Highway to Heaven, but every step may be Your Last. Bottomless crevasses yawn from underfoot, which mountaineers (nearsighted cusses that they are) are in constant danger of stumbling into. Towers of top-heavy ice line their path, swaying in the afternoon breezes and collapsing just yards from our dauntless heroes. This conceptualized glacier is a no man's land, where mountaineers are forever dodging cannonades of ice and shying back (in the nick of time!) from abysmal booby traps. While all the while the glacier cascades downhill, taking them farther and farther from their goal, a treadmill beneath their feet.

Now if you ever see a glacier, you'll find that neither of these pictures is true. You will not say, "Aha, what we have here seems to be a frozen river of ice, moving imperceptibly downhill." In fact, the darn thing seems to be standing quite still. Neither kicking nor pushing nor an all-night vigil discloses any sort of motion. Nor, when you

see a glacier, will you tend to flee in abject terror. True, there are a few yawning crevasses on the surface; but there are also some yawning manholes on Broadway, and there's no excuse for falling into either. And there are indeed some unwieldy towers standing on the ice; but they seem relatively stable—an excellent place, in fact, to rest from the sun.

Instead, if you ever see a glacier, your reaction will be that this is a very strange place indeed.

There are three reasons why a glacier should be a strange place: (1) it is made of ice, which can melt and refreeze and do gymnastics that solid rock would never dream of; (2) it is under huge pressures and strains; and (3) it is, after all, moving imperceptibly downhill. Snow keeps piling up on the mountainsides and has no other way to escape. And these three cause some pretty baroque kinds of topography. Often a glacier is flat and smooth, a lap rug up the mountain—and the top half of Yerupaja's glacier was just like this. But sometimes the sun melts puddles in the snow; then its rays reflect back and forth in the cavity until the "sun pit" is several feet deep. Soon the glacier is pocked with them—tedious walking but not dangerous. *Séracs*—originally a hard kind of cheese—are towers of ice squeezed up by internal pressures. The sun glitters through them in orange, green, and blue opalescence. Where the glacier rounds a corner or flows down an especially sharp incline, the ice can't take the strain and cracks open. These are the crevasses, sometimes so thin you can't wedge in a knife blade, and some-

times—but not in Peru—hundreds of feet across and several miles long. When the drop is sharp and the crevasses are many, you have an icefall: an unholy chaos of cracks, towers, chock stones, and labyrinths. Several times an hour one of the smaller blocks breaks loose and showers down to a lower point. Neither you nor I nor any of my mountaineering friends would care to spend much time on an icefall. The lower half of the Yerupaja glacier is one; that's why we climbed over Rassac to avoid it. But even the most restless icefall can be enjoyed from afar, iridescing in the sunlight.

And so, as you squat pensively on your first glacier, you will reflect that it is more phlegmatic than movable, more grotesque than perilous, more colorful than dreary, and like no other ice you have ever seen before. And you will curse those adventure writers who for so many years have preyed on your ignorance. For it is now quite obvious that you or anybody else can walk up a glacier, if you behave yourself with a little sense. When you see a Great Towering Serac Ready to Topple in the Afternoon Sun, you will circle out of your way to avoid it. Which is just what a mountaineer will do. When you approach a Yawning Crevasse Dozens of Feet Across, you will not particularly fall in. You will go somewhere else. And so will any mountaineer. Happily for our expedition, though, most crevasses are bridged here and there by spans of ice or packed snow. These are built by the wind and are quite substantial. Unless you are the squeamish type, you will

cross a crevasse on an ice bridge with fewer qualms than when you crossed the River Chiquian, on one of those water-sopped native edifices.

So Dave Harrah and George Bell approached Yerupaja's glacier with no more bravado than any hiker nearing a new kind of terrain. The glacier did not quite fill the valley. At its side it had pulled away from Rassac Ridge; and in the cleft George and Dave walked up-mountain for several minutes. Sometimes it was only two feet wide, and finally it closed in. Then they tied themselves together with 150 feet of nylon rope—for safety—and put crampons over their shoes—for a stronger footing. Crampons are steel spikes, usually ten or twelve of them, set on a steel framework. Where boots would slip, the crampons hold firm.

Dave and George stepped onto the glacier, and our expedition was on ice for the rest of the climb.

The two men slogged upward, withering under an ungracious sun. Their goal, two miles ahead, was the top of the glacier and the Col Camp site. By now the careful reader has gathered that there is nothing either hair-raising or romantic about climbing a glacier. It was, according to Dave and George, a "long, dull, long grind." It went on and on. It went up and up. It did so for six hours, and there's little more to say. When they reached the col, sweating and with their shoulders aching from the load, they felt like lying down for a long rest. So they did.

But perhaps you still want to hear a few adjectives,

well-chosen and only slightly hyperbolical, about the hazards of their walk. As a matter of fact, there had been a few tight spots. Dave and George had to enter the glacier where it was still icefall; so for the first 200 feet there was a hodgepodge of seracs, sun pits, and crevasses that the layman might well look askance at. They crossed three crevasses on snow bridges. But this was soon past. On the glacier above there was a danger of avalanches from Yerupaja; at one point, some time before, the face had peeled off on both sides and a million tons of snow had crisscrossed over the glacier. Elsewhere great chunks of ice stuck out of the snow, having fallen from above. Presumably it could happen again. But it never did, and whatever danger there was of avalanches could be minimized by a quicker pace.

The col, you remember, was (1) the low point on the ridge between Yerupaja and Rassac peak, and (2) at the foot of the broad wedge of Yerupaja itself. Looking over the col, Dave and George saw that the slope fell away to the south with alarming steepness. There the snow was seldom touched by sunlight and remained—if it remained at all—soft and treacherous. Luckily, they had no business there anyhow. To the north, beyond the glacier, rose the lesser mountains of the Cordillera and—far, far away—huge Huascaran. Huascaran is the only mountain in Peru bigger than Yerupaja, but child's play by comparison. It was first climbed in 1908 by a Latin professor named Annie.

The col was also at the top of the glacier, which—if

you are of a scientific bent—should give you some disturbing thoughts. The glacier is slipping slowly downward; but sooner or later *something* has to stand still, or else the mountain won't be there for long. The result is always a large crevasse, where the glacier pulls away from the more sedentary mountain. Climbers, who can be as pedantic as anyone else, call it the bergschrund. At Col Camp the bergschrund was about twenty feet below the ridge; its upper lip had fallen in at one spot and filled the cleft, and here Dave and George pitched their tent. It was the only level spot around. But a serac rose high above, suggesting more a sword of Damocles than a homesy totem pole. Contemplating their Col Camp, George bet that the top would fall in before the bottom fell out; Dave put his money on the bergschrund. Both of them creaked as they tried to sleep that night, but no one won the bet—a final blow to those who would terrify us with tales of glacial bogeys.

Dave and George came down the next day. Glacier Meadow, said Dave, looked like a movie set—what with the two of them returning from the col, Chuck and Austen bringing loads from Boulder Pocket, Jim emerging sleepily from a tent, and three Indian porters appearing first as silhouettes on the ridge and then as sweaty demanders of payment at the supply pile. We had engaged these worthies to help with the drearier phases of mountain climbing. On every expedition you must spend far too much time

picking up various weights at Camp N and carrying them to Camp N + 1. Only two of us, after all—we still didn't know who—would ever climb Yerupaja. The rest would function as a supply corps, reconnaisance patrol, and relief team; in the jesting language of mountaineers, we would consolidate the lower camps and bury the dead. Both of these services, according to our biology textbooks, could be better performed by Indians. They were, said the texts, Uniquely Adapted for the Higher Altitude. Their hearts were spacious; their lungs were extraordinarily roomy, drawing in prodigious volumes of air at every breath. On oxygen-starved heights they could carry loads that a lowlander could barely lift. In the old days, in fact, a few of them would carry grand pianos across the Andes for Spanish dilettantes in the interior. Or so said the biology texts. And so we jolly well expected our Uniquely Adapted Indian Porters to perform somewhat like the Times Square Shuttle, jogging back and forth between camps with several man-days of food and a goodly number of tents under their arms.

But alas! Our textbooks had neglected the factor of human indolence. Our Indian porters quickly lost their Unique Adaptations and became just like the rest of us; and this event occurred precisely when they learned we had no scales. "No, *señor*, that is all I may bear. It is indeed too heavy for my poor body. See, *señor*, is it not almost as much as you yourself do carry?" They had headaches, they said. They were not used to rock-climbing. And so they loitered along, chewing their cud of coca leaves,

gloating in the knowledge that we had forgotten to set prices in advance.

The spectacular convergence of eight persons at Glacier Meadow left that camp almost fully stocked. Now we could start to provision the col. We regretted that we hadn't bought extra boots for the Indians, so they could carry on ice; we had to do that job ourselves. For the next week we worked on no definite schedule. When you felt like it—and you almost never did—you picked up a load from Glacier Meadow and trudged it up to Col Camp. It was not necessary to rope up or even wear crampons; after a while you could make the trip alone. In foggy weather, you could follow the footsteps—they lasted a week. Jim, Graham, Chuck—they all portaged to the col three or four times.

We had built a stone wall at Glacier Meadow to keep out the wind and dust. As the days went by, it became more and more attractive to lie there, a winter resort in the Andes, our shirts off and our bodies assuming the proper hue for the color photographs. Everyone had brought a book to the mountain, which he devoured upward of three times. If you had your choice of one book for one month, what would it be? Graham Matthews—who now teaches English at a private school—took a Bible. Dave Harrah, the dynamic philosopher, read *The Revolt of the Masses*. Chuck Crush, the quiet philosopher, had a commentary on John Dewey. Jim Maxwell is precise and scientific. He brought a calculus textbook from Harvard.

George Bell also read the Bible. Austen Riggs thumbed back issues of *Time* magazine. In his lectures, Austen talks as much about economic conditions in Peru as about Yerupaja.

This was a tedious week. We went up the glacier and down, riffled some pages, and started again. We could amuse ourselves, of course, with our Scientific Projects. Presumably Don Juan and Tomás, down at Base Camp, were already obliging the American Museum of Natural History with feats of sharpshooting and disemboweling. As for our intimate survey of the Yerupaja glacier, I don't think we discovered much beyond the fact that maximum-and-minimum thermometers are extremely fragile. They should not be left lying around. Our greatest contribution to human knowledge was a short excursion into ethnology, at the instigation of the instant-potato company. We performed Certain Experiments Designed to Ascertain Whether the Quechua Indian Prefers Instant Potatoes Over the Indigenous Variety. He didn't.

The one exciting thing that week was the arrival of mail from the United States. An experienced mountaineer, camping 16,000 feet high in the Andes, learns not to expect any rural free delivery. So Austen and Chuck, down at Base Camp for a rest, were quite at a loss to explain the figure that came riding up one afternoon—seated on what might once have been a horse, quite obviously whiskered and bundled in an egregiously plaid jacket, and singing, in a spirited basso, "I'm an Old Cowhand from the Rio Grande." It was—I blush to admit—me.

I had twenty-eight letters and a thirst for news. Out of touch with the expedition for two weeks, I had written fables for the local press that were as hair-raising as ever, but which seemed to lack a certain definiteness of detail. And so I had made my first trip into Yerupaja, under the faithful guidance of an Indian lad with a knife slash across the forehead, a continuously bloodshot eye, and a swollen lip. We shall call him Scarface, and he will emerge later in the story as still another villain. Right now I can only hint at Scarface's depraved nature by pointing out that he asked thirty *soles* for the trip to Yerupaja, then doubled it whenever we reached a point of no return. But the mails must go through, and after two days of wage disputes I made a preposterous entrance into Base Camp, throaty and alone (Scarface was half a mile down the path, throwing rocks at some cows).

Some of the mail was a month late. There were letters from Gorham, New Hampshire; Fillmore, California; and Bolton Landing, New York. There were two bills from the Banco de Crédito in Lima. Jim Maxwell had six letters from Diana Harding; their engagement had been announced the day he left for Peru.

# 15

COL CAMP, WHILE WE USED IT, WAS THE HIGHEST HUMAN habitation in the Western Hemisphere. What was it like to live there?

Our home was a nylon tent with an aluminum bow for a door. The tent was to be staked into the snow, but the pegs oozed up soon after you put them in. The col, without radio, rhumba music, sandwich pavilions, or Apple Surprise, was nowhere so luxurious as Base Camp. We did three things in it: we ate, we drank, we slept. We slept in double sleeping bags—you put one sleeping bag inside of another sleeping bag and slept inside of that, so you could keep warm at night. But first you blew up an air mattress—it took ten minutes at that altitude—and put it on the floor of the tent, and put the double sleeping bag on top of that. Unfortunately, the heat of your body still melted the snow under the tent, and soon you were sleeping in a hard and rather confining sort of cavity. It quickly

filled with water, because the tent was warm and your breath condensed on the inside. So you picked up your double sleeping bag and your air mattress and piled ropes and packboards in the hollow. Then you put back your double sleeping bag and your air mattress, and slept on top. As a matter of fact, you really didn't sleep. You cannot sleep in rare air; you can only languish. You can take sleeping pills if you want, but they made some of us sick. Our bodies were sluggish enough as it was.

As for food, you didn't have an appetite anyhow. There wasn't enough air to digest your meal; your stomach felt the same as when you're in love. So you drank hot tea with a lot of sugar, and lemon drops dissolved in water, and ate crackers, jam, and cold cereal. You boiled the tea in a pressure cooker, of course otherwise it wouldn't even get warm. First you poured some gas into an Army stove and pumped it up. Then you tried to light some matches, an exasperating job with so little air. It took several minutes to light the stove. You put a collapsible tripod several inches above the stove, and you put the pressure cooker on the tripod. The gas didn't catch fire until it reached the tripod, because there was so little air.

For tea, or anything else, there was no water around. So you melted snow. If you were in a hurry, you could light the stove and put the snow in a pressure cooker and put that on top of the tripod on top of the stove. Otherwise you could spread the snow on a tarpaulin, and let the sun do the job. This didn't take long because Col Camp, according to our light meters, was "four times as bright as a

bright day at the beach." The water drained off into a pot, and you put it aside and saved it. If you wanted to keep some for morning, you poured it into thermos bottles, so it wouldn't freeze overnight. You didn't use corks on the thermos bottles. They would pop from the pressure as you climbed the mountain, so you used rubber clamps instead. First, of course, you chipped the ice off the rubber clamp so you could open it.

There wasn't enough water for "unessential" purposes, like washing or brushing your teeth. There wasn't any soap anyhow. You could brush your teeth with snow, but that would chill your mouth, and you'd have to melt some snow and boil some water and drink some tea again. You always had to figure how much water you had and how much you needed. That was hard to do, because it's hard to think at high altitudes. Simple decisions become knotty problems. Jim once tried to add four numbers, but couldn't do it.

You do not smoke at Col Camp, or anywhere else above the base. It would knock you out. At Col Camp you'd walk five miles for a Camel.

Such is life at 18,800 feet. Nevertheless, we had every intention of making the col our home address. We had visions of a mountainside Utopia: a Col Camp of mansional proportions and a suburban High Camp on Yerupaja face. But I can already hear the reader chuckle. Time and again in this story he has watched the untimely demise of the best-laid plans of mountaineers. And he is right. Because

of sickness, there were never more than three men in the col at once. High Camp, when we pitched it, seemed best suited for two midgets of rather angular shapes.

George Bell was sick once again, and struggled to the base with a 102-degree fever. Graham and Chuck were still recuperating. Dave Harrah was a permanent caretaker at the col. Healthy as ever, he was eager to be off and pitch a High Camp. But Yerupaja, playful old devil that it was, now engaged Dave in the sport of cat and mouse. The wind roared around the col, great gusty belches of it, blowing what we judged was eighty miles an hour. Like artillery shells, it swooshed over the pass and—after a silence—exploded violently on the tents. Dave reflected that the wind might have started from Africa, and the first thing it hit would be Col Camp; and all of us, battling to keep our tent in its wanted locale, agreed that the trip was uncalled for. When he had enough of this, Dave switched to indigestion. Austen saw him staggering about in the snow late one night; Dave found time to mumble, "Is it time to wake up?" and collapsed against the tent, which followed suit. One thing after another was thwarting his plans for Yerupaja.

On the other hand, these frustrating days gave Dave a chance to acclimatize, and to plot a route up-mountain. Dave reconnoitered the ridge; it was dragon-backed and corniced, as inexact as the plasterwork on a Lima ministry. Great spasms had disfigured it, profound revolutions coupled with the mutiny of its component parts. Now the ridge shot piously to heaven, drooped into sinister excava-

tions, then staggered out, wobbly but game, and ready to try again. From the side it leered down on us with the toothy grin of a particularly unbeauteous witch. As the coast line of Maine is no path for hikers, so this was no route for mountaineers.

Our other choice—outside of helicopters and other unsporting mechanisms—was the face of Yerupaja. The face of Yerupaja was one of those terrains far better adapted for going down than for climbing up. Oceans were purposed to be sailed across, but not walked on; pits to be fallen into, not out of. And Nature, in her wisdom, had designed Yerupaja so that an object on the top might hasten to the bottom in the shortest conceivable time. What its condition would be at the bottom was irrelevant; however unconscious, it would feel in far greater harmony with the universe than if it had attempted a most unnatural ascent. Yerupaja was steeper, quite literally, than the roof of a barn. The slope can be expressed, coldly and passionlessly, in degrees of arc; but this is unfair. Degrees are deceptive. The reader knows that 0 degrees is flat and 2 degrees is a gentle highway slope, and 90 degrees is straight up and down. But does he know—as he stands on his first ski trail and trembles at the whirlwind declivities below—that this is only 15 degrees? It is. And does he know, when he struggles up a precipitous mountainside on the Appalachian Trail, that he is treading just a 30-degree slope? A hillside is steeper to the climber than to the surveyor. With this in mind, I shall say that the face of Yerupaja varied from 40 to 60 degrees, with some impass-

able pitches of 80. Which is quite enough to start an avalanche, or daunt the Sunday hiker.

But we had seen no avalanches there for three weeks, and Dave thought we could climb the face, whether or not this contravened the natural order of things. His binoculars found a site for High Camp, high on the face near the south peak. From here, he figured, we could climb onto the skyline ridge and follow it to the summit.

On July 19 Dave and Austen Riggs left the col to pitch a High Camp. As mountaineers always do—for reasons that I'm sure exist but which I have never been advised of—they left at 3:30 A.M. Perhaps the danger of avalanches was even less; perhaps they realized that they weren't sleeping anyhow. Whatever the merits of such promptitude, its disadvantages were soon obvious. It was cold and windy; Austen had trouble maintaining circulation throughout his great length; his fingers were soon numb and he was losing control of his muscles. After 300 feet they turned back, regaining their sleeping bags with perhaps not too many misgivings.

Dave's frustrations were just starting. He and Austen tried the next day, at a tardy but warmer seven-thirty. The same thing happened. Austen went down to the base for a rest, his stature once again his undoing. Now it was Chuck's turn, and he joined Dave in Col Camp. But the Great Unknown Bug would have none of it; Chuck coughed away the hours of a miserable night. The next day he returned below—an able mountaineer and a wonderful fellow who never had his chance on Yerupaja.

By now our expedition made a somewhat disappointing sight. The brave Northamerican scalers of the mountains were peppered like spotted fever on the face of the Cordillera, all in various attitudes of infirmity: some coughing, some sneezing, some wheezing, all making dangerous inroads on a dwindling supply of miracle drugs, but none of them gainfully employed in what could be called the conquest of The Butcher. Austen and Chuck at Base Camp, commiserating with each other and outlining to the Press an account of their several maladies. Graham and George at our various resorts and health spas on Rassac Ridge, trying to recuperate from their most recent miseries. And at 18,800 feet our Healthy Member (just over an acute attack of indigestion) frittering away his sanity and decimating our food supply, and waiting to set foot—something none of us had done yet—on Yerupaja itself.

What would the Limeños say now? Which of them would exult to his neighbor, "See, it is they! They who shall climb the Yerupaja!" Where would be the open mouths of street urchins and the awed whispers of "*los Alpinistos*"? No; they would nod wisely to each other "Tsk, tsk; *soroche*"—and they would walk on, sniggering like old sailors while the recruit groans below. And the customs inspector! With what suspicious brows, with what incredulous stares would be greet us when next we met! "But, *señores*, the aureomycin! *Madre mía*, two hundred dollars of aureomycin! Surely, *señores*, you cannot persuade me that it was used by yourselves! It has assuredly

been sold! . . . What? Sick in the mountains? *All* of you? No, *señores*, I am only a poor inspector, but I am not to be deceived. You were not in the Cordillera. Only see, your rope—almost 1000 meters—it has not even been used! Ah, *señores*, this is a matter for the Ministry!"

As we looked over these unappetizing prospects on July 21, it became evident that George Bell was not much sicker than the rest of us and, from his Biblical readings, perhaps more reconciled to the idea of eternal misfortune. So George joined Dave at the col. The next day they tried once again for High Camp, and as much to their surprise as yours, they made it.

# 16

A PASTIME ON MOUNTAINS THAT IS SOMETIMES DELIGHTING and sometimes maddening, but always necessary, is route finding.

As a game of skill it has much to recommend it. Each participant is given a pencil, a paper, and a pair of binoculars; he is confronted with an ample face of white mountainside, networked into crevasses, bergschrunds, avalanche slopes, gullies, ice cliffs, and other topographical obstacles. Our sportive route finder is at the bottom (in this case, Col Camp); he must draw a practicable line to the top (in this case, High Camp).

So the game is much like those mazes found on newspaper Puzzle Pages, where one must move a pencil from START to FINISH—a process usually involving much backtracking out of detours, baffles, and assorted cul-de-sacs. On the mountainside, the right answer is the route that can most easily be climbed. Perhaps it will lead right

across a black line in the snow, without violating the letter or the spirit of the rules—something that could hardly be tolerated on the Puzzle Page. On the other hand, one has no guarantee that an area is feasible merely because it is white; it may be 80 degrees steep. Another feature not wholly desirable is the fact that maybe there's no route at all. On the Puzzle Page, you take it for granted that there *is* a solution; otherwise you are likely to feel somewhat cheated. You will change your subscription to a more honorable newspaper. Through the binoculars, you never know when you are tackling the impossible; you may be as far from success on the 100th day of endeavor as you were on the first. This is sure to fret the youthful pathfinder.

Dave Harrah, a shark at finding routes, had doped a path to High Camp during his days of otherwise frustration. He had sketched it from below; we would use this as a map. On many mountains his problems would have just begun. A hillside from close up, like a flea in a microscope, looks nothing like it did from afar. And a map is no good—as anyone must know who has driven through Michigan—unless one also has road signs to reveal where on the map one is. Yerupaja had no road signs. But it did have an infinity of cracks, bridges, towers, walls, and ravines. There were so many landmarks, and the route was so complicated, that we couldn't have got lost.

July 22, at last, was bright and calm. Dave and George left the col at seven-fifteen. Dave's route led across a bergschrund on a clover leaf of snow bridges; it was neces-

sary—don't ask me how—to go over one bridge and under another. Nearby was an overhanging grotesque that we called the Drawerhandle, which took several minutes to avoid. Above, a tedious diagonal walk led to a gully and then to the, as it were, Amphitheater. The Amphitheater sloped 45 degrees and had to be traversed horizontally. One's footwork tended to get sloppy toward the end—something not to be desired, since the Amphitheater ended quite abruptly a few hundred feet below, where an unconscionable amount of snow had avalanched off the face. Then Dave and George forced their way up through broken cliffs and seracs. Like anything that is higher than something else, these conceivably *might* fall; but while Dave was in Col Camp, none of them had. They gave him and George little concern.

The two men had roped together early in the trip. In the popular imagination, a rope is the legendary totem of the mountaineer. The winetaster has his chain; the cigar vendor has his Indian; the mountaineer has his rope; and all three seem equally useless. Or so we must gather from the cartoons and caricatures of mountaineers at work. A Tyrol-hatted youth clings to rock on the side of a cliff (often using his ice ax for this purpose); 100 feet below him is another gentleman engaged in a similar pursuit; between them, and tied round their bellies, a thin and taut length of cord. There it is; but what useful function it performs escapes the most careful scrutiny. It prevents the higher man from climbing up and the lower man from climbing down. Should the higher man climb down,

or the lower man climb up, the rope will slacken and become even more futile. That both men can continue up the face at equal rates, thus (for some unknown purpose) keeping their rope tight—this seems an outside chance at best. One can only conclude that they have been stationary for a good time back, and that a third member of their party (now out of the picture) recently adjusted a tight cord about them for photographic purposes.

Or, in other cartoons, one sees a hefty Switzer seated at the edge of a cliff. Arm over arm he is pulling up a rope, on the other end of which, dangling freely in air like a four-limbed bucket, is his climbing companion. Precisely how our Swiss friend arrived at his position of vantage is never fully explained; perhaps he is permanently assigned there by the local tourist service. Now the fact is, a mountaineer will almost never use his rope to climb with. To do so would raise the eyebrows of his fellow climbers; and logically enough, for mountaineering is the sport of climbing rock, not hemp. A rope is for safety. It is only for safety. Almost anything that can be climbed with a rope, can be as easily climbed without one. Unless you fall, when your rope will stop you after a few inches, rather than a few thousand yards.

Mountaineers usually tie themselves to the ends of a 125-foot cord. They take in the slack with their hands, so the rope is always fairly tight. On an easy climb, they may be a full rope-length apart; on tough pitches, they will shorten up to ten or fifteen feet. If one man falls, the other can dig in quickly and, it is to be hoped, stop him. Often

a climb is so ominous that just one man will move at a time, while the other sits down for extra stability. He is the "belayer"; he "belays" his friend by paying out rope and pulling it in, to keep it ever taut. In the cartoon, our Tyrol-hatted friend should be squatting securely on a ledge, belaying his friend below.

Dave and George squatted securely in the snow, belaying. And after six hours they reached that Lilliputian horizontality that Dave, through his binoculars, had chosen for High Camp.

High Camp promised to be a confining sort of place. There was just room for one tent. Below, the snow dropped away at a distressing rate; above, an awning of ice loomed five feet out. It would shelter the camp from wind and avalanche, making it the only safe place on the mountain. But it is never a comfortable feeling when someone or something is peering over your shoulder; and one's discomfiture is noticeably increased when this is ten tons of fragile ice.

Dave scrambled past the overhang and determined that they were 400 feet below the summit ridge. George belayed him from below, warming his chilled toes in the sun and dreaming up tricks to discourage advance. They both agreed it was too late to try for the summit; that would wait till tomorrow. There was little left to do—sports or other divertisements are out of favor at this altitude, and the tent blanketed all the level space anyhow. For a while they yodeled down at Jim who, 3000 feet below, was ascending the glacier to the col. West from High

Camp, the view stretched to the Pacific Ocean, still topped with a frosting of perpetual fog, inland to the verruga highway and Chiquian, brown cubes in a brown valley. They could see far along the Andes and, through low spots in the Cordillera, the outskirts of the Amazon jungle. At evening the sun wedged itself between two layers of clouds and ran through the repertory of color that it can stage only at such an altitude. Then, says Dave, it did not just set; it swooned.

Dave was digesting *The Revolt of the Masses* for the third time. As for more conventional food, they had brought a few bricks of compressed cereal and some dehydrated milk. Both of these were no great shakes from an aesthetic point of view; gustatorily, they might be considered edible if they were mildly debilitated with water. Dave and George had no water: for reasons that will always remain a mystery, there was no stove at High Camp. The two men scooped some snow into a pot and told the sun to melt it. Some of the snow evaporated; some of it sat quietly. None showed any honest desire to assume a more liquid form. The upshot was no supper, and they went to bed.

Under these conditions, it was probably a mistake to try for the summit next morning. George turned back after 200 feet. It was immoderate enough to attempt to climb Yerupaja; to do so with the traces of a fever and no food for twenty-four hours—this would be downright maniacal. Dave wandered alone for a few minutes above High Camp, reconnoitering the route. Finally he came to

an 80-degree wall of ice and—after thwacking it disgustedly with his ice ax—turned to go down again.

Yerupaja, inert and comatose mountain, had so far been patient with us. For a month she had stood by silently while we intruders crouched cravenly out of reach and made tentative advances on her flanks. Now she began to bestir herself. As Dave sought paths to her unconquered summit, Yerupaja gave a broad and threatening hint of the powers of defense that such a mountain as she could muster. Above High Camp was a crevasse six feet wide, crossed by two snow bridges. One bridge was thin and dubious, the other comparatively safe. Dave, walking across it back to High Camp, suddenly felt it tremble beneath his feet; he threw himself on the other side as the bridge swayed out from under and cascaded to the bottom of the crevasse. Dave was safe by the fraction of a second; but it was a grim warning from an awakening mountain.

The two men thawed toes and fingers at High Camp and waited for the sun; then they descended to the col. Jim Maxwell was there and feeling fine, and George gave his end of the rope to Jim for the next try. If Dave and Jim didn't make it—what with time and food running out—there wouldn't be another chance. If they did, then we would break camp and head for the relative civilization of Lima, perhaps finally hiring that small boy to walk in front and beat a drum and shout:

"Here come the courageous mountaineers! Barbecue your oxen and make ready your sister!"

# 17

No treatise on mountaineering is complete without a storm; but I'm afraid our storm wasn't much to brag about. It was not the type that sends palm trees to the ground, or squeamish women to their cellars, or editors to the bolder headline fonts. Rather it was the kind that causes men to say, "Darn!" and call off the picnic. Should a representative of the United States Weather Bureau have materialized at Col Camp, he would (in the meager and restrained vocabulary of his profession) have characterized the weather beyond doubt as "unsettled."

The weather unsettled itself the day Dave and George returned to the col, and didn't regain its composure for the better part of a week. Clouds and high winds scudded over the pass. Snow flurries sparkled in the sun like mop dust; again and again it was necessary to dig out —or perhaps to brush off—the tents at Col Camp. This storm would not affright even a qualmish reader, who

knows that some mountaineers have been buried alive in blizzards and others knocked prostrate by lightning. But it did deter us from climbing. One becomes touchy about the weather high on a mountain. Even under "unsettled" conditions he is loath to try up-mountain sorties, for the air is cold and the wind is strong and the Unknown Wastes, now obfuscated by fog, are more unknown than ever. Dave and Jim were pinned down at the col for four days, with very little to do. George Bell made it back to Glacier Meadow, however, and Graham packed a belated stove to the col. He found Dave and Jim still in bed at ten-twenty; there was, indeed, little to do.

Those fronts and isobars, updrafts and anticyclones, and all the other esoteric machinations that produce what we call the Weather—even in Peru they seem supernaturally aware of the plans of men. They make note of them. They take them into special cognizance. Then they do everything in their power to frustrate them. In America, the sky smiles for a week and torrents on your Sunday clambake. In Peru, now, the weather was equally adaptable to our plans. When we wanted sun, it snowed. When we really didn't care, it shone like hell.

Accordingly, it cleared for a while on July 28, and Dave and Jim climbed to High Camp. The next day they had to stay in their tents to acclimatize, so the sun beamed merrily. And the day after that they left for the summit, so a wind of great violence tore about them. It swooshed across the ridge and over their heads; gray clouds shot past like the backfire of a bazooka. They could guess its

strength from the lee below and, reluctantly, went back to High Camp. Dave and Jim had left the camp at seven-fifteen and returned at noon. A second attack on Yerupaja had failed as quickly as the first.

They had food for one more day—July 31—and that would be our last chance.

There are times, I imagine, when even great armies are confounded by misfortune and scattered by rout, and left in dazed patches about the countryside with little semblance of internal communications or military order. Such was our state on July 31. Our expedition—if so specific a term could be applied to the diffusion of tents, dumps, and sick mountaineers that now littered the face of Yerupaja —our expedition did not evidence what a sociologist would call intra-group solidarity.

Dave and Jim were up at High Camp, waiting for the weather to do something nice. Austen Riggs was at the col, where he had just ferried some food and mail. At Glacier Meadow, George Bell was laid up with fever for the third time. Graham Matthews had broken his glasses a few days before, and went down for spares; now he was working on the goat trails above Solterahanca. Chuck Crush had gone to the base for food.

As for myself, I was once again in Base Camp and waiting for someone to climb the mountain. Don Juan and Tomás were also there, excusing their now total inactivity on the grounds that their trunk was filled to capacity with deceased fowl. Often they pointed to the padlock,

which was just as tight as ever, as if this in some way proved their claims. Don Juan was tent-bound. He lay in the sack day after day, masticating without comment the food that Tomás and I prepared for him. Only once did he get up for an appreciable period of time—on July 31, in fact.

We discovered him early that morning on the shore of Jahuakocha, pointing wildly at Yerupaja and waving his cap in the air. "Bravo, brave alpinists!" he shouted. "Bravo, *escaladores!* See! They are almost there!"

Tomás and I peered suspiciously at the summit. We could see nothing. Yerupaja was far away; even a horse could have passed on the peak without notice. We tended to question Don Juan's powers of discernment. As research later proved, Dave and Jim were in their tent throughout his whole exhibition.

But Don Juan, to his credit, was as precise as he was exuberant. "See! They both stand on the ridge! Bravo, young alpinists! But now, one drops behind the mountain! He is out of sight! Ho! There he is again! Bravo, Señor Har-rah! He climbs! Do you not see him?"

Tomás and I, agreeing that Don Juan made a spectacle far more interesting than the purported activities on Yerupaja, turned to watch the Don instead. He had dropped his cap, and now was pointing with both hands at once, sometimes clapping them too. He spit his words through his beard, like an old but excitable grandfather at a football game. "Bravo, oh, scalers!" he shouted once more, and retired to his tent without waiting to see

whether they gained the summit. It was a sensitive but enigmatic performance.

So there we were, on July 31, the nine of us, from the two weather observers at High Camp to the thespian at the base: the Harvard Andean Expedition, in a most glorious state of disarray. It seemed that our positioning was at best haphazard. Though we couldn't know it, the stage was now set for a rather thrilling mountainside drama. It was a drama that, from the easy-going and often farcical nature of our expedition, we had never come to expect; and one that we sweated out for fifty-four hours.

Alone at Glacier Meadow, George Bell would often scan Yerupaja through field glasses. It was another "unsettled" morning, this July 31. Yerupaja, still in its own shadow, looked cold and dismal; winds lashed over the crest and avalanched down the face, buffeting George's tent and exploring noisily the crags and spurs of Rassac Ridge. To the north, convulsive gray whorls of cloud shrouded Rondoy and the stubby chunk of Jirishanca. But George's eyes were fixed on Yerupaja. There, almost a vertical mile above him, Dave and Jim were moving upward toward the summit ridge and toward the clouds. The third and last bid for the summit was under way.

George watched them climb for more than an hour. Soon they were below the skyline ridge, hacking their way up one last ice cliff. Then the winds stirred up again and a hulking gray cloud mass rose broodingly over Yerupaja. For a minute it writhed above Dave and Jim, pawing the

air with wispy tentacles, and then it settled on the mountain and swallowed them up. Where two men had been, George now saw swirling mists or the fleeting ghost of an ice-fluted slope.

Every few minutes he looked out of his tent, but it was always the same: above 20,000 feet, gray and funereal fog. Dave and Jim had disappeared into the clouds, just as George Leigh-Mallory and Andrew Irvine disappeared into the clouds on Mt. Everest. Mallory and Irvine were never seen again. No one knows what happened to them, and, as the clouds spiraled lower, George wondered if this was Everest once again. And then it was night. The clouds still hid Yerupaja; but what else, George could only guess.

The clouds were still there the next day—August 1. They hovered on the mountain above High Camp, as if that tent were civilization's last outpost on the border of a weird and nebulous otherworld. Sometimes you could see High Camp clearly; sometimes the clouds lapped up to it, and it was lost in gray eddies. George kept his binoculars on the tent whenever he could, looking for signs of Dave and Jim: the flare of a Coleman stove, perhaps, a pot scooping snow from the tent stoop, or the two men themselves. He saw nothing. And then it was night once more.

By now, as if we were following the cues of a play, the rest of the expedition had converged on Glacier Meadow—Austen, Chuck, and Graham, as well as George. We were no longer a behind-the-lines supply corps, but seriously and unexpectedly a rescue party. On the morn-

ing of August 2 we climbed slowly onto the glacier. We would keep going up-mountain until we found what had happened.

George peered up at High Camp as he walked. It was now two days since Dave and Jim had left it, but there was still no activity there. We halloed and shouted at the face. The wind brought no answer but its own mutterings and echoes off the walls of Rassac and Yerupaja. There were new avalanche tracks across the route to High Camp. Perhaps one of these torrents had trapped them, silently, quickly. We looked at the avalanche debris on the glacier, scrutinizing each black speck, but saw nothing. Did they lie somewhere where only the giant condor and the wind-driven snow would forever mock the folly that led them to so lonely a land?

We shouted again and again. By now we were far up the glacier and heard—or thought we heard—a muffled reply. Whether it was a wind-torn voice or only the tauntings of the wind itself, it didn't sound like a mountain distress signal—a call repeated thrice.

We hurried farther and yelled again. We were directly under High Camp; the wind had died down and even the gray clouds on Yerupaja seemed to have stopped their involutions, waiting to catch the reply. We shouted; we listened. This time, from far above, we could hear it clearly. It was the voice of a single man, pain-wracked and almost sobbing, and the words were:

"Help! Help! Help!"

# BOOK 3

# 18

REAL-LIFE DRAMA, WHEN IT HAPPENS, HAPPENS WHEN YOU don't expect it. One minute you are fumbling on the beach with the dials of a portable radio; seconds later—before you can realize it—a man has been saved from drowning. The soldier who falls on a hand grenade has just been talking of a girl in Seattle. The traffic fatality had gone back for his umbrella.

So it was with us. We never expected any drama, any cliff-hanging adventure. Our expedition had been just what we wanted it to be: a vacation, usually pleasurable and often quite ridiculous, with a four-mile challenge to keep us busy. We were climbing for fun, not for derring-do. We knew, of course, that terror, death, and hair-breadth escapes had struck other expeditions; and we had read of these adventures with the requisite dismay. But these were stories of supermen, not real people. They were stories of men who crawled for days on frostbitten

hands, who lost all their food and tents in overnight blizzards, who were buried alive in avalanches and clawed their way out. They were more or less plausible, but bore little semblance to what we had experienced in the mountains or expected on Yerupaja.

For we were not supermen. We were college students. We had stubbed our toes in the mountains and fallen once or twice, but we had never performed feats adaptable to *True Comics* magazine. A few weeks before, we had taken final exams in Cambridge. A few days before, we had merrily foisted Instant Potatoes on some Indians, and kidded Chuck about his omnipresent Dewey. The two men on our attack party were not professional cliff-hangers. Dave Harrah was a Stanford junior who liked philosophy. Jim Maxwell was a bespectacled Harvard senior who spent most of his life in the Mineralogy Labs.

Unexpectedly, they had lived one of the most terrible and courageous stories ever to come from the mountains.

The story begins on July 31—the day George Bell watched Dave and Jim leave High Camp and disappear into the clouds. At eight o'clock that morning, the two men were still in bed—not asleep, of course, but at least lying fallow. When it was distressfully clear that the day had begun, Jim unshrouded an arm from his sleeping bag and tossed the chamber bucket out the tent. Dave dragged his boots into his bag, to warm them up. Jim wrapped his boots in a sweater.

Neither had left his sleeping bag. When one's uni-

verse ends in canvas three feet from one's bed, there is no reason to get up—particularly if the temperature is 10 degrees. Dave and Jim remained in lethargic horizontality, releasing a hand or an occasional shoulder to perform the morning chores. The sleeping bag, olive-drab sarcophagus, would writhe erratically for a moment and drool a spindly arm from its orifice; the arm would scoop a potful of snow or light a stove or clasp an apricot, and creep once again to its tomb. Activity in our High Camp tent reminded one of a family of garter snakes lazily greeting the sun after a winter of hibernation.

Thus did the first hour pass. Conversation—that dribble of monosyllables which graces breakfast tables the world over—conversation was about the climb and nothing else. Dave and Jim agreed once again that the weather was, assuredly, unsettled. Gray clouds were taking their morning constitutionals and yoga exercises far above; from the crest, the wind howled a lengthy proclamation of the sun's impending arrival. The clouds would be no aid to visibility; but at least they weren't stormy, and Dave and Jim decided to chance it. Starting late, they could climb in sunlight and return—they hoped—just after nightfall. It was inadvisable to be trapped by night above High Camp, for the two men were traveling light: no sleeping bags, no food—just their clothes. That was another gamble.

Neither of them was very hungry. It was bad enough when food sat leadenly in one's belly; but at High Camp it exhibited a distressing sort of wanderlust. Again and

again it would leave the stomach for a visit to the larynx or a protracted tour of the upper esophagus. Dave chewed cautiously on a prune and munched dry Corn Flakes. Jim made chary advances on a chocolate bar and nibbled some cheese of a size more suitable for mousetraps. They dunked some lemon drops in the lukewarm water and called it tea. Then, exhuming themselves from their sleeping bags, they got dressed.

By now the sunlight was streaming down the Yerupaja face; it spewed over the clouds on the summit ridge and ricocheted along the ice gully above High Camp, piling blindingly onto the glacier far below. Dave hacked his way up the gully, trying to evoke from the callous ice some sort of response to the overtures of his ice ax. The gully—mountaineers call it "black ice"—was stubborn. A dull ax dented it like hard linoleum; a sharp ax pierced it and stuck; and for Dave it was time-consuming work. They had left at ten o'clock, and they had to be back by nightfall.

At the top of the gully, Dave gave Jim a taut rope and Jim scrambled up alongside him. For the next half hour they zigzagged up the face, Dave leading and Jim—not so well acclimatized—hurrying to keep up. The snow bridge over the crevasse was thinner than ever; nothing but tradition seemed to hold it in place. Once there had been two bridges; but Dave had broken the larger one, and now the route detoured over this questionable span of ice six feet long but sometimes only a foot wide. Snow

chipped off the edges and rattled into the crevasse as Dave and Jim pussyfooted across it.

They were slowly nearing the crest, where Yerupaja's clouds continued their morning gymnastics. Sometimes climbing, sometimes chinning, they worked their way up 180 feet of ledges to a final hodgepodge of crevasses. Then they jumped across the last crevasse and, at a break in the cornice, stepped onto the summit ridge. For several minutes now the sun had been obscured. The clouds, pursuing their involutions with little regard for the affairs of men, had fallen about them; and George Bell, watching nervously from Glacier Meadow, had just seen them disappear.

The sway-back skyline ridge rose in a long and gentle slope toward the summit: it was the route Dave had planned on for many weeks. But Yerupaja was no place for blindman's buff. Today, lost in the clouds, the ridge was nothing but a blur, an out-of-focus monochrome without shape, depth, or direction. One path, however, was free from fog. The cornice that overhung Yerupaja, burdened with its own prodigious weight, had pulled out from the ridge for four or five feet. The result was a giant crevasse, beginning where Dave and Jim stood and running along the ridge for many hundred yards. It was a bizarre route, but an easy one to follow, and the two men climbed into it.

Above them, the wind played over the lip and sent

echoes roaring against the icy walls. Tentacles of fog drifted down, dancers in slow motion. Dave and Jim were walking along the bottom of the crevasse, following a damp and sunless alleyway toward the summit. At first the crevasse was only four feet deep, but the floor sloped downward and the two men descended deeper and deeper. Ten feet; forty feet; a hundred feet. Daylight was a sliver line high above their heads.

The crevasse was awesome in its hugeness and grayness, but most of all it was awesome in its futility. There it was, perhaps a quarter mile long: a mountain on one side, a million tons of loose snow on the other. Someday the snow would break off, crashing down Yerupaja with a billowing white roar. Meanwhile, gales whipped across the top, tearing the fog to shreds against lonely buttresses and crags; and nearby, acres of mountainside disappeared in a few seconds of avalanche. For what purpose? It had been going on for centuries, would continue for centuries more. Yet no eye ever saw it, no ear ever heard it, no one knew about it and no one really cared. Only on this day did the drama have an audience, as Dave and Jim walked slowly forward, inside Mt. Yerupaja.

In such a futile show of might, unseen and unheard, Yerupaja had hurled a boulder of ice into the crevasse many years before. This "chock stone" was wedged near the bottom and blocked their path after they had gone just a few dozen yards. Laboriously Dave wriggled underneath it and with difficulty came out the other side. He called to Jim: "You better go over the top. It'll be easier."

It was quickly evident that they would have to unrope, for Jim was climbing over the chock stone and Dave had gone underneath it. Jim loosened the bowline around his waist and let it drop to the floor of the crevasse; unprotected, he climbed to the top of the boulder. Twenty feet below, Dave looked up and shouted, "Jump," and Jim leaned forward and jumped.

He landed safetly in the soft snow, but it was still another minute before he knew how close he had come to killing himself. By then Dave had gone ahead, and Jim had tied the bowline once again around his body. Jim took one step forward, and fell through the snow to his knees. For the first time he realized that the floor of the crevasse wasn't a floor at all. It was a false bottom, a mezzanine story of snow one or two feet thick; while beneath it the crevasse continued for twenty—maybe 100—feet. Jim's knees were in the snow, but his feet dangled in free air. Had he landed here when he jumped, he would have gone straight on through.

Jim scrambled out of the hole. By now Dave was at the full length of the rope, 120 feet ahead and out of sight, plowing along through the crevasse and unaware that a few inches beneath his feet was nothing but thin air. He had to be warned. It was useless for Jim to shout, for words were enfouled by their own echoes inside that narrow alley and further lost in the screeching of the winds. Jim hurried down the crevasse to catch up with Dave, but forty feet farther he broke through again, this time up to

his waist. He could feel the snow packed around his hips while his legs swung freely in space.

"Hold up!" Jim shouted; but his words and Dave's distant reply were battered into unintelligible overtones to the wind's lamentations. Dave kept on going.

"Stop!" Jim yanked on the rope. Unaware of what was happening, Dave yanked back, jerking Jim forward and making the hole that much wider, so that Jim slipped through to his chest. Sweating and scared, Jim appreciated the danger of his position. There was nothing holding him now but the tension on the rope. Sooner or later Dave would stop and come back to see what was wrong; and Jim, like an anchor on a pulley, would be lowered into the pit.

Dave took two or three more steps, until the nylon rope stretched tight, and stood still. By now Jim was up to his shoulders in snow. Frantically he stretched out his arms and legs to find a purchase on the icy walls of the crevasse; he dug his ax into one wall and, swinging his feet in the unseen pit below him, jammed his crampons into the opposite side. For a second he held himself there, wedged between the two walls, and then, with a desperate effort, pushed himself out of the hole. As he scrambled onto a sturdier part of the floor, he glanced behind him: through the hole he could discern the crevasse for another twenty feet, and below that, blackness.

In a few minutes Jim caught up with Dave and warned him of the false bottom. Cautiously and with a softer tread they continued down the crevasse; but now

that great crack twisted and zigzagged, stumbled over rubble of snow and ice, leaned from side to side and sometimes closed over their heads, so that they walked as through a tunnel. After a few hundred feet of this, Dave decided to call it quits and climb back to the fog-shrouded ridge. The side of the crevasse was smooth and almost vertical, but it was made of snow. Ramming their crampons and axes into the wall for holdfasts, they crawled to the top like spiders on a garden wall.

Light fog still blurred the ridge, cutting visibility down to thirty feet but lifting sometimes to show yard on yard of hummocked snow. Over these Dave and Jim followed a tedious path to the summit. The ridge was about twenty-five feet wide, beetling off to the left in great overhangs of cornice and dropping steeply on the right to an avalanche slope. On this side the snow suggested ball bearings, tiny marbles that slipped as you walked on them and slowly began carrying you off the side of the mountain. When that happened, Dave or Jim would hop back to the left and regain his footing as the displaced snow rolled with a whirring sound down to the Amazon basin.

Even in the fog it was not hard to find the route; Dave, leading, simply slogged upward between the cornices on one side and the ball-bearing drop-off on the other. Only once did he stray from the path, and he returned from that experience looking shaken and rather unhappy. He had walked the full length of the rope, when the clouds lifted for a moment; and then Dave discovered he was not on the ridge but far out on the cornice.

Through breaks in it he could see the face of Yerupaja, 120 feet behind him. Dave was poised above the glacier on an awning of snow, and excitedly hollered to Jim to take in the rope as he came back. It was hard to believe a cornice could be so large.

They were bucking one more danger. Dave, who had been kicking a trail through the mushy snow, felt his boots slowly filling with water; and both men knew they would suffer from frostbite—though how bad it would eventually be, they had no idea. It was more important than ever to reach the warmth and shelter of High Camp before nightfall.

But it was three in the afternoon. For three hours they had been slogging ahead through the dunes, putting one foot ahead of and slightly above the other, grunting and puffing four seconds for every step they took. Now Dave had stopped, and was staring ahead disconsolately through the fog. Jim trudged up to him; and he saw it too. "I guess we're done for," said Dave. Ahead on the ridge, looming up through the clouds and seemingly another hour away, was a vertical stone cliff, 300 feet high.

# 19

PRACTITIONERS OF EVERY SORT DEVELOP A SIXTH SENSE AFTER a while, a combination of know-how and prophetic inspiration that both bewilders and galls the neophyte. The crack newsman "feels" when a big story will break; the customs agent "knows" there is contraband in the suitcase; and the mountaineer can "see" through a ridge. Dave and Jim had been standing still for several minutes, peering gloomily through the fog, when Jim's sixth sense began acting up. Something told him that the cliff was much closer than it looked, much closer than Dave—and he himself—thought it was.

Perhaps the rock seemed well-defined despite the fog, or perhaps Jim was just thinking wishfully. Whatever it was, Dave soon felt it, too, and together they hurried ahead through the snow. In far less than an hour—five minutes, in fact—they had reached the cliff.

This was Yerupaja's last road block on the path to its

unconquered summit. It straddled the ridge as a guardian genie might, rearing 300 feet up through the mist to a narrow and beckoning apex, just a few snowball throws from the summit. But every hold on the face was plastered with ice. Such a cliff, even at sea level, would try the patience of the all-day climber; on Yerupaja it was quite obviously a dead end. There was one way out. On the extreme left edge of the cliff, sticking half-heartedly to rock and poised dizzily over the glacier, was a thin rib of snow deep enough—perhaps—to hold crampons.

This was a 60-degree slope, not consonant with the ideals of the *Safety Manual.* Slowly, and with all the precision of a surgeon performing a delicate operation, the two men moved up it. As they went, the belt of snow narrowed and forced them to the left, where the snow was corniced into the air for one and a half feet. Every now and then Dave stepped onto this cornice and felt his foot go through, and through the hole he could see down the mountainside to the glacier a mile below.

The rope that bound them together was a mockery, giving them heart, perhaps, but no protection. There were at least three pitches where, if Dave or Jim had fallen, he would have yanked the other man after him. Here the snow was thin and there was no place to wedge an ice ax, and they climbed as slowly as possible. "This is a no-good belay!" Dave would shout. "You're on your own. Don't slip."

Moving so cautiously, it took them forty-five minutes

to reach the brow of the cliff. Perhaps they should have called this place the summit. The top of Yerupaja, invisible through the fog, was just 400 feet ahead; but those 400 feet were dangerous and unpredictable—a billowy sea of cornices. Mistakenly they decided to chance it, for the highest point was too close to be denied. To their annoyance and peril—for it was already four in the afternoon—those 400 feet took much more time than they had expected. A tantalizing hummock of snow would beckon from ahead; excitedly they slogged toward it and poked their heads over the top—to see another hummock farther on. Three times this happened, until Dave and Jim agreed that the false summits were just that, and trudged quietly along through the snow. Now the ridge had thinned out, so that the avalanche slope on the right met the cornice on the left, but they carefully belayed across this spot and plodded ahead through the mists. From pictures of the mountain, and from the reconnaissance they had done from the hills of Chiquian and Glacier Meadow, they knew they were just yards from the summit. At five o'clock Dave climbed onto a hummock and called back to Jim: "Come up and give me a belay."

Dave was standing on a platform about the size of a parking space on a city street, fairly flat and only a foot higher at the far end. Jim sat in the snow with the rope tight about his waist while Dave crossed to the high spot. As he did so the clouds, as if they were special effects in a third-rate and melodramatic movie, parted and dropped

to the sides. A blue-black sky and a dazzling sun and, beneath them, Glacier Meadow and the northern peaks of the Cordillera revealed themselves as Dave reached the far end of the platform. He called back, "This looks like the top."

"Are you sure? Is there anything beyond it?"

"No. The ridge goes down from here."

For all the histrionics of the clouds, it was not a spectacular moment. Some soaring observer or divinely positioned reporter, watching Dave and Jim now on the summit of Yerupaja, would have concluded that the ascent was something of a letdown. There was no back-clapping, no throaty huzzahs of victory; outwardly, they might have been bringing another load to Col Camp. Yet the conquest of Yerupaja would be a letdown only to men who expected a sensation. The joy of mountaineering, as in all things truly enjoyable, lies not in the ends but in the means. Ten minutes on a summit, however rapturous, could never justify the weeks spent in fingering inscrutable maps and dusty volumes, in trundling across the countryside and dealing with shifty-eyed natives, in convoying tents and food farther and farther Up. These things must justify themselves. To the man who loves the mountains and that hectic farce we call adventure, they do. He needs no pot of gold on the summit, nor any laurel wreath; the thrill of Being There is part of the fun of Getting There, and it is enough that he has done what he set out to do. Soberly, with an inward satisfaction that our levitated

newsman would never notice, Dave and Jim regarded the summit and prepared to go down.

They did not even plant a flag. For one thing, they had no flag to plant; that seemed a futile gesture, suitable for Columbus in the Indies but neither visible nor abiding on a gale-swept peak of the Andes. Flag-waving was a habit of Nazi mountaineers, who always carried a swastika considerably larger than their tents. But Dave and Jim were sportsmen, not supermen; and they had climbed, not captured, Yerupaja. Tangibly, the only token of victory they extracted from the mountain were a few photographs on the summit. It seemed small enough booty, but it almost brought our expedition to tragedy.

One at a time Dave and Jim had stood on the summit while the other snapped his picture. Now they had started back down, and had walked for twenty minutes when the clouds lifted once again; and Jim, a zealot for mountain photography, stopped to take a picture. Dave rested against his ice ax while Jim slogged about eight feet past him for a better view. It was a delicate place to stop, for the ridge was scrolled with capricious cornices; but around them it was flat and relatively solid. Ahead, the fog had cracked to reveal the south summit of Yerupaja and the sway-back summit ridge—an ethereal and beautiful scene.

Jim never had a chance to take the picture. He neatly coiled up the rope that bound the two men together. Then he stuck his ice ax into the ground and stood up again. Clumsily he pulled off his mittens and laid them in

the snow in front of him, and as he began to straighten up he glanced sidelong to where Dave was standing; rather quietly, and without warning, a thousand tons of cornice and Dave Harrah dropped from view.

# 20

MANY TIMES BEFORE, JIM HAD GONE OVER IN HIS MIND what he would do in an accident. He had plotted his reactions if Dave should slip while climbing, if a cornice should break, if the snow should slump from beneath them and avalanche down the eastern face. When a man falls off a ridge, as Dave had, mountaineering lore suggests that his companion jump off the other side to balance him. But in this case, the danger of inciting an avalanche was too great.

The cornice had cracked almost beneath Jim's feet. In that split second when Dave disappeared in the muffled and dull roar of falling snow, Jim saw that his ice ax was going too. He grabbed it, stepped back to the solid part of the ridge, and flopped down on his stomach, at the same time jamming into the snow the long handle of the ax. Sprawled about six feet from the drop-off, his left hand clenched around the ax and his right arm buried

deep in the snow, Jim waited while the nylon rope spun out to its full 120 feet. There was a sickening jolt around his waist, as if someone had tackled him; the ax pulled part way out of the ground, and Jim was dragged two feet closer to the precipice. Then the rope went slack—dead slack.

Had it broken? To Jim, in this one terrifying moment, that seemed the only answer. The rope was knotted about his waist and hung loosely over the side of the ridge; there was no weight on it at all. Still, without even thinking about it, Jim reared up and drove the ice ax once again into the snow; and as he did so there came another violent tug, almost as strong as the first, and again the rope went slack. Jim thought that the nylon had snagged at first, and that now it was broken for sure. He had been pulled even farther through the snow, and suddenly there was a third shock that dragged him right to the edge of the precipice. Jim was tense with fear, for a fourth tug would have snapped him over the side of the mountain, and there was no way he could stop it. The fourth tug never came. Instead, after a moment of slackness, the rope pulled taut without a jolt.

Jim, still stretched on the ground, didn't know what was happening. He could feel a weight on the other end of the rope, undoubtedly Dave—but whether alive, unconscious, or dead, he had no idea. It was all quiet below. Badly shaken, Jim yelled out: "Dave!"

There was no answer.

"Dave!"

Jim's first inkling that Dave was still alive was a choked and painful cry from below, with the quality of pebbles rubbing on a slate blackboard; a voice pleading for something that Jim was powerless to give: "Sla-a-ck! Sla-a-ck! Sla-a-ck! Sla-a-ck!"

Dave Harrah, standing on the ridge just a few moments before, had heard a cracking sound and saw the snow open beneath his feet. He felt himself hurtling head downward amid tumbling ice, falling free for the first fifty feet and then bouncing along the steep western slope. It is not true that a man, in so inauspicious a position as this, sees his life flash before him. Often he feels completely detached from his body, seeing it fall as from a distance of ten or twenty feet and feeling no pain as it strikes rocks and ledges. As a matter of fact, Dave was only vaguely aware that his chest was being pummeled with falling ice blocks. "What a way to die," he thought; and he remembered the Greek concept of *hubris*, the wanton disregard of nature that plunges man to his doom. Dave had been presumptuous in ignoring the natural order, and this was the nemesis.

Three sickening jerks about his waist cut short these reflections. The resilient climbing rope had stretched another ten yards, and like a yo-yo Dave was bobbing up and down on the end. Much of the shock was absorbed by the nylon, saving Dave's life; but his ribs had absorbed the rest. Wrenched by the cord and battered by falling ice, Dave's chest was so painful that he could barely

breathe. He was sure his ribs were broken. Now he was swinging in free air, a rope tight about his chest and his whole weight hanging from that.

"Slack!"

"I can't give you any."

"Slack!"

"Dave, I can't help you."

"Slack!"

Jim saw that the next move was up to him. He was lying with his face toward the drop-off; curling his legs under him, he braced his arms and began to push himself back from the edge. But after six inches he could go no farther. In tense situations such as this one, mountaineers waste no words. Their interests are not served by elaborate phraseology; their vocabulary is a few clipped shouts: "Ready!" . . . "Belay on!" . . . "Slack!" After a while the mountaineer will react to these words with an unconscious and automatic reflex, as the golfer reacts to "Fore!" and the skier to "Track!" Jim knew this, and knew it was the only way out of their jam. He yelled a sharp command to Dave.

"Climb!"

"Slack!"

"CLIMB!"

Looking down, Dave saw the sunlit ice flutings plunging off an overhang a hundred feet below; beyond that he could see only the glacier, already in twilight shadow and almost a mile beneath him. The next forty-five minutes took more courage than we ever thought our expedition

would call for. Dave's rope was three eighths of an inch thick, the size of a small finger, and hand over hand he began to pull himself up it. After ten feet he found a purchase in the wall and secured himself there with his crampons, an ice ax, and a smaller ice hammer. Then, by grappling the cliffside with his ax and hammer and—whenever he could—with his boots, he began to crawl up 100 vertical feet of ice.

Jim felt painfully futile. His job was to take in the rope as Dave climbed and otherwise lie dead still; for belayers are taught never to move. Sprawled on his stomach, hoping that Dave would pull himself up before he pulled the rest of the cornice down, Jim could do little to help. For most of an hour he heard from below the slow thud of Dave's ax and the clinking of the steel wedges and snap links that hung from his belt, noises coming closer and closer from a source still unseen. Then Dave's face appeared over the edge. He was weary and panting, expecting to cough up his ribs piece by piece, but Jim was the only one who spoke.

"Boy, I'm glad to see you."

For a few minutes Dave sat in the snow, catching his breath and sobbing a little, his arms wrapped around his injured chest. Dave was in great pain. When he stood up he wobbled, like a prize fighter who has taken too many punches; it was a struggle for him to talk. More than anything else now, Dave wanted to get down from the mountain. Jim, seeing his condition, insisted that they belay

each other at all times, and Dave said, "I'll do anything, but let's get down."

For one thing, it was dangerously late in the afternoon; also, Dave knew that when one cornice breaks, the rest start falling too. As it turned out, his fears were well taken, for Yerupaja also had its eyes on Jim. They had gone fifty feet farther along the ridge; Jim was leading the way down a steep pitch from one hummock to another. "Something felt wrong," he says; perhaps once again it was a sixth sense that made him step ahead and then quickly—he doesn't know why—pull his foot back. As he did so, the snow ahead of him peeled off the mountainside. Jim was too scared to move, but he was standing on solid ground.

"Are you all right?" shouted Dave, who heard the noise but couldn't see what had happened.

"Yes, the whole cornice broke."

Dave had been belaying Jim all the while, but as the two men picked their way across what was left of the ridge, he admitted that, if Jim had fallen, he didn't have the strength to stop him.

"Let's get out of here," Dave kept saying. "Let's get down off these cornices." By now both men were badly shaken. Dave, tortured by pain that had begun to affect his mind, was trying courageously to control himself. He apologized to Jim for his groans—frightening sounds that came with every breath; he said they made him feel better. He tried to warn Jim that his mind was wandering,

but his words were like those of a drunken man: "Jim I I think I'm I think I'm somewhat deril a little delirious." Dave was having hallucinations; he thought there was a third man on the rope.

There is a drug called Dexedrine that mountaineers take in cases of extreme fatigue. For four hours it gives them an added boost of energy, but after that they are completely useless, unable to do anything but lie on the ground. Dave and Jim, although they had Dexedrine pills with them, decided not to use any. Both of them were severely exhausted. At times their bodies refused to obey their minds; they told a foot to move and it didn't. As a result, the slow descent of the rock cliff went even slower, and it was night when they reached the bottom of it. Jim could not see their footprints of the afternoon. He felt there was a danger of straying from the route, either over the edge of the cornices or down the avalanche slope; but Dave insisted, "I can see them easily," and took the lead.

Dave was sure that he saw the steps in spite of the dark, and was angry at Jim for being skeptical. Yet Jim believes that Dave, after they had gone several rope lengths, slowly veered off toward the Amazon and down the ever-steepening avalanche slope. There is no way of knowing who was right; at any rate, Jim yelled at Dave to stop and, when he kept on going, sat down in the snow. Dave was still obsessed with a desire to get off Yerupaja. "Get up!" he cried. "Keep going! We've got to keep going down!" Jim walked over to talk to him, but once more Dave started off—again, Jim thought, in the wrong direc-

tion. This time, when Jim sat down, he stayed so for fifteen minutes.

Dave was quieter by then, squatting submissively in the snow with his arms almost tied about his chest. He said nothing as Jim slogged across to explain calmly, "I'm going to dig a cave. We'll stay there until the moon comes out." The cave would protect them from the cold, for the temperature had already dropped somewhat below zero. Jim began swinging into the snow with his ice ax. He had dug a hole large enough for one man and was at work enlarging it, when the moon came higher above the clouds so that they could see the footprints clearly; and once again they started down the mountain.

# 21

AT NIGHT THE ANDES FOG SETTLES INTO THE VALLEY, SO that the path was easily discernible in the moonlight. But night also brought unbearable cold, about 10 degrees below zero at this altitude, and choking winds that howled across from the Amazon basin. Once again Dave and Jim had to climb into the crevasse. This shielded them somewhat from the wind, which now screeched louder and louder above their heads, sprinkling them with loose snow; but it gave no respite from the cold. Exhausted, they tried to rest for a while on a sheltered ledge part way down the wall of the crevasse. They sat together on a coiled rope, growing colder and colder until they were shaking violently and could sit still no longer, when Jim yielded to Dave's pleas to push on. They had been there forty-five minutes; it was now eleven o'clock.

In the face of unnerving fatigue, and with Dave still moaning from his injuries, they stumbled falteringly

ahead along the false bottom. It was now evident that both men would suffer extreme frostbite, perhaps with the attendant gangrene, unless they reached High Camp very soon. Their feet had been frozen solid for some time now, and were too numb to feel the ground as they walked along. Meanwhile, the temperature had dropped even farther than ten below; and the wind, having forced its way into the crevasse, was whooshing like an express train down the narrow alleyway.

Whenever I find myself shuddering these days in a winter cold snap, dancing to keep warm while waiting for a bus or a ski lift, I can't help thinking how Dave and Jim must have felt. The two men never reached High Camp that night. Drained of strength and afraid to venture onto the black, wind-swept western face, they spent the next ten hours inside the crevasse.

For a few minutes Dave had stood at the end of the crevasse, peering unhappily down the slope toward High Camp. "Do you think we should go down?" he asked. They were just an hour from High Camp, but Jim knew they could never find the way. The moon had not yet struck the western face, which lay in pitch blackness and could only be heard, not seen. Dave sat disconsolately and shivered while Jim backtracked down the crevasse and, in the area of the chock stone, began to search for a sheltered place. Near the chock stone was a small tributary crevasse that had fallen in many years before and healed over at the top. In the resulting rubble Jim found a tiny cave, about the size of a large steamer trunk, an ideal place to bivouac.

Jim started to enlarge it with his ice ax. After he had carved a ledge for both of them to sit on, he yanked on the rope to summon Dave, and, when Dave was within hollering distance, shouted to him, "I've found a warm ice cave."

The cave was considerably warmer than the outside, being about 10 degrees Fahrenheit, but it was not enough to stop their trembling and chattering or to arrest the growing frostbite. Luckily Dave had brought a single candle with him for just such an emergency. With inferior Peruvian matches, which even at sea level often sputter and die, they now tried to light it; but twenty matches had fizzled and their supply was almost gone before they realized the futility of this task. In desperation Dave remembered his emergency junk bag. There were matches in it that he had carried since 1942, but they were still satisfactory and lit the candle; and within an hour the cave had been heated to the freezing point, and perhaps higher.

Over this candle flame Dave tried to thaw his frozen socks. Jim's feet were numb but at least they were dry, so he left his socks on and slowly massaged them with his hands. Dave was in a more serious condition. He had been kicking a trail all afternoon and his boots had filled with water; his feet now were frozen white, the color of chicken in a food locker. He could rap on his toes, and the sound was hollow and wooden.

Dave wrapped his feet in a jacket, but he didn't massage them as much as he should. Dave was too distracted

by his ribs to do so. He was still convinced that they were broken, although he realized later that he could never have withstood the pain or descended the mountain if this were the case. Actually, Dave's ribs were intact; but his chest had been wrenched and contused, an injury common in football and very painful. Right now his feet were far more urgent. Frostbite is a progressive malady, and, although Dave's feet had not yet reached a stage that doctors call "irreversible," he needed medical attention very soon if they were to be saved. In the cramped ice cave, Dave and Jim talked idly about climbing with artificial feet.

For the next ten hours, until eleven in the morning, their positions were parodies of the sitting. Dave and Jim perched on their axes and their coiled rope, to shield themselves from the wet ice; they slept fitfully and woke to massage their feet or pick crystals off their clothing; they shivered over a dying candle. In its flickering light their faces looked spectral and cadaverous. The two men had smeared their skin with white oxide when they started the ascent, to protect them—a final irony—from the sizzling rays of the sun.

At eleven o'clock the next morning the sun was shining straight into the crevasse. Dave and Jim were still exhausted and cold, and they had to watch their feet to know when they were touching ground. But the sun was a big help psychologically; also, they could move quickly as they descended the western face, skidding purposely with

each step. In less than an hour they were at High Camp, but not before Yerupaja had once again shattered their nerves with a parting blow. That was at the snow bridge, now just twenty inches wide at its narrowest point. Dave crossed first, knocking a side of the bridge and some of the underparts into the crevasse, and making it necessary for Jim to half-jump, half-walk over the last few feet. The bridge collapsed behind him as he did so.

High Camp was blurred by occasional fog, so that George Bell, still watching from Glacier Meadow, did not see their return. Dave and Jim climbed immediately into their sleeping bags, melted snow on the gas stove and dissolved lemon drops in the lukewarm water; they nibbled some apricots and chocolate and fell asleep at one-thirty in the afternoon, almost tearfully grateful for the warmth of their sleeping bags, and didn't wake up until the next morning.

By then the frostbite had entered a somewhat more advanced stage, so that Dave's feet were puffed and swollen and difficult to force into his boots. One danger of frostbite is that the limbs will "come to"—thaw out and lose their numbness—and become too painful to walk on. Dave's feet were still insensate, and he knew it was important to climb down the mountain while this condition lasted. They filled their packs with two cameras, the exposed film, a little food, and their sleeping bags, in case they were forced to bivouac once again, but left the tent standing; and they headed once again toward Col Camp. Dave had sketched the route in *The Revolt of the Masses*

and used this now, for their old footsteps had melted away and the clouds cut visibility down to fifty feet. Through occasional rifts they could see the rescue party slowly climbing the glacier. They began to holler for help, but the wind destroyed their words.

Psychologically, these cries for help had a bad effect on them, for their nerves were already frayed from the ordeal they had been through—an ordeal that was not yet over. Several minutes below High Camp was a steep pitch, an icy cascade that required the greatest of caution. It was hard for the two men to place their crampons securely against the ice, because their feet were so numb; and Dave, leading the way down the pitch, slipped at one point and skidded several inches before catching his balance. Later he stood off to the side and belayed Jim. At the same point where Dave had almost fallen, Jim set his boot down at an insecure angle, causing the ice to break under each point of the crampon and his foot to skid suddenly down the slope.

"Fall!"

Jim tumbled forty feet along the ice, flying through the air part of the time before being stopped by Dave's belay. The damage was more mental than physical, for Jim was badly rattled by the fall, and, like Dave, now in some degree of shock. Besides that, he had pulled a tendon in his right ankle. When they crossed the 45-degree amphitheater, Jim found that this foot would collapse under him unless he pointed it straight downhill, so that his weight locked it tight. This slowed them up and unnerved

them even further; but as they left the amphitheater they saw Col Camp and the rescue party just an hour below them, and Dave, who at the moment was not so shaken as Jim, yelled for help in his pained and choking voice.

This time they were heard. While the others brewed hot lemonade at the col, Graham Matthews started immediately up-mountain. He met Dave and Jim at the bergschrund. They were shattered men; in a few gasping sentences they explained that they had had an accident, that they had climbed Yerupaja, that a cornice had broken; that Dave's chest was injured and his feet badly frostbitten. Jim was utterly exhausted and collapsed into a sleeping bag at Col Camp; he stayed there for the next few days while George nursed his feet back to health. But Dave insisted on going ahead and, in the blood-red twilight and the early hours of the night, hanging to the shoulders of Austen and Graham, he stumbled painfully down to Glacier Meadow. Even now, the most important thing to Dave was getting off Yerupaja, but his words had a new note.

"We've got to get to Glacier Meadow tonight," Dave kept sobbing. "We've got to get off the ice. We've got to get down, so the doctor can amputate my feet."

# 22

"GANGRENE" IS A MEDICAL WORD THAT MEANS DEATH. WHEN a foot or some other part of a body dies, it may be said to be gangrenous; and the progression from frostbite to gangrene is not a hard one to understand. Exposed to severe cold, a limb turns white as blood withdraws from the surface to economize its heat. This is frostbite. But human tissues cannot live without blood, and after a while they wither and die; or, as we say, gangrene sets in. The limb turns black and pasty; swellings and wet blisters rise, the results of inner putrefaction; the skin cracks open and starts to slough off. By this time the process is irreversible, and doctors cannot restore the injured part to health. Without their attention, though, the gangrene will slowly spread and, just as one rotten peach infects the whole barrel, brings about the death of the patient in a matter of days. A danger even more immediate is that bacteria will enter the defenseless limb. When the angry red lines of

blood poisoning strike out from the gangrenous area, there is not much that can be done.

Parts of Dave's feet, as he stumbled into the tent at Glacier Meadow, were black and pasty.

Water blisters covered the charcoals that once were his toes, and the heels of both feet were in a similar condition. The rest of the flesh was swollen all about, but, because Dave's feet were still numb from cold, Chuck and Austen and Graham were able to pull off his boots without having to cut the leather. Dave himself was exhausted and in a state of shock, and his ribs were giving him great pain. That night, and all the next day while Dave relaxed in Glacier Meadow, the rest of us salved his feet with the contents of aureomycin capsules and changed the dressing every few hours on his oozing blisters. This would destroy most of the bacteria in the area but could not forestall the spread of the gangrene itself. We knew it was urgent to put Dave in a hospital, and the only hospitals were in Lima; from the now putrescent nature of his feet, we estimated that we had three or four days to get Dave there in order to save his feet and possibly his life, although earlier in the summer the same trip from Lima to Glacier Meadow had taken us three weeks.

Dave had climbed Yerupaja on Monday, July 31. On Tuesday he had slept in High Camp; on Wednesday he staggered down to Glacier Meadow; on Thursday he rested there while we treated his feet. Now it was Thursday evening, and Chuck had drawn up a plan that would bring Dave to Lima in the late hours of Saturday night.

The next morning—Friday—Dave and Chuck would walk over Rassac Ridge to Boulder Pocket; we had to hope that Dave was rested enough, and his feet numb enough, for him to make the trip, since there was no way of coaxing a horse or mule over the slippery rocks of Rassac to carry him. But from Boulder Pocket Dave could ride a mule to Base Camp and, on Saturday, a second mule to Llamac and a third one from there to Chiquian. He and Chuck would be in Chiquian Saturday evening. Some sort of automobile or truck could speed them to Lima before sunrise; and we were quite sure that this would be time enough to save Dave's feet, perhaps with a little to spare. Certainly it could not be managed any faster.

The key to Chuck's program was timing. At Boulder Pocket, at Base Camp, at Llamac, and at Chiquian, fresh transportation had to be waiting as soon as Dave arrived. There could be no shilly-shallying while half-hearted vows of *mañana* filled the air, no haggling with lackadaisical natives. To insure that a mule or a car was ready and waiting at each of the key points, one member of our party would have to travel out from the mountain several hours in advance of the sick train, making the necessary arrangements along the way. Graham Matthews volunteered to do the job. He left Glacier Meadow at five o'clock in the morning on Friday, and in one day he walked to Chiquian.

I was at Base Camp. A lot of disconnected things had happened to me that summer, none of which seemed rele-

vant at the time to the Greater Scheme of Things. Our radio had broken down; our telegraph system fell short of minimal standards; to get news, I had been forced to travel time and again between Lima and Chiquian. If the Fates had any reason for causing all this, that reason was now apparent. Graham could find mules as well as the next man; but no one could remove Dave from Chiquian, or send him to Lima in any reasonable length of time, unless he knew from dull experience the idiosyncrasies of the local truck drivers, bus operators, cabmen, and other unreliables. Unwillingly I had become something of an expert in these affairs. I knew whatever transit systems can be said to prevail between Chiquian and Lima, and this knowledge was important for the rescue operation. At eight-thirty Friday morning Graham passed by Base Camp and, stopping first for breakfast, suggested that I come with him; and together we walked toward Llamac and Chiquian.

We hoped to get mules for ourselves, but not until there were enough for Dave. As it turned out, neither of these would be easy to arrange. Some sort of harvest had just occurred, and every man in the valley had left to sell corn at a distant village; and their wives, who aren't allowed to meddle in such economic matters, were loath to rent us mules for any amount of money. Austen Riggs walked with us to the far end of Lake Jahuakocha. There were a few huts here, and one horse in the field; while her husband was away, a dutiful Indian woman guarded it. We explained to her that one of the *Alpinistos* was badly

hurt; that he must be rushed to a hospital; that he would be at Boulder Pocket in a few hours and needed an animal to take him to the base. It would just be for the afternoon, and the price we offered was more than she had ever seen at once, yet she was leery. Austen was finally making some headway with her, so Graham and I left and continued on the path to Llamac. After we had gone, however, the woman told Austen that she could give him a saddle but nothing more, so there never was a horse at Boulder Pocket.

Graham and I met no one else for the next few hours. We walked slowly, as mountaineers always do, stopping every now and then to nibble on some chocolate or a package of mincemeat: alongside the glacial river, up the snaky trail to the pass at 14,500 feet, and down the even snakier trail to Llamac. It was now early afternoon. Below us we saw a rather shabby Indian with two mules, climbing the path in our direction. Here, we figured, was Dave's transportation from Base Camp to Llamac; but as the Indian drew nearer I realized that once again it was Scarface, my one-time Faithful Guide, who had relieved me of Peruvian specie at every fraudulent opportunity. No doubt he would try it again. We imagined his bloodshot eye reddened as he saw who we were, and that his swollen lip quivered with anticipation; certainly he chewed his coca with added vigor. We might have acted indifferent with Scarface, but money was no object right then, and we put ourselves at his mercy: we told him that Dave was in very serious shape and hinted that we would

pay as much as he asked for. Scarface smiled sickeningly. He agreed to take his mules immediately to Base Camp, and the next morning—Saturday—to bring Dave from there to Llamac. For the time being he demanded a deposit of only ten *soles*, which we paid, and parted.

Graham and I were bucked up by our success, and happy about Scarface's modest fee. We almost ran down the gravelly trail to Llamac, shunting most of the switchbacks; when a bewildered dog barked at us, we sang some spur-of-the-moment poetry:

> Hark, hark, the dogs do bark,
> *Alpinistos* are coming to town;
> Give them rags and vinylite bags,

but I forget the rest. Meanwhile, Scarface slowly ascended to the pass and, as he explained to the Ormeas many days later, developed a slight head cold toward late afternoon, so that he decided to return instead to his home. He never showed up at Base Camp.

Llamac, whose inhabitants also had corn to sell, was as deserted as every place else. Graham and I found no mules there, neither for Dave nor for ourselves; but we were told that our old friend, Naptali Sombrano, was returning from Chiquian with some pack animals, and that we should no doubt meet him on the trail. We ran into Naptali at twilight, rounding a corner near where the

River Llamac meets the River Chiquian. He was as devoted as ever; he promised that he would stay in Llamac Saturday and have fresh transportation ready when Dave and Scarface arrived. We knew we could count on Naptali to do just that.

Graham and I, believing that our job was almost over, trudged on toward Chiquian in growing darkness. We still had our chocolate bar and mincemeat, but we hadn't drunk any water during the hot, dusty afternoon. With a callousness that still astounds me, we knelt down by the River Chiquian, which still exuded a faintly excremental odor, and swallowed a few handfuls of water. It never harmed us, though, and we slogged forward behind the yellow glimmer of our flashlight. Graham had walked thirty miles without stopping, and he was getting very tired. Yet the long uphill road to Chiquian seemed to go on and on, and it was ten o'clock before the town appeared before us: first the scuffed-shoe houses in the moonlight, then the unkempt streets, and finally the dim lantern over the door of the Grand Hotel Bayer. That night even the Grand Hotel's bedbugs couldn't bother us.

To the untutored eye, the automotive situation in Chiquian the next morning looked fairly promising. There were two or three trucks in town, including Neil McCallum's new pickup; and Señor McCallum himself was near at hand. The truck schedules, however, were a function of the weather, the local rice production, the

keeping qualities of goat's cheese, and the holiday whims of the drivers. I thought it would be safer to hire a private taxi, and Graham agreed; it turned out that we were right, because all the trucks left Chiquian long before Dave arrived.

The closest taxis were on the coast. Once again I booked squatting space on a produce truck, and spent the afternoon—Saturday—joggling over the foothills to the Pacific; and that evening in the town of Barranca, after phoning a story to United Press, I picked up a rather antiquated cab and started back. The driver and a mechanic sat in front while I curled up in the back seat, and when I woke we were in Chiquian.

By then it was two o'clock Sunday morning. According to our rescue plan, Dave should have been in Chiquian for several hours now, waiting to speed to the hospital, so I was disturbed to find Graham in bed at the Grand Hotel Bayer and nobody else around. The sick train, said Graham, had not yet arrived; nor did it arrive all day Sunday. Graham and I were getting increasingly worried, for we knew that delays were intolerable; the taxi drivers were impatient, and grumblingly tossed coins into the mouth of the Grand Hotel's bronze frog; we paid them for the time they were wasting. On Sunday evening Neil McCallum left for Lima with $1000 of cheese in his truck, and I went with him to warn the Anglo-American Clinic that Dave was coming. Graham walked back to Llamac to find out what was the matter. The two taxi drivers were left alone in Chiquian; they waited Sunday night and Monday

morning, and by Monday noon, when the sick train still hadn't arrived, they began to wonder whether it wouldn't be better, all things considered, to take the money we had given them and drive home to Barranca.

# 23

ON FRIDAY MORNING, THE DAY WE WALKED TO CHIQUIAN to arrange for mules, Chuck Crush wedged Dave's swollen feet into a pair of size thirteen boots belonging to Austen, which normally would have been three sizes too large, and began climbing with him over Rassac Ridge. Chuck carried two sleeping bags and food, in case they got caught between camps, and Dave managed a small pack with some of his personal gear.

The first hours were uphill. Beds of vertical rock dragon-backed the sides of Rassac, like buttresses trying to shore up that weathered and crumbling ridge; toward these, and then across them, Chuck and Dave picked their way. Dave kept up a remarkable pace, considering how he felt. His ribs gave him the most pain now, for there was still some numbness in his feet; but the oversize boots made it hard for him to balance on rock. At two in the afternoon they arrived at Boulder Pocket. Because of the

reluctant Indian wife there was no horse waiting, and at first there was some talk of staying in camp for the night; but Dave thought he could make it on foot to the base. He was not able to eat very much, but he did drink some water before starting once again.

For Dave, it was now becoming a nightmare. The grassy slopes below Boulder Pocket were quite slick and, even though he used his ice ax for support, he would slip and put painful pressure on his feet. The Ormeas waited at the floor of the valley; with them was a crude stretcher they had fashioned from tree limbs and a blanket, a neighborly gesture but not very practical, and Dave, who was now very tired, elected to keep walking rather than trust the flimsy litter. He was less than a mile from Base Camp, yet if he stopped now he would never get going again. Chuck Crush knew that too.

"Señor Dave," the younger Ormea kept saying, "you should stop for a moment and rest." Often he and Don Juan grabbed Dave to help him across the rubble, which only made things harder because of their own uncertain balance; and Chuck had to remind them to stop. Dave plugged along, making the last hundred yards by sheer guts; most others would have given up miles before.

There is no use in describing Dave's feet as they looked that night and the following day. The skin had burst open during the long walk, and both feet were bleeding; they were not a pretty sight. Some of the more imperturbable Indian wives came by and asked to see them, and made those soft clucks of sympathy that women

make everywhere. Meanwhile, Chuck broke open more aureomycin capsules and changed the bandages every few hours; he swept out the big tent to make a clean place for Dave, and tried to stop the Ormeas from tracking in dirt. It was now Saturday, the day Scarface was to bring Dave out from the mountains; but Scarface, of course, never materialized, and Chuck was getting worried. Luckily Chuck was not the only one: in Llamac, our friend Naptali Sombrano began to fret when the sick train didn't show up and, taking some mules with him, started off toward Yerupaja. Once again Naptali was the hero of the hour. Dressed as ever in a somber poncho, with his rather naïve face peering amicably through the top, he walked into Base Camp at sunset and said he could take Dave to Chiquian the next day. It would be necessary to get an early start; Chuck wanted to leave at eight o'clock Sunday morning, using one mule for Dave and another for their packs; he himself would walk. The Ormeas made the arrangements with Naptali, since they spoke better Spanish than we.

Accordingly, on Sunday morning, Chuck and Dave woke at six-thirty, cooked a breakfast of hot oatmeal and milk, changed the bandages, packed up their sleeping bags, food, clothes, cooking kits, and medical supplies, and waited for Naptali to come. I have said that South Americans are a tardy people. It is not laziness or perversity that makes them so; they simply have very little to do and are in no great rush to do it. Time and again we had fumed over their unhurried philosophy, but this time, we

thought, even the most easygoing Latin must realize the need for speed. At eight o'clock there was still no sign of Naptali or the mules; nor had the Ormeas stirred from their tent. At nine o'clock Chuck roused them. Tomás Ormea hemmed and hawed for a few moments and finally explained, with some reticence, that he and his father had decided to leave Yerupaja with the sick train, and that no doubt it would take Naptali longer to get the extra animals.

At this point inter-American relations became rather strained. Chuck Crush, usually a temperate and understanding fellow, was furious; he tried to persuade himself that South Americans couldn't know the meaning of urgency, that language barriers made it hard for Don Juan and Tomás to understand. Still, it was not easy to forgive them, for Naptali didn't appear until noon with the additional mules, which meant they could never reach Chiquian by that night. While the Ormeas lackadaisically shuffled their belongings together, Chuck and Dave started for Llamac. Dave crouched on top of a gentle mule, an air mattress beneath him to absorb jolts; his boots were too large for the stirrups, so Chuck tied them to the saddle with climbing rope, high enough to stop the blood from pounding into his painful feet. Dave's feet had lost their numbness by now, and he was in some degree of shock for the whole trip. Meanwhile Chuck walked behind, coaxing the mule with a stick and hoping it would not fall on the rocky paths, for Dave was tied to the saddle.

Because they moved slowly, and because Dave had to dismount twice at steep parts of the trail, it was evening when they finally pattered into Llamac. Their reception suggested a Marx Brothers comedy routine. Naptali had a one-room hut in Llamac, where Chuck and Dave would spend the night; and in this room, very small and very dark, surged a self-appointed welcoming committee: Mrs. Naptali, her daughters, uncles, cousins, and neighbors, local politicos and landed gentry, dogs, sows, stray sheep, and several varieties of barnyard fowl. All wore attitudes of genial expectation, and none showed any intention of leaving. Like a self-conscious plumber fixing a radiator in the midst of a cocktail party, Chuck and Dave tried to spread their sleeping bags and cook supper as the company milled about them. Once again Dave's feet were bandaged; meanwhile the welcoming committee amused itself by picking hors d'oeuvres from the expedition's food pile and studying the various applications of the modern flashlight.

At last the crowd thinned out. Chuck and Dave took off their outer clothes while the surrounding darkness giggled, slid into their sleeping bags, and made themselves comfortable; but it was a night of many interruptions. First Graham appeared through the door, after hiking worriedly from Chiquian. Then came Mrs. Naptali. Mostly in Spanish, but with several interjections drawn from the Quechua, she explained that her husband was currently situate at the local pub, where he was partaking of native liqueurs and becoming quite drunk; and

that if we wanted to leave in the morning we should have to dislodge him, no? Graham departed with the *Señora*, and a few minutes later they all came back. Naptali apologized at length, sang a song, and staggered out into the dark, presumably to rest for the next day's trip; and Chuck, Dave, and Graham went to sleep.

Early Monday morning I drove up to the Anglo-American Clinic in Lima to tell them that an injured mountaineer was being rushed there, and would no doubt arrive momentarily. I described what had happened to Dave's feet; the Clinic agreed that he should have been hospitalized many days before, and that speed was urgent. At that moment Dave Harrah was at the inland village of Llamac, loading mules for the all-day ride to Chiquian. His chest was healing of its own accord, so that he could now take a deep breath with very little pain; his feet gave off the sickening-sweet smell of rotting flesh.

It wasn't every day that Naptali Sombrano escorted the Yankee alpinists to the big town of Chiquian. Apparently none the worse for his revels, Naptali wound a bright sash around his waist, and his wife insisted that he wear his best hat. The sick train left at eight-thirty in the morning, trailing a smoke screen of dust as it plodded through the hot canyon; at noon it was overtaken and passed by the Ormeas. Don Juan and Tomás wanted to be the first in Chiquian with the news that Dave was coming. They spread the word; and by five o'clock, when the sick train hobbled through the outskirts, throngs of peo-

ple were standing around to watch. If they expected something sensational, they were not disappointed. The procession had stopped in front of the Grand Hotel Bayer when Don Juan rushed forward from a large crowd; in his enthusiasm he grabbed Dave around the chest in a bear hug and literally tore him from the mule. Dave yelled with pain, and Chuck pulled Don Juan away, but the damage was done. In a few moments Dave had staggered into the Grand Hotel and collapsed on a bed. His ribs were ripped loose once again; they gave him more pain than they ever had before.

Dave's room and the hotel patio quickly swelled with people. Carlos Villanueva, the only doctor in Chiquian and an excellent man, pushed his way through them; and only those with strong stomachs now remained. Dr. Villanueva could do little for Dave's ribs, but he cut the loose skin from Dave's feet and anointed them with penicillin. He, too, agreed that Dave must get to a hospital immediately. Dr. Villanueva had practiced for many years in Chiquian, and we were probably the first patients who could pay him what he deserved; yet he refused to take a single *sol.*

Chuck had been negotiating with the taxi drivers, and they had reached an agreement. That is, Chuck paid what the drivers asked for: 500 *soles* ($30) and their hotel bill. Then he bought some canned fruit, bottles of a strange soda pop, meat, and crackers, bade good-by to the Ormeas, and after many handshakes carried Dave into the taxi. Chuck and Dave sat in the back, and the two drivers

were up front. They revved the motor, honked the horn, flicked the lights off and on, and crawled forward in low gear; and as they passed the edge of Chiquian, the motor died out.

This was the last straw. The two cabmen, who were more concerned with discussing the engine than repairing it, had entered almost immediately into a rather heated argument. One of them thought the trouble lay under the hood, and began to unscrew parts of the carburetor; the other had little constructive to say, but disagreed violently with the first. In the end, Chuck got the car started by pushing it, and there was no more trouble after that. The driver sped across the foothills, skidding around corners in the best hot-rod style.

In the back seat, Dave was having a painful time. The road was rough and twisty, and the jolts made his ribs ache continually. Chuck held Dave's feet in his lap to raise them higher, but Dave was having shooting pangs, and for the first time since High Camp he couldn't help groaning. The taxi raced through the night, stopping only to buy gas and sign in at the Civil Guard posts and, in Barranca, to pick up another relief driver: down the dirt road from the mountains and along the Pan-American Highway to Lima.

At two-thirty Tuesday morning, exactly one week after Dave's feet had contracted frostbite on Mt. Yerupaja, the cab pulled up in front of the Anglo-American Clinic in Lima and Dave Harrah was wheeled into the emergency room.

# 24

IN PERU, MEDICINE HAS NEVER BECOME A BIG BUSINESS. There is not much ballyhoo, pink pills, advertising, patent medicines, elixirs, drugs, potions, balms, and cure-all poultices; the people are too poor to afford such baubles. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, Peru's doctors are excellent. They did not become doctors to make money, for there is little money to be had; nor to get prestige in the community, for that goes inevitably to the Spaniards, the government officials, and the rich. They became doctors to cure sick men, and they do. They can—just one example—cure colds overnight.

Carlos Villanueva of Chiquian, who gave expert first aid to Dave but refused any money, was such a doctor. So was Ned Raker, the surgeon at the Anglo-American Clinic, and we knew he could do the best job possible. Dave lay at the Clinic for three weeks, at first in shock and reliving the horrors of the descent; for a while he

was partly delirious. His chest healed of its own accord. Meanwhile, Dr. Raker worked on Dave's feet, housing them in a heated case at the end of the bed and applying medicaments every few hours. Dr. Raker stemmed the gangrene and restored much of the blackened flesh; but at last, late in August, he had to amputate all of Dave's toes. By that time Jim Maxwell was also in the Clinic, and Jim lost parts of three toes.

It was not a high price, and it might have been worse. Certainly Dave Harrah, who wrote an article about the adventure called "Good Luck on Yerupaja," does not think the ending was tragic. After all, you can still climb without toes. Dave rested a while at home; he ordered a pair of custom boots that fitted his feet; and once again he is climbing mountains, this time the Selkirks of British Columbia. Dave remembers what he said before, about another accident: "To quit mountaineering is easy; I've done it a hundred times." The story also has a happy ending for Jim, who was climbing in New Hampshire just a few months later.

As a matter of fact, it's almost impossible for a mountaineering trip to end in a letdown. A week end at Cape Cod, or a summer in Europe, yes; but not a Wilderness Expedition. There's something to look forward to even when the last tents are pulled down, the last boxes loaded on recalcitrant mules, the last wrinkled hands shaken in the Indian villages. We had dreamt of it all summer. So perhaps that's where our expedition should be said to end, in the Grand Hotel Bolivar of Lima where the rooms

have radiators and the beds are made, not unrolled; where the accepted means of ascension is an elevator; and where "toilet" means an object and not a locality: each of us floating serenely in his own bathtub and lapped by those two Olympian liquids, hot water and Pisco wine; an inner-spring mattress waiting in the next room, and downstairs—many, many hours later—a steak dinner with sweet potatoes and onion rings on the side, and ice cream in five convenient flavors.

And then, the United States. The pretty girl on the airplane, who gurgled of Buenos Aires night clubs . . . lazy beaches and Florida, whose highest mountain is 300 feet high . . . the season of summer, after a year of two winters . . . the hysterical woman who saw Graham's beard . . . and the Biological Laboratory of Harvard University. I wondered what it would be like to get back. Would I bore my friends with tedious references to the High Andes? Would it be necessary—as I had planned all month—to pump my stomach and start digestion with a clean slate? Would I keep saying "*sí*" instead of "yes"? No; I was just the same as ever—except for one thing, and my friends remarked on it for the next few weeks. They found it strange and unaccountable, they said, that whenever they promised to do something, I never really believed them; and that, when they did it on time, I was always openmouthed with surprise and stupefaction.

Why do men climb mountains? Every book on mountaineering, I guess, must tussle with that question

sooner or later—and there lies a paradox. For if you have to ask this question, you will never understand the answer.

Yet perhaps I can give some hints and dispel some wrong ideas. Many people wonder why men climb mountains when the business is so risky, so ominous to life and limb. The answer is, it isn't. Most persons, with a lot of nerve and no skill, can scale the side of a cliff; anybody—but anybody—can get down. The object is to do it safely; and this is what comprises the science of mountaineering. With a rope about his waist and a belay from above, and his feet on solid rock, the mountaineer is as safe as he is at home. He very rarely takes chances. On Yerupaja, Dave and Jim were excited because the mountain was big and the summit was close, and they did take a chance; and that was the cause of their accident. But this was exceptional; there are 40,000 practicing mountaineers in North America and only three or four—1 per cent of 1 per cent—are seriously hurt each year.

The layman also wonders why mountaineers sweat for the dubious pleasure of standing—five minutes perhaps, or ten—on an inconsequential knob of land geodetically determined to be higher than anything nearby. It seems obvious to him that mountaineers climb mountains to reach the top; but that isn't true. They don't. One might as well say that men swim to reach the other side of the pool, that they play tennis to beat their opponent, that they ski to get downhill. It is exciting to reach a summit, of course; but mountaineers climb because they like

climbing in itself, regardless of ends. To say that it's silly to climb, because reaching the top isn't worth it, is like saying it's silly to live, because the end is always death.

Mountaineers enjoy the very process of climbing. Why? Well, some of them like the exercise, some of them like the view, some of them like the lure of the unknown; for some, mountaineering is healthful and out of doors and remote from the irrelevant troubles of civilized life; it brings a group of men together with a single challenge —and life is more interesting with a challenge. Most mountaineers, like the ones on our expedition, climb for all these reasons. But this is all superficial. You can enjoy the view without flying to South America, you can exercise in your own back yard, and as for a challenge—well, you can even find that in a business office.

There is something else to mountaineering, and I think it's creativity. In a way, the mountaineer is an artist. He is no machinelike hired hand, hoisting his 160 pounds up a cliffside as if by winch; he is using his imagination, producing, creating: inventing a route where there was none before. To the mountaineer, a climb is almost a tangible object: he "makes" an ascent in the same sense that a sculptor makes a statue or a composer makes a symphony. He expresses himself in it—and the creative life is the happy one. After a while mountaineering becomes part of him, and perhaps he cannot say why he likes it. Why does an artist paint a face? Because, he feels, he *has* to paint it. Why does an author tell a story? Because

he *has* to tell it. This is what George Leigh-Mallory was thinking when he explained why he tried to climb Mt. Everest. Mallory said, "Because it's there."

After we climbed Yerupaja, we got many letters from many people who thought the whole thing was rather silly. One man was typical. He doubted, he said, that we had accomplished anything at all, and opined that if we had to risk our lives like that, we ought to do it in Korea. It would be picayune for me to point out that most of us were veterans, or to ask whether a soldier, who kills another soldier, is himself "accomplishing" something. And the question of which is closer to reality—the quiet, eternal mountains or a profitless affray between antagonistic Earth-men—this may be intriguing but it's not the main point. More important is the philosophy behind this kind of letter. For this is the philosophy of the man who will always ask, "Why do men climb mountains?" and will never understand the answer.

He is a man who thinks nothing is worth-while unless it produces "results," unless it "accomplishes" an end. He goes to college, not because education is good in itself, but to get a degree and higher wages; he works at a job, not because he likes it, but to make money and gain prestige. Such is the temper of our society. We seek after ends, rather than enjoy the means; we never live life, but only prepare for it. We are baffled that a man should climb up a mountain and then come down again, when he has nothing to show when he's through. We are even more

baffled that he should risk his life to do this, and deny himself the comforts of civilization.

Perhaps we are right. Perhaps, for all I know, people should never leave bed in the morning, for they immediately expose themselves to all sorts of dangers. To argue against this philosophy would take another book. Right now I can only point out that there are still some men who do not believe it, who are convinced that there is a greater purpose to living than to prevent one's self from dying; who believe that the means can be its own justification, that life is its own justification, that climbing mountains is its own justification. Mountaineers are such men. And all of us know, who spent one month striving toward the top of Yerupaja, that in that month we lived more of life than many people live in a lifetime.