

Oliver Perry-Smith

Profile of a Mountaineer

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IN EVALUATING the record of a climber whose activity reached its climax sixty years ago, one must place it against the standards of its time. In the 1860s when many of the 4000-meter peaks of the Alps were still unclimbed, first ascents were triumph enough when accomplished by obvious routes. Thirty years later it was necessary to seek further goals and, in consequence, the limits of the attainable were extended.

Lucien Devies¹, a past president of the French Alpine Club, has said of Mummery that his climbs were never below 3d degree of modern rating and, on the Grépon, attained 4th degree. In the early years of this century few Americans were in this class. It was a time, however, particularly in the Eastern Alps, when climbers of reputation, such as Paul Preuss, rejected artificial aids on principle, and there was a large cult devoted to solo climbing.

In the Dolomites the S.W. Vajolet towers were gained between 1887 and 1896, the central Stabelerturm holding out until the latter year. D. Diamantidi (A.C.) ascended the three summits of the Drei Zinnen in one day, August 8, 1881, this being the first traveler's ascent of the Kleine Zinne. The Guglia di Brenta, one of the most difficult and exposed climbs, fell to two Innsbruck students, K. Berger and A. Ampferer on August 18, 1899.

With this as background we may now consider a fellow-countryman², whose almost legendary exploits are little known on this side of the ocean: Oliver Perry-Smith, born in Philadelphia on October 11, 1884. His father, of the same name, was a noted athlete, rowing, boxing and horsemanship being among his skills. He also wrote poetry. Educated at St. Paul's School, he was a member of the First City Troop, and at the outset

1. *Alpinisme*, 1933; H. Isselin, *Les Aiguilles de Chamonix* (1960).

2. The writer is indebted to Fritz Wiessner for criticism in connection with this paper and for supplying otherwise unobtainable reference books dealing with Perry-Smith and Saxon Switzerland. Additional information came from Herr Helmut Holdegel, an officer of Sektion Dresden, D.A.V., Herr Hans Pohle and Herr Carl J. Luther, the latter supplying the data on Perry-Smith's skiing career. Contemporary photos, showing Perry-Smith in action, survived the destruction of Dresden and are used by courtesy of Walter Hahn of that city. Editorial comment is in square brackets.



PLATE 77

OLIVER PERRY-SMITH, act.
79. October 11, 1963.

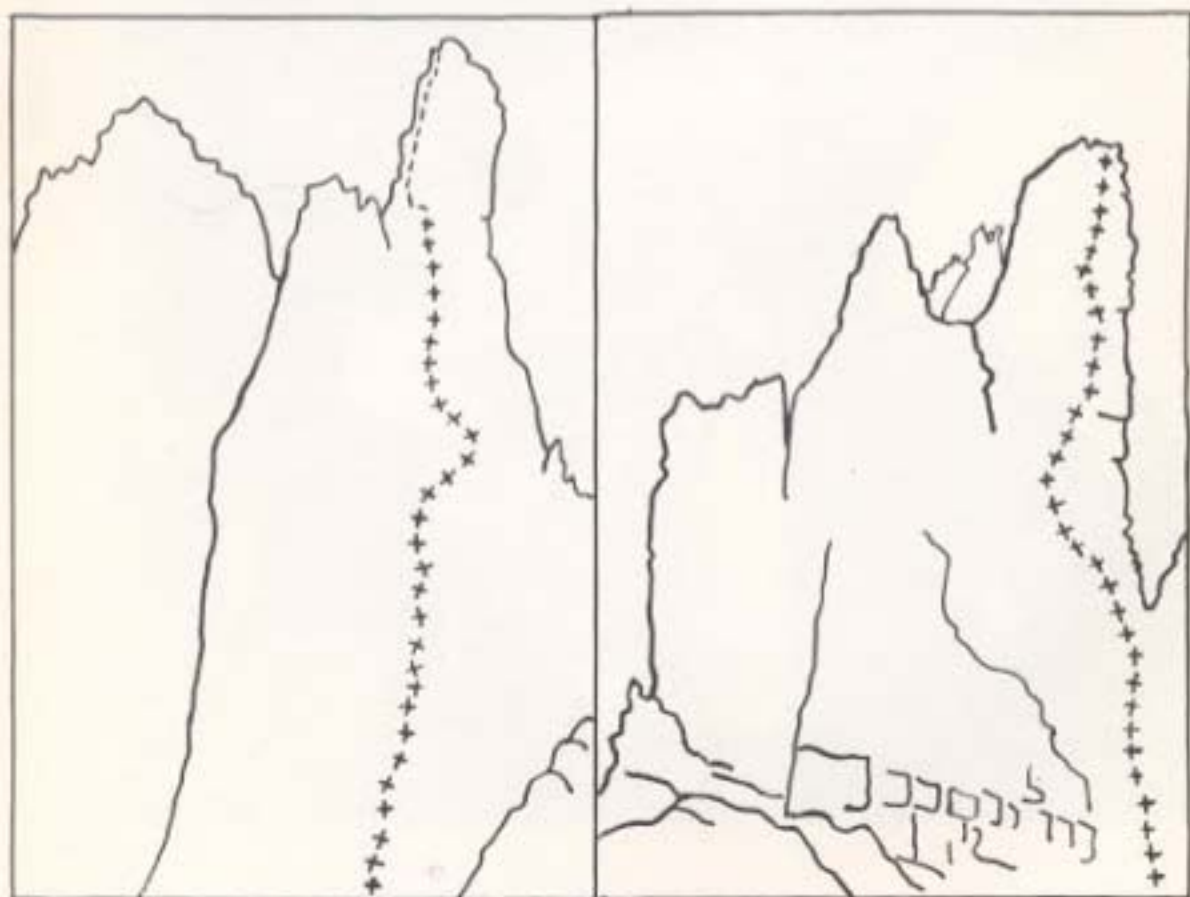


PLATE 78

Traced from C.A.I. guidebooks

Left: Campanile Basso (Guglia di Brenta), southwest face. Right: Piccola Cima di Lavaredo (Kleine Zinne), north wall.

PLATE 79

Grosser Wehlturm (r.) and Kleiner Wehlturm (l.) showing Perry-Smith's routes. He made first ascent of Grosser Wehlturm on August 2, 1905 and first complete ascent of Hünigweg (VI), May 2, 1906. He led first ascent of east wall (V) of Kleiner Wehlturm, October 31, 1905,



PLATE 80

These and all remaining photos in this section by Walter Hahn, Dresden.

Schrammtorwächter. Perry-Smith led first ascent (VI), September 10, 1905.

of the Spanish-American War was commissioned Captain in Fitzhugh Lee's 7th Army Corps. He died in Havana in 1899 at the age of 38. His widow remarried and went to live in Dresden. Young Perry-Smith was sent to St. Paul's, where one of his schoolmates recalls: "He had the most extraordinary sense of balance, and used to walk like a monkey across four-inch beams in a building under construction, that were over fifty feet above the ground." In 1902 he sailed from Philadelphia and joined his mother. Opera in Dresden was then world-famous and they attended frequently. He enrolled in the Technische Hochschule, the equivalent of M.I.T., and there met young men who spent their holidays among nearby mountains.

In a recent letter he says: "I forgot to tell you what started my climbing. I spent one summer at Bar Harbor with cousin John R.³ and Emily McLean. Grandma Beale had already taken me up Green Mountain in a buckboard, and told me all about the wonderful climbs she had seen through telescopes in Chamonix, Grindelwald and Zermatt. This got me enthusiastic, and one day I walked up Newport [Champlain] Mountain, and climbed down the cliffs approximately 2000 ft. to the ocean below. It was not difficult, but we had no rope. A South American named Calvo was with me."

From the outskirts of Dresden one can see the peaks of Saxon Switzerland, twenty miles to the southeast, along both banks of the Elbe. In this picturesque region the action of water and ice upon the soft sandstone, of which these hills are chiefly composed, has produced deep gorges and fantastic isolated pinnacles which, although beautiful and striking, by no means recall the characteristics of Switzerland. They are erosion forms rather than true mountains and as unique entities require no comparison with the great Alps. The highest summit, the Blossstock, is 1830 ft., but the better-known Lilienstein, Königstein and Bastei are lower.

The Falkenstein, northern outpost of the Schrammstein group, is the most important and spectacular of the Saxon peaks, a climber's prize with sheer walls rising for 90 meters. As early as 1300 robber-knights, by means of hewn steps, used it as a vantage point. There is no doubt that this is a climbing area of utmost difficulty, much of it being of 6th degree. The climbs are short, ranging from 100 to 300 ft. in height, but the rocks are so steep and smooth that to all appearance they are absolutely impossible to ascend. By 1890 rock climbing in this region had become a pure sport. It was no longer a question of getting up by any available means but of *how* it was done. By 1898 a large number of summits had

been gained by more than one route, O. Schuster and F. Meurer being pioneers. Many of the most expert Continental mountaineers, Albert Kunze, Rudolf Fehrmann and Walter Hünig among them, had their early training there, and in this group Oliver Perry-Smith and later Americans, Allen Carpe, Rand Herron and Fritz Wiessner must be included.

As technique advanced, Rudolf Fehrmann⁴ advocated undertaking climbs by "Great Lines" (routes laid out in the most direct way, tackling great difficulties; hence, the ideal, most beautiful line), which present the uppermost total performance in route finding, agility, technique, strength, endurance and, particularly, daring. He defined the ultimate objective of friction climbing as the art of overcoming steeply inclined steps and holds which are not sharply edged (*i.e.* rounded downwards) and this also at great height, with poor or limited possibility of belaying.

Fehrmann was a wonderful climber and much of Perry-Smith's success was due to his inspiration and guidance. Fehrmann realized early that, in order to preserve climbing in Saxon Switzerland unspoiled, the use of artificial aid had to be prevented. He was the brain and leader of the early climbers and was able to convince them by lectures and writing that once strict rules were broken there would be no end to it, and the beautiful towers and pinnacles would lose much of their natural charm and challenge. Many young experts have come out of the area and, with little other training, tackled important problems of the Dolomites and northern Kalkalpen in the most astonishing way. After a season or two of Alpine rock climbing they have done well in the snow and ice of the Western Alps and Himalayas (Nanga Parbat, 1961). One can say that much of what they accomplished was based on the tradition of Fehrmann and Perry-Smith.

Before the first World War 6th degree free climbs (present Alpine rating), with little protection, existed only in Saxon Switzerland. Perry-Smith was the first to master this degree. He was definitely ahead of his time, the great rock climbs done in the Alps before 1914 by men like Preuss, the Dibona brothers, Fritzsch, Herzog, Dülfer and others reaching 5th degree at best.

Considering the great difficulty and exposure, very few safety rings are used. Only the leader of a new climb has the right to place a ring, and it stays as a permanent fixture, no one being allowed to remove it. It is considered bad form to employ many rings, so as few as possible are used, thus precluding criticism and leaving the rock clean. Regular alpine pitons

3. Proprietor of the *Washington Post* and the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. His daughter-in-law, Evelyn Walth McLean, was the owner of the Hope diamond. It is worth adding that Thomas Traxton (1753-1822), distinguished American naval officer and one of the original crews of six captains when the U. S. Navy was reconstituted in 1798, was Perry-Smith's great grandfather.

4. Goldammer and Wächter, *Bergsteigen in Sachsen* (Dresden, 1936), 75. Fehrmann was born on a German ship while his parents were crossing to America. He spoke English and was a student in the Wettlinger Gymnasium, Dresden, when Perry-Smith first met him. He died in a concentration camp in 1947.

are not suitable for the soft sandstone, erosion and cracking of the rock being such that one could rarely find a place in which to drive them. Therefore, holes are drilled, usually 5-6 in. deep, with a crown chisel about 14 mm. in diameter, and then the shaft of the ring is driven in together with wood or lead pieces to make it fit solidly. The rings are not less than 10 mm. thick, the carabiners 14 mm. or more, and the manila ropes usually 18 mm., but now superseded by 12 mm. nylon. Relatively long falls can be held, often 60 ft. on steep walls, but the death rate has always been high, mainly due to rope breakage and because the climber was not equal to the task. The rings are meant only for belays and are not used for hand or footholds. Shoes are of flexible leather, rubber replacing hemp for soles, but climbs are sometimes made barefooted.

Albert Kunze⁵ recalls the historic meeting: "On the first Sunday of May, 1902, I climbed the Hinterer Ganskofel with a friend. Suddenly I heard in a chimney leading to the peak a shower of curses and coughs and often the word 'goddam.' In a few minutes a young man climbed out, hesitated and then greeted us and sat down on the other corner of the summit. I thought he was an Englishman as there were English families then living in Dresden. The new arrival wore nailed boots, an English sports-costume and a broad-brimmed hat. He asked us how he could reach the frontal peak. We showed him the way and soon followed. At the final wall he explained that in nailed boots he could not climb this alone. I went to the top and offered him the rope for safety, and soon all three of us were there. He introduced himself as Oliver Perry-Smith of Philadelphia, and said that he was climbing here to train for ascents in the Alps. He asked us to take him on our rope through the Gühne chimney, to which I agreed as I was afraid that alone and inexperienced he might fall. But he accomplished the descent faultlessly, climbing with care, securing himself well and was ready to assist when he could. At the foot of the rocks his stockings were in tatters, the seat of his trousers in rags with torn underclothing protruding. It was impossible for him to go home in such condition and I lent him my Wettermantel to cover himself. At the Amselgrund he invited us to have a glass of beer, but I declined as I didn't drink beer in the middle of the day, and we had to walk to Wehlen as our tickets were only good from that point. He sat thoughtfully for a while and then said suddenly that in America it was a great insult to refuse a drink. I told him that this was not the case in Germany. In Wehlen we sat in the garden on the Elbe and ordered coffee. A cup cost 15 pfennige. Perry-Smith asked if he might offer us a cigar. We agreed, for a good cigar cost 10 pfennige. But he ordered Havana cigars,

which the waitress brought, with bands marked 'Henry Clay,' that cost 50 pfennige apiece! That was the first time in my life I smoked a Havana cigar.

"This was the beginning of a happy mountain companionship. Every Sunday we went together and soon were after new climbs. We became acquainted with members of the Mönchsteiner and Gipfelstürmer Clubs. With a postal-card picture as guide we searched for the Brosinnadel and were up at the first attempt. We had much to learn, but the more we climbed the more secure we became. We went on to the Blossstock. The beginning of the crack was funnel-shaped and difficult. We advanced by centimeters, but succeeded. The next narrow chimney gave me no trouble and, in a firm stance, I waited for Perry-Smith to follow. His girth was much greater than mine and I could not help thinking he would have much difficulty. [Powerfully built, his companions described him as "tall as a tree" — *baumlang*.] He tried with all his strength, but called that he must make a halt. Suddenly I heard a rhythmic bum-bum-bum. At a distance of three meters the heartbeat of my friend was conducted through the rock! Soon we were on top, happy to have climbed one of the most difficult cliffs of the home area.

"At the turn of the century it was taken for granted that one descended the cracks and chimneys as well, only roping down on steep walls that were otherwise impossible. Eight days later we did the more difficult Kreuzturm, and afterward on several Sundays, in training for the projected tour in the Alps, climbed all three peaks in one day."

Kunze continues: "Our first new route was accomplished on the Falkenstein, March 1, 1903. We made the first ascent of the Lokomotive-Esse on June 7. When I stood in the final crack I said to Perry-Smith: 'It will go; victory is sure.' My friend could not speak for emotion; only unintelligible sounds came from him. We repeated the ascent on June 22.

"In the middle of July we went to Zermatt, with the Matterhorn as our goal. My leave was short and I had only six days left. For the Matterhorn two guides were officially required. Perry-Smith made contact with young Joseph Knubel, whose father, Peter Knubel, went along as second. But storm and snow at the Hörnli Hut made the ascent impossible. So, with Josef we went up the Riffelhorn by the Matterhorn couloir. It was our first climb in nailed boots on such rock. It was of medium difficulty and, in the middle of the wall, the guide, seeing that we could climb well, allowed us to unrope for the rest of the ascent. Three days later we were again in the Hörnli Hut, hoping to make the first ascent of the season. This we did, outdistancing an Englishman with Alexander Burge-

⁵ A. Kunze, "Fländerien aus der Erschließungszeit, 1901-1903," *Jahrbuch für Touristik*, 1954, 19.

ner, who had started half an hour earlier. On the next day I had to return home, but Perry-Smith had engaged Josef Knubel for two months."

As Josef did not obtain his guide's license until 1904, Perry-Smith entered the ascents in Peter Knubel's *Führerbuch*⁶, although the latter, being 71 years old did not take part in any of the climbs except the Matterhorn. It is a remarkable list for a climber who had no previous experience in the Alps: Riffelhorn (Matterhorn couloir), Matterhorn (these two with Kunze as companion), Zinal Rothorn, Rimpfischhorn, Weisshorn, several peaks of Monte Rosa, Lyskamm ("We traversed, as we didn't want to return over the glacier we had ascended from the Bétemps Hut."), Wellenkuppe, Obergabelhorn, Dent Blanche, Matterhorn (repeated, with descent of the Italian ridge). In August they did the Teufelsgrat-Täschhorn in 12 h., including probably the first ascent of the highest gendarme. Perry-Smith, himself 18 years of age, added: "Josef Knubel is the best climber in Zermatt even if he is too young to have a testimonial book of his own." Sixty years later he wrote about this traverse: "We had close shaves. Knubel almost fell while leading the smooth slab on the last gendarme. It took us 21 hours to regain Randa, the first party not spending a night on the glacier. I remember I had just crossed a snow-bridge over a wide crevasse when a sérac came down and broke it. I then wasted much time climbing most of these mountains alone and missed a lot of new ascents."

Despite the foregoing entry, Perry-Smith was alone on the Matterhorn crossing. "On this solitary traverse," he writes, "I went up the E. face and over the shoulder. Many rocks came down. The parties with guides who had climbed the N.E. arête did not want to let me pass, but a famous guide, Supersaxo, told them to. I did, ran up the roped ice-slope in the cut steps and then up the steep rocks to the summit, where I had a good

6. *A. J.* 32, 108; 67, 270; *Jahrbuch für Touristik*, 1934, 21. Capt. D.F.O. Dangar, A.C., has kindly transcribed the following entries of Perry-Smith from the *Führerbuch* of Peter Knubel:

"On July 11th, 1903, Peter Knubel and his son Joseph accompanied by Joseph Imboden and Albert Kunze went with me the first time this year up the Matterhorn. I was very much pleased with them both."

"Joseph Knubel has ascended with me this year the Matterhorn for the first time, the Wellenkuppe, Zinal Rothorn (Aug. 1), Weisshorn, Lyskamm, Gabelhorn, Dent Blanche for the first time this year from Zermatt. The Matterhorn a second time *descending the Italian side* for the first time this year. On all these ascents we have been alone excepting the Dent Blanche and the first ascent of the Matterhorn. Joseph Knubel although he is too young to have a guide book is the best climber in Zermatt. I am sure of this as I have seen many of the others climb. He has also done more mountains than most guides of fifty years old and although he is so young he has a great knowledge of mountaineering on the ice, snow or rocks. I am very well satisfied with him and am sure that what any other guide has done he also could do. I can honestly recommend him to any climber as a pleasant companion and a first rate guide."

"Joseph Knubel also ascended with me the *Devil's Goat* on Aug. 12 '04. We ascended the last large gendarme, I think for the first time. The climbing was rather difficult, the rock overhanging considerably. From Täsch-Alp we took exactly 12 hours to reach the summit. We reached Randa at 7.20 after having a puzzling time on the glacier. Through this whole trip Knubel proved himself to be a wonderful rock climber."

"Joseph Knubel has ascended the Wellenkuppe and Obergabelhorn with me and I am satisfied he is still as good a guide as ever. July 29 '06."

bottle of Mumm's Extra Dry. The guide, his son and an Englishman soon joined me. The view was magnificent; Monte Viso 100 miles away could be seen plainly. Supersaxo said I should go down the Italian side, in spite of my protests that it would be too difficult for me. It was lucky for him I did. In a few minutes, half-way down the 90-ft. ladder from the Italian summit, an icicle broke and a large chunk glanced off my head and hit the top of my rucksack. I stuck my feet through the rungs of the ladder and held tight with my hands. It was the closest to death I had ever been. However, I climbed down quickly. Supersaxo pointed up at a man named Fuchs, who was almost half-way down the ladder and seemed terrified. I went up and held him close against the ladder, telling him that he was all right and to come down with me as I could easily hold him. It didn't take me long to get him down. Josef Knubel and I had taken Fuchs as porter up the Täschhorn by the Teufelsgrat, and he had several times become frightened. Fuchs had been exiled to America for killing a man with a knife and had only recently returned to Switzerland.

"When we reached a point about 40 ft. above the so-called Big Chimney, the Englishman slipped. This was near the place where Whymper fell in 1862. The son of the leading guide had laid his coiled rope, connecting this Englishman, in front of me. We were talking while the elder Supersaxo was cutting steps up to the ridge above and the regular route. There was no chance for the son to grab the rope. I caught it, braced my feet and held tight. I don't think the father saw what happened. Anyway the son was grateful to me for preventing a fall."

After this campaign Perry-Smith returned to America. He wrote often to his old friends and sent photos to show that he had been training on the granite outside walls of a house, becoming an expert façade climber. [E. Cromwell says: "He did 'human fly' climbing up office buildings, but the police stopped him because he created traffic jams."] In August, 1905, he returned to Dresden, his first words to Kunze being: "May I live and eat with you for a month? I have lost nearly all my money gambling on the ship." The professional card-sharps had taken him over. The Kunze family at once accepted him in their home. Money, however, was scarce and they could only afford climbing on the nearest peaks. But Perry-Smith was eager to ascend the Torwächter⁷ and, when it seemed that a competitor might snatch this prize, began to curse and wanted to leave at once. But first they had the blacksmith make safety and rope-off rings and, with Hanns Schueller as third man, started on September 10.

Arriving at the overhang, Perry-Smith drove in the safety ring and roped to his companions. The final wall was covered by thin lichen, still

7. *Jahrbuch für Touristik*, 1934, 22.



PLATE 81

Barbarine. Perry-Smith made first ascent (VI), September 19, 1905.



PLATE 82

Barbarine.



PLATE 83

Teufelsturm (VIIb). Perry-Smith led the first ascent, September 9, 1906.



PLATE 84

Ascending the Teufelsturm.

wet from rain, but soon they were on the summit, listening to cheers from friends on a nearby tower. Perry-Smith was still full of emotion and, instead of having a smoke, ran around the very edge of the peak, saying that only in this way could he find out whether he was still free of dizziness. His companions assured him that there was already sufficient evidence on this point. This was the first new ascent that he had led, the beginning of an era in which his name and that of Rudolf Fehrmann head the list of those who made possible the great days of development in climbs of Saxon Switzerland.

The ascents in which Perry-Smith took part are now listed, the leader in each case being named first. "Old route" means that by which the first ascent was made. The bracketed figure indicates the relative difficulty of the climb, the grading being slightly different from that used in the Alps. VI = very difficult; VII covers climbs of utmost difficulty which, because of the nature of the rock, would not be possible in the Alps. These data are derived from *Elbsandsteingebirge* (3d edit., 1961), the successor of Fehrmann's guidebook, *Der Bergsteiger in der Sächsischen Schweiz* (Dresden, 1908, with subsequent editions), and details more than 3000 routes on the 600 towers. The first evaluation of Saxon rock climbing appeared in *Zeitschrift des D. u. Oe. A.V.*, 1908. Perry-Smith made more than 90 ascents in this area, 33 of which are rated VI or above. There were 32 first ascents, 13 solo climbs and 36 additional on which he led.

1903

Undated. *Unterer Ganskopf*, old route (III). O. Perry-Smith alone.

March 1. *Falkenstein*, Kunze route (IV). A. Kunze, O. Perry-Smith.

June 7. *Lokomotive-Esse*, old route (V)⁸. A. Kunze, O. Perry-Smith, H. Simon. [On these Kunze was the leader and Perry-Smith his companion on the rope. In October the latter met Rudolf Fehrmann and thereafter with him dominated the classic period.]

June 22. *Lokomotive-Domgipfel*, N.W. route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, A. Kunze, H. Sattler.

It was as if the success on the Esse, long believed impossible, had suddenly widened the boundaries of technical climbing. From this year the conquest of difficult walls progressed. This transfer from chimney and crack to open wall was at first considered by some as "half suicide," but it soon became accepted as the knowledge of friction technique spread.

Rudolf ("Petrus") Fehrmann⁹ recalls: "Perry-Smith was the strongest individual personality I have ever known. He had a flair for the super-monumental, whether it was to find new routes on rock or ice, to drive his Bugatti racing car along the highways by night, or in friendly carousal

to lift many a glass. [At a club gathering of his climbing friends he once arrived looking like an inflated balloon, twenty bottles of champagne being strung around his waist under a motoring coat.] He was no saint and did not care to be one. Only a few really knew that in this sometimes rough, sometimes tender youth there beat a chivalrous heart. In 1905 he came to Germany for the second time. I was amazed to see on the Chinesischer Turm how, just after crossing the ocean, he easily overcame difficulties, and when I went carefully forward he straddled and sped past me. To his arms and legs distances seemed nothing. 'He is the man for me, with him I must visit the Alps,' I thought. And there in the great Alps as in the mountains of home he became the comrade of all comrades. Together we did the Guglia di Brenta (S. wall), the new N. route on the Kleine Zinne, the Matterhorn.

"His bear-like strength I saw for the first time on the Brosinnadel in the autumn of 1905. We had a beginner on the rope whom Oliver did not suffer gladly. To get even with him for a bit of boastfulness Oliver gave him the malicious advice to go directly down the south wall instead of the usual ridge. All went well in the beginning, but then hand and footholds gave out. 'Hold, hold, I'm falling,' cried the unlucky fellow. Oliver replied with pretended anger. 'That's no loss; fall into Hell where you belong.' 'Hold tight, hold the rope tight.' 'Goddam, I can't hold you,' sounded from above, 'I must cut the rope, I have no desire to fall on your account.' A cry of anguish from the depths at last brought Oliver to call to me: 'You, Petrus, have him on the rope, you must pull him over to you.' And so it worked; the poor fellow swung through the air, while Oliver stood upright on the narrow ledge and paid out the rope. As the victim hung free in the air and flailed with arms and legs, Oliver slowly spoke memorable words to me, which I can never forget: 'See, Petrus, the lovely picture, how he hovers, like an eagle!'

"Unforgettable is another experience when, in 1908, we were on the Guglia di Brenta. Perry-Smith knew the peak already and showed me the way as I went ahead. But for once he was mistaken and we had to go back. I was in a bad position and saw that I must trust to luck to come out safely. He too was in a risky spot, and I called to him to unrope as, in case of a fall, he could certainly not hold and there was no point in two men instead of one going down. His indignant answer still echoes in my ears: 'What do you think I am, man or beast? Either I hold you or I drop with you.' If I had not known what is meant by mountain friendship, it was then apparent. Is it any wonder that, despite his mistakes and weaknesses, I loved this man like a brother?"

⁸ A. Kunze, *Mitteilungen des SBB*, No. 6; *Bergsteigen in Sachsen*, 43.

⁹ R. Fehrmann, "Meine Seilfahrten," *Bergsteigen in Sachsen*, 112.

- Updated. *Tante* (Torsteinnadel), S.E. angle (V). O. Perry-Smith, alone.
 August 2. *Grosser Wehlturn*, old route (IV). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith, H. Schueller.
 September 10. *Torwächter*, old route (VI). O. Perry-Smith, A. Kunze, H. Schueller.
 September 12. *Oberer Ganskopf*, old route. H. Schueller, O. Perry-Smith.
 September 13. *Kleine Herkulesäule*, old route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, H. Schueller.
 September 17. *Höllenhundspitze*, old route (V), and *Vexierturm*, old route (VI). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith, A. Hoyer, O. Elsner.
Erse, Lamm side (VI). O. Perry-Smith, R. Fehrmann.
 September 19. *Barberine* (Jungferstein), old route (VI)¹⁰. R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.
 September 24. *Brandscheibe*, old route (V), and *Honigsteinnadel*. O. Perry-Smith, H. Schueller.
 September 27. *Kleiner Prehischkegel*, N. side. R. Fehrmann, H. Schueller, O. Perry-Smith.
 September 28. *Rauber Turm*, old route (IV). O. Perry-Smith alone.
 October 2. *Talwächter* (Feldstein), Pfeiler route (V). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith, H. Schwede.
 October 3. *Jäckelfels*, old route (IV), N. *Pfaffenschluhtspitze*, old route (III), and S. *Pfaffenschluhtspitze*, S. route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, alone.
 October 4. *Hirschgrundkegel*, old route (IV). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.
 October 15. *Kelch*, old route (VI). O. Perry-Smith, F. Wendschuh, H. Göpfert.
 October 31. *Kleiner Wehlturn*, E. wall (V). O. Perry-Smith, A. Hoyer.
 November 20. *Zitronenkopf*, old route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, alone.
 December 3. *Schieferturm*, old route (VI). O. Perry-Smith, A. Hoyer, F. Koppasch.
 December 12. *Verlorener Turm*, old route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, alone.

In August Perry-Smith visited the Lombard Alps. "I climbed the Cima Tosa alone and met some people from Graz. The man [George F. Goetze], a climber and skier, asked me whether it would be dangerous to take him up the Guglia. He had lost some fingers, frozen on the Schneekoppe in the Riesengebirge. He had recently fallen in the steep south couloir, and seemed to doubt my ability to lead him up the Campanile Basso. Of course, I had never been on its summit, but I had really learned to climb and knew just what I could do without much danger. The commencement of the route at the top of the couloir close to the S.E. edge led up to a wide ledge on the E. face, where Preuss started his ascent. From here we climbed across the N. face to the W. shoulder. Then up a crack on the N.W. edge to a narrow ledge leading to a piton and a

slight overhang. Then straight up the N. face to the summit. At that time I don't think any guides [Tita Piaz, 1902.] had made the climb. We roped down the N. face and again on the S. face near the E. edge, thence glissading the whole way down the 700-ft. couloir at an angle of 40 degrees.

"The gentleman from Graz and I became great friends and the next winter we did the Sonnenwendspitze (I think) on skis. At that time they rode on a single alpenstock and did not fall often. I made Christies and, very foolishly, sometimes Telemarks. I wasn't very good then, but got down without any broken bones. I then went to Schreiberhau in the Riesengebirge [now Polish Silesia], to my future wife's home, the Neue Schlesische Baude. We had good skiing from October until June, a wonderful Abfahrt to Schreiberhau with speed sometimes approaching 70 miles an hour."

1906

- February 19. *Vorderer Torstein*, Perry-Smith variant (III). O. Perry-Smith, alone.
 March. *Domgipfel*, Perry-Smith route (III). O. Perry-Smith, alone.
 March 18. *Höllenhundspitze*, W. *Vorturm*, old and N.W. routes (III), *Central Vorturm*, old route (III). A. Hoyer, O. Perry-Smith.
 March 26. *Vorderer Torstein*, N. route (V). O. Perry-Smith, alone.
 March 27. *Grottenwand*, old route (III). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.
 April 6. *Amiselspitze*, old route (V). O. Perry-Smith, R. Fehrmann.
 April 7. *Wilder Kopf*, old route (VI). O. Perry-Smith, R. Fehrmann.
 April 9. *Wehlturn*, old route (V). O. Perry-Smith, R. Fehrmann, H. Schueller. *Mittlerer Gansfelsen*, gully route (IV), *Hinterer Gansfelsen*, gully route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, alone.
 May 20. *Grosser Wehlturn*, Hünig route (VI). W. Hünig, O. Perry-Smith, W. Lehmann. *Höllenhundspitze*, E. *Vorturm*, old route (V). O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig, W. Lehmann.

The ascent of the Grosser Wehlturn by the S.E. wall (Hünigwand) by W. Hünig and W. Baudisch on May 13, 1906, ushered in an important period of climbing in the Elbsandsteingebirge. It was witnessed by Perry-Smith¹¹, who congratulated the pair and plied them with questions as to its difficulty. They were proud of the interest shown by one of the best climbers of their mountains. Oliver, however, had noted and pointed out to them that their route deviated somewhat from the "Great Line" of Fehrmann's concept, and it was decided to rectify this in a new ascent. A week later he joined Hünig's party, bringing with him a professional photographer, although his faulty German did not at once make his intentions clear. But they hoisted the photographer, his rucksack, a bulky camera with plates, and a large tripod to a proper viewpoint on the Kleiner Wehlturn. The higher peak was then reascended, up the final wall and

10. R. Fehrmann, *SSB Jahrbuch*, 1914-15: *Bergsteigen in Sachsen*, 52.

11. W. Hünig, *Jahrbuch für Touristik*, 1937-38, 48.

the overhang to the summit, while six pictures were taken which later appeared as a postcard series. The peak was traversed and the photographer retrieved.

May 27. *Jungfer*, old route¹². W. Hünig, O. Perry-Smith, W. Baudisch.

In a letter to R. Fehrmann, Perry-Smith wrote: "Yesterday was a day for me which I shall never forget. Herr Hünig and I went to the Schrammsteingebiet where Herr Hünig ascended the *Torwächter als erste*. Then we ascended together the *Jungfrau*, both climbing at once. Hünig led and I followed close behind in order to back him up. Three meters from the summit we stood together in small footsteps with smooth rock in front and nothing at all for the fingers to hold. The summit was gained by shoving Hünig over the smooth rocks until he could grasp the top with his fingers. Baudisch, another fine climber, came after us in fine form. . . The *Jungfrau* is the most difficult rock that has yet been climbed. It is harder than the *Barbarine* or the *Schrammtorwächter*." On the summit block it took them two hours to drive in safety-rings. Hünig climbed on Perry-Smith's knee, then on his shoulder, but still could not reach the top scarcely a meter away. Only when Perry-Smith raised him with outstretched arm could he grasp the peak with his right hand and pull himself on to the highest point.

June 3. *Chinesischer Turm*, N.W. route (V). O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig.

R. Fehrmann. *Schiefe Zacke*, S.E. angle (V). O. Perry-Smith, alone.

June 7. *Amboss*, old route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, F. Goetze.

June 24. *Spannagelturm*, N.W. angle (VIIb). O. Perry-Smith, A. Hoyer.

July 1. *Schiefer Turm*, E. angle (VI). O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig.

July 15. *Kanzelturm*, Perry-Smith route (VI). O. Perry-Smith, A. Hoyer.

September 1. *Kleine Zinne*, N. route (V). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

September 3. *Dreifingerturm*, S. route (VIIb). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

September 8. *Vorderer Torstein*, W. route (V). O. Perry-Smith, J. Kehling.

September 9. *Tenfelsturm*, old route (VIIb). O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig, R. Fehrmann. [Considered at this time the most difficult climb in the range. F. Wiessner is of the opinion that on this ascent Perry-Smith reached a point in free climbing technique that is close to the limit of the possible.]

September 10. *Blaisstock*, Fehrmann route (VI). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

October. *Daxenstein*, N.E. route (III). O. Perry-Smith, alone.

October 3. *Kanzelturm*, N.W. angle (VI), and E. route (VI). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

In this summer Perry-Smith, now a member of the Austrian Alpine Club, was at Sulden and, with the guide Zischg, made the then unthought

of traverse Marltgrat-Ortler-Zebbru-Königspitze in a day of 15.5 hours. He was in such great form that he placed the guide behind him. As late as 1939 the older guides still spoke about it with awe.

"I traversed the Gross Glockner with George F. Goetze, of Dresden, sometime after he fell or slid down the couloir on the south side of the Guglia di Brenta. I hired a guide and we went up the ordinary route [Hoffmanweg] and came down an arête to the long [Pasterze] glacier leading into the valley, getting into a nasty lightning storm which I will always remember. This was just after the King of Saxony made the ascent. I think it was in 1906."

"In 1906 I walked around Mont Blanc to Courmayeur. Then over the St. Bernard to Visp, where I took the train to Zermatt. Knubel was glad to see me and invited me to make a climb with him. I told him I wanted to go up the Unter Gabelhorn, and over the Wellenkuppe to the summit of the Ober Gabelhorn. I am not sure, but think it was the first ascent of the Ober Gabelhorn by this route. Knubel was so pleased that he wouldn't take any money."

The Matterhorn N. wall was also on his program¹³. From Zermatt he sent a postcard marked with the proposed route to Fehrmann, telling him to come immediately. This extraordinary document is still in the possession of the Gipfelstürmer Club. Nothing seems to have resulted from this invitation and the problem remained to be solved by Toni and Franz Schmidt a quarter of a century later. Perry-Smith's mother died in this year. In this period he was made an honorary member of the Rohnspitzler Club, a Dresden climbing group.

1907

March 13. *Hinterer Gaisfelsen*, S. route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, R. Fehrmann.

March 29. *Dürrschladel*, old route (V), and *Kleine Grenzsturm*, old route (II). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

March 30. *Herkulessstein*, old route (I). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

April 1. *Winkelturm*, N. angle (VI), and S.W. angle (VI). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig.

April 7. *Kleiner Falkenturm*, old route (V). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig.

April 8. *Osterturm*, Fehrmann variant (V). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

1908

July 26. *Höllenhundspitze*, Perry-Smith route (VI)¹⁴. O. Perry-Smith, R. Fehrmann.

August. *Jortanskoen*, new S.E. route (V). O. Perry-Smith, A. Kunze, W. Hünig.

¹² R. Fehrmann, *SBZ Jahrbuch*, 1914-15; *Bergsteigen in Sachsen*, 56; *Jahrbuch für Touristik*, 1934, 36 (facsimile of Perry-Smith's letter to R. Fehrmann).

¹³ *Jahrbuch für Touristik*, 1934, 24.

¹⁴ *Bergsteigen in Sachsen*, 63.

the overhang to the summit, while six pictures were taken which later appeared as a postcard series. The peak was traversed and the photographer retrieved.

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June 3. *Chinesischer Turm*, N.W. route (V). O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig.

R. Fehrmann. *Schiefe Zucke*, S.E. angle (V). O. Perry-Smith, alone.

June 7. *Ankoss*, old route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, F. Goetze.

June 24. *Spannagelturm*, N.W. angle (VIIb). O. Perry-Smith, A. Hoyer.

July 1. *Schiefer Turm*, E. angle (VI). O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig.

July 15. *Kanzelturm*, Perry-Smith route (VI). O. Perry-Smith, A. Hoyer.

September 1. *Kleine Zinne*, N. route (V). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

September 3. *Dreifingerturm*, S. route (VIIb). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

September 8. *Vorderer Torstein*, W. route (V). O. Perry-Smith, J. Kehling.

September 9. *Tenfelsturm*, old route (VIIb). O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig, R. Fehrmann. [Considered at this time the most difficult climb in the range. F. Wiessner is of the opinion that on this ascent Perry-Smith reached a point in free climbing technique that is close to the limit of the possible.]

September 10. *Blössstock*, Fehrmann route (VI). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

October. *Daxenstein*, N.E. route (III). O. Perry-Smith, alone.

October 3. *Kanzelturm*, N.W. angle (VI), and E. route (VI). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

In this summer Perry-Smith, now a member of the Austrian Alpine Club, was at Sulden and, with the guide Zischg, made the then unthought

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1907

March 13. *Hinterer Gausfelsen*, S. route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, R. Fehrmann.

March 29. *Dürrschelndel*, old route (V), and *Kleine Grenzsturm*, old route (II). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

March 30. *Herkulesstein*, old route (I). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

April 1. *Winkelturm*, N. angle (VI), and S.W. angle (VI). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig.

April 7. *Kleiner Falkenturm*, old route (V). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig.

April 8. *Osterturm*, Fehrmann variant (V). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith.

1908

July 26. *Höllenhundspitze*, Perry-Smith route (VI)¹⁴. O. Perry-Smith, R. Fehrmann.

August. *Jordanhorn*, new S.E. route (V). O. Perry-Smith, A. Kunze, W. Hünig.

12. R. Fehrmann, *SBB Jahrbuch*, 1914-15; *Bergsteigen in Sachsen*, 56; *Jahrbuch für Touristik*, 1954, 36 (facsimile of Perry-Smith's letter to R. Fehrmann).

13. *Jahrbuch für Touristik*, 1954, 24.

14. *Bergsteigen in Sachsen*, 65.

- August 2. *Brückenturm*, old route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig, B. Henning, R. Fehrmann.
 September 20. *Mönchstein*, N. crack (VIIb). O. Perry-Smith, R. Fehrmann, R. Greter.
 October 11. *Haupt-Drilling*, old route (VII). O. Perry-Smith, A. Hoyer, W. Hünig, B. Henning, K. Kopf, E. Klar.
 October 18. *Muschelkopf*, old route (VI). O. Perry-Smith, A. Hoyer, E. Klar, K. Kopf.

In a letter to Fehrmann, dated October 12, 1908, Perry-Smith wrote: "On September 30 I went from Dresden to the Drilling Needle and saw that it was possible from the rear. On October 9, Hoyer, Hünig and I met and told Löschner [Paul Löschner, one of the best climbers of the time, fell to his death three months later.] that we intended to climb the Drilling. He said that he had tried already and knew it was impossible. On that day we did not succeed either, and naturally many people laughed at us. On October 10, in the afternoon we were again at the Drilling, bringing two alarm-clocks. Hoyer, Hünig, Henning, Kopf and Klar accompanied me. At 1.25 a.m. on October 11 the alarms went off and I had to douse my companions with cold water to awaken them. At 6:30 we had begun the climb from the back, leading to the block from which previous attempts had been made.

"Hoyer stood beside the smooth groove, Hünig on his shoulder, while from the side I shoved Hünig higher and finally held him on my hand until he secured a hold and could overcome the difficult spot. We then reached a narrow ledge 12 m. above the starting point, put in a ring, and I went ahead. After a traverse to the right and 5 m. upward, Hünig advanced and climbed on my arm. About 5 m. below the top he met difficulty, and I followed with hard work. Just as I was below him in a small step he shot down, fell on my back, then through the air. His rear-end struck the rock with a bang and blood streamed from his head like a cloud-burst, reddening the stone. I expected to fall with him, but he soon sat up on the ledge and cursed God and the world in general. As so much blood had been sacrificed, it seemed my duty to advance, particularly since there were observers below, some carrying the black flag with death's head of the Schwarzer Kamin [the Dresden club of which the party were members.] After many attempts and placing a ring I ascended, traversed to the right, and at 2:30 reached the summit and planted our flag. The others came up on the rope, and the ascent would have been impossible without such comrades. The Drilling is 31 m. high, much higher than I thought, and now I have shut Löschner's mouth."

During the summer Perry-Smith and Fehrmann went to the Dolo-

mites¹⁵, first to the Rosengarten group, where they made the first ascent of the S. face of the Stabellerturm (Vajolet) on August 19. "One morning in the Rosengarten I made up my mind to make a new route on the Stabellerturm. Near the S.W. edge, maybe 150 ft. up, was an overhanging crack. There was a loud yell from below 'Das ist nicht der richtige Weg.' 'Jawohl,' I said, 'Ich weiss, but I am making a new route up your Stabellerturm.' In a few minutes I had climbed the overhang, and the guide looked astonished and left. It was not very difficult. In about half an hour I reached the summit, descended the W. face a little way and crossed over to the E. wall of the Delago and up the famous Pichlriess, which looked more difficult than it was. I led the whole S. face and did not use any pitons. I let Fehrmann lead the way up the Delago."

Their next objective was the N. wall of the Kleine Zinne (Piccola Cima di Lavaredo). It is split from top to bottom by two vertical chimneys, the eastern of which was conquered by Helversen and Innerkofler in 1890. Ever since 1903 Fehrmann had longed to make a new route through the western crack, but now storms defeated them. An exploratory ascent was made by the ordinary W. face route and, during descent, when 30 m. below the Zsigmondy chimney, Fehrmann was twice struck by lightning, but was held on the rope by his companion. They had no better luck on the Grosse Zinne and departed for Molveno.

On August 28 they ascended the Guglia di Brenta (Campanile Basso) by the S.W. face route which now bears Fehrmann's name. Perry-Smith states, however, that he led on this [his second ascent], but that since Fehrmann was the first to sign the summit book, the latter was assumed by later climbers to have been the leader.

1909

- May 12. *Zuckerhut*, N. crack. O. Perry-Smith, A. Hoyer.
 June 1. *Grosses Spitzer Horn*, S.E. variant (V). R. Fehrmann, O. Perry-Smith, A. Fehrmann.

Not to be defeated, Perry-Smith and Fehrmann returned to the Dolomites¹⁶, in this summer being rewarded by perfect weather. Gaining the hut from Innichen on August 15, they spent the remainder of the day exploring and marking with red chalk the lower reaches of their proposed route on the N. face of the Kleine Zinne. On the following morning they completed the new ascent up the W. chimney in 4.5 hours, Fehrmann leading throughout. "The technical difficulties were the greatest

15. 'Stabellerturm; I. Besteigung über die Südwestwand'; 'Guglia di Brenta; I. Durchkletterung der Südwestwand bis zum grossen Vorbau an der Westseite,' *Öst. A.Z.* (1909), 72; *R.M.* (1912), 343, (1927), 29; E. Castiglioni, *Dolomiti di Brenta* (route 175 d), 358, the ascent being rated continuous 4th degree with a section of 5th degree.

16. 'Ein neuer Nordweg auf der Kleinen Zinne,' *Öst. A.Z.* (1909), 259; A. Berti, *Le Dolomiti Orientali*, 482.

PLATE 85

Mönchstein. Start of north crack (VIIb), the first ascent of which was led by Perry-Smith, September 20, 1908.



PLATE 86

Mönchstein. First ascent of north crack (VIIb) (left of highest point) was led by Perry-Smith.





PLATE 87

Falkenstein. Photo shows Perry-Smith leading first ascent of south crack (Blitzreiss, VI+), November 11, 1913; on traverse to start of crack.



PLATE 88

Falkenstein, South crack.

- August 2. *Brückenturm*, old route (IV). O. Perry-Smith, W. Hünig, B. Henning, R. Fehrmann.
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16. 'Ein neuer Nordweg auf der Kleinen Zinne,' *Gr.A.Z.* (1909), 259; A. Berti, *Le Dolomiti Orientali*, 462.

either of us have ever met with in the Alps, but not reaching the extreme limits of difficulty." Perry-Smith adds: "We then crossed the Rosengarten from east to west and headed for the nearest railroad and Zermatt. I took my friend up the Matterhorn [Perry-Smith's third ascent], Zinal Rothorn and Weisshorn."

They continued to Chamonix. Making a late start from Montanvert they went up the Grépon as far as the Mummery crack. "It was too late to climb to the summit. We returned to Montanvert. Alois Pollinger, sitting outside at table, told us that Josef Knubel, Mr. Geoffrey Young and H. O. Jones were at the Plan des Aiguilles. We went over and asked Josef what he intended climbing next day and he said the Grépon. I told him we had just come down and that we intended to climb it also, but did not know the way from the Plan des Aiguilles across the Nantillons glacier and would like to follow him. He said to ask his boss, Mr. Young was very nice, and said he was always interested in guideless climbers. Next morning, after crossing the glacier, we climbed a steep ice slope to the top. Knubel, Young, Jones and the two Lochmatters were waiting for a fall of séracs to cross the glacier. I was standing in ice steps close to the top and Fehrmann was, for some reason, waiting below. It wasn't long before a huge block of ice came rushing across the glacier and passed close to us and down the ice slope directly toward Fehrmann. I pulled him up as fast as I could and he also ran up the ice steps. The block of ice just missed him. We then went on to the commencement of the fairly steep couloir leading to the Mummery Crack. There was a foot of new snow and all the rocks had a heavy coating of ice. The other parties said they would not go up the Grépon. Knubel stood in doubt. I told him I would go ahead. After 150 ft. upwards my rope came to an end. Fehrmann asked if he should come up. I said 'No, tie Young's rope to mine,' and then went up another 150 ft. to a point below the crack. I made the rope fast and called the others to come up. When Mr. Young arrived, he laughed and, after looking at the ice-covered rocks, said: 'Now what are you going to do next?' I replied that I would show him in a minute; took off my rucksack and climbed up until I could look into the narrow Mummery Crack, and saw that it was iced on both sides. I could easily have gone up without standing on anyone's shoulders. Although Fehrmann wanted to come up, for diplomatic reasons I called Knubel and quickly stood on his shoulders and got one foot in the crack. Knubel gave me a good shove and I was soon at the breakfast place, Josef coming up at once. We pulled up the rucksacks, and Young, Jones and Fehrmann came up one at a time, secured by Josef and myself. We ate breakfast, and after Josef and I had a good drink from my bottle of cognac he said:

'Well, now, I have gotten my courage back; I will lead the climb.' I am sure Josef could have climbed this stretch just as well as I did, but believe he wanted to test my ability. Fehrmann and I followed and we were soon on the rock needle summit. Mr. Young wanted me to climb down the final crack on his new route from the Mer de Glace." This was the first guideless American ascent. Young¹⁷ later refers to Perry-Smith as "one of the finest of transatlantic climbers," and in those far-off days there were few Americans who merited such praise.

Perry-Smith had already made two explorations of the N.E. corner of the Weisshorn. "Mr. Young wanted to know if I knew of any new routes, so I told him I was sure I could lead a new one directly up the N. face, over the lower part of the huge ice pinnacle seen from Randa. He told me to meet him there. Fehrmann and I went to Dresden and I returned. After four days in the train I got back to Zermatt and, as the weather was good, Mr. Young wanted to start right away. We did." Perry-Smith, Young and Knubel climbed the mountain by this route on August 31.

"The north face of the Weisshorn discovered the persistent tracks of Oliver Perry-Smith. We had already met upon the Grépon, where the relish with which he handled several inches of snow on rock holds had made Knubel's and my perishing fingers ache yet more to watch. He had also been one of Knubel's first friends in the wood-chopping days. Our combination, for any fresh attempt upon the north face, seemed pre-ordained . . . we called him Cortez because circumstances interfered with his living longer in America." The ascent was made from a sleeping place on the Bruneegg horn. "Our fluent progress up the ridge was checked at the second hour by a call for breakfast from Cortez, who was not called so because he was often silent up on a peak. I have seen him ballast his sack with any number of chocolate boxes, and a cedar-chest of cigars. It was only judicious to redistribute such a burden from time to time." Young adds: "A very long steep climb, and it certainly entailed, as we found it, more physical labor than any other ascent in my recollection."

Perry-Smith comments: "We did not climb the N.E. corner, but went up to rock ridges and crossed the high ice pinnacle some 20 ft. up its N. face and on to the final steep ice slopes, where steps were cut six feet apart, saving much time in reaching the summit. I didn't like Mr. Young bringing his guide with him, as I wanted to lead the first ascent of the N. face myself."

17. *A. J.* 23, 168; G. W. Young, *On High Hills* (Weisshorn chapter). At the A. C. Centenary dinner in London in 1957, Young told the present writer that he still had a photo of Perry-Smith hanging in his home. Perry-Smith ascended the Weisshorn five times in all: with Knubel (1903); once with two Swiss climbers from Basle, Heimbach and Krettinger; once alone; with Fehrmann; with Young (1909).

1910

October 23. *Grosser Falkenstein*, W. route (VIIc)¹⁸. M. Matthäus, O. Perry-Smith, H. Wagner.

Richard Pötzsch, of Dresden, accompanied Perry-Smith to the Valais in this year, the latter mentioning extreme difficulties met with on a guideless ascent [Oliver's second] of the Dent Blanche.

This was Oliver's last climbing season in the High Alps. He was then 26 years old. If, as has been said, the measure of a mountaineer rests in his willingness to repeat climbs, his record shows: Weisshorn (5), Matterhorn (3), Dent Blanche (2), Zinal Rothorn (2), Wellenkuppe (2), Obergabelhorn (2), Guglia di Brenta (2), Kl. Zinne (2).

1911

September 3. *Nördlicher Schrammturm*, N.W. route (VI). M. Matthäus, Perry-Smith, K. Ullrich and one other.

Free descent, as an alternative to roping down, had become the custom after 1905. Perry-Smith had accomplished this from the *Torsteinnadel* and, in 1913, even from the *Hauptwiesenstein*. The greatest climbs up to this time had been of the *Esse* (1903), *Barbarine* (the local Guglia di Brenta) and *Höllenhundspitze* (both 1905), in which he took part, and of the *Schrammtorwächter* (1905) and *Teufelsturm* (1906), on both of which he led. Oliver once made a night ascent of one of the most difficult towers, carrying up a bicycle which he left as a surprise for a following party.

1913

May 4. *Glatter Turm*, old route (V). O. Perry-Smith, R. Keiler.

July 8. *Glasergrundturm*, W. angle (VIIc). K. Ullrich, O. Perry-Smith, A. Loos.

September. *Hallenstein*, W. route (VI). O. Perry-Smith, R. Christophe.

September 18. *Daxenstein*, N.W. angle (VI). O. Perry-Smith, R. Pötzsch.

September 23. *Hauptwiesenstein*, S. angle (VIIa). O. Perry-Smith, K. Ullrich, R. Pötzsch.

September 30. *Nördlicher Wiesenstein*, S.E. angle (VIIa), and S.W. wall (VI). O. Perry-Smith, R. Pötzsch.

October 1. *Johanneskegel*, S.E. angle (IV). R. Pötzsch, O. Perry-Smith, S.W. angle (V). O. Perry-Smith, R. Pötzsch.

October 2. *Daxenstein*, S.E. angle (VIIa). O. Perry-Smith, Frau Pötzsch, R. Pötzsch.

October 6. *Zarathustrastein*, N.W. angle (IV), and E. wall (IV). O. Perry-Smith, R. Pötzsch.

October 7. *Daxenstein*, W. crack (VIIb). O. Perry-Smith, R. Pötzsch.

October 10. *Herkulesstein*, W. route (III). W. Pfeilschmidt, O. Perry-Smith.

November 11. *Falkenstein*, S. crack (VI). O. Perry-Smith, R. Fehrmann, A. Fehrmann. [The S. crack, the *Blitzriss*, well above 6th degree, very narrow on a vertical wall, is 80 m. high, and was a daring first ascent of Perry-Smith. It is most spectacular to do and see — Wiessner.]

These are the last recorded climbs of Perry-Smith. For several years he had been equally interested in skiing, and soon gained international recognition in this sport as well. As the first foreigner to compete successfully against the hitherto unapproachable Norwegians, his phenomenal strength made him particularly formidable in cross-country runs. His keenness made him a jumper. His style was not graceful, onlookers always expecting him to fall, but his jumps were long and safe.

In 1909 the first German Skimeisterschaft was held at Braunlage in the Harz mountains and, on the evening after the cross-country race, competitors of several nations sat together in the inn. In those early days there were few rules and it was not generally understood that, on a narrow track, one must make way for a pursuer calling "Bahn frei." The story was told that it once became necessary to say: "If you please, let me pass!" Perry-Smith, making his first appearance in competition, spoke up: "Well, that's polite, but if I overtake anyone I shout 'Rrauss' with all my might, scare him almost to death and slip by. Reciting a sentence would be too much for me."

Oliver was aloof next day on the slope. There was then no starter, no telephone, no list of names and no fixed order of starting. He stood at one side, looking into the air until his attention was called to start. Pulling a large bottle out of his pocket, he took a deep drink, turned to bystanders and asked: "Who will hold my bottle?" He then made a long jump, taking off like a catapulted frog and, when the second and third trials came up, repeated the procedure with the bottle and a plummet landing. He was second in the 17-km. race, but could not place in the jumping. At that time, like the Germans, he sported a beard.

In January of the same year he competed at Oberwiesenthal in the Erzgebirge on the Czech frontier, winning the cross-country race of 13.6 km. and defeating the Norwegian, Rudie. In jumping he came in fourth, after three Norwegians, thereby for the first time becoming champion of Saxony, beating out Edler v.d. Planitz, twice Saxon champion and the 1920 German Skimeister. There he met Franz Adolph, his future father-in-law, owner of the Neue Schlesische Baude at Schreiberhau in the Riesengebirge. Adolph took him to Schreiberhau where, during the winter-sports week, Perry-Smith gained second place in the jumping with 28.5 m. At the end of January, 1910, he won a local jumping contest there.

18. A. R. Koppasch in *Der Fährtenführer* (1925); *Bergsteigen in Sachsen*, 73.

At the end of January, 1911, Perry-Smith was second in the Deutsche Skimeisterschaft at Oberwiesenthal. A harsh critic, writing in *Der Winter*, called him "An American in whose blood the record-demon courses. He is as unruly as a stallion, and a go-getter. He is not a companionable sportsman and his successes fortified by alcohol do not command our respect." He also entered a jumping contest at Altenberg, Saxony. In 1912 he brought to the Riesengebirge the first three-grooved jumping skis¹⁹.

January 25-26, 1913. The competition for Saxon championship took place at Johanngeorgenstadt on the Czech border. Perry-Smith won the 15-km. event over the Norwegian, Tschudi, and was third in jumping. In the Nordic combination he again became Saxon champion.

February 8-11. The German championship was held at Oberhof in Thuringia. Perry-Smith was third in the cross-country race, two Norwegians leading. *Der Winter* said: "The Norwegian supremacy has been broken by the American. His technique is nothing to look at; a galloping man of boundless energy." He placed seventh in the jumping with three leaps of 26 m. The Nordic combination was won by the Norwegian, Bergendahl, Perry-Smith taking second place.

1914. German Skimeisterschaft in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Perry-Smith was fourth in the cross-country event and third in jumping with three leaps of 33 m. In the Nordic combination he was second and received the prize of honor of the Norwegian Consulate in Munich. He then spent five days with Hannes Schneider, training at St. Anton. Each morning was given over to cross-country runs, followed by hot bath and massage, with jumping practice in the afternoon. Oliver took no part in this last, believing it was not worth the risk of injury so close to a contest. He thought little of style; cross-country was for him the decisive end and jumping only a troublesome adjunct.

A week later he won the cross-country event in the Austrian championship at Kitzbühel. C. J. ("Cil") Luther, the ski-historian of Partenkirchen and Oliver's close friend throughout their skiing careers, reported in *Winter*: "A fine victory gained through rigid training. I could observe his progress precisely and know that, with typical American persistence, he gave his all. Perry-Smith also won the jumping with three leaps of 34.5 m. His victory in this championship is no accident. In the course of the last year he improved himself with tenacious energy, evidently supported by the sporting qualities of his nationality." Afterward Perry-Smith and Luther sat at the German-Austrian frontier waiting for the night express. Oliver complained of earlier criticism, every fifteen minutes

saying that he was never a drunkard, and, after each assertion, downing another glass of beer!

At the Holmenkollen races at Oslo, Norway, in 1914, Perry-Smith, representing the German Ski Verband, was considered the most dangerous of the German contenders. Interest in him was tremendous during the 50-km. race and became greater when Oliver, starting as No. 5, completed three-quarters of the course over completely unknown terrain without being overtaken. In the last quarter he was the victim of inexperience in courses of such length, and fell back into fourteenth place, giving out from intestinal cramps. He had heard that kola tablets increased endurance but, instead of taking one or two, devoured a whole package, and to quench the resulting thirst downed an entire liter of milk! In the 15-km. race he took fifteenth place, sixteen minutes behind the Norwegian victor. In jumping he reached 31 and 32 m., and was fifteenth in the Nordic combination.

He was the first to introduce English training methods to the Riesengebirge, attracting many eager young people to the Neue Schlesische Baude. Oliver, at this time, drank nothing stronger than lemonade, even at Christmas and New Year celebrations, when among the winter-sport guests champagne flowed in streams. Assisted by the Adolph family new jumping slopes with very high take-off platforms were constructed, from which Berger, later German champion, made in Oliver's time the first jumps of 41 m. "He directed a fresh wind from the outside world to the still dreamy eastern mountains, which put the younger generation on its feet. With an almost primitive drive in sporting accomplishment he was an inspiring companion. His was the tall, muscular stature of the American pioneer; one knew he could not be defeated."

During 1912-13 for the most part he represented the Dresden Ski Club, but sometimes the Windsbraut Club of Schreiberhau. In 1914 he brought to the Riesengebirge the first light-weight *langlauf* skis and the first Bergendahl bindings, for which he himself designed the boots. He was often an object of curiosity, particularly to customs officers, as he carried his ski outfit²⁰ in a case suspiciously like a coffin! His remarkable balance was once shown when he loaded a tray with drinks, held it at arm's length and skied down a slope, coming to an abrupt stop before a group of ladies seated at table.

In October, 1911, he had married at Schreiberhau Agnes Adolph, daughter of the well-known sportsman and hotel owner. Their first son,

19. Perry-Smith was constantly experimenting with various types of ski and, as far back as 1909, was using a very short one in ice-crochets of the Dolomites.

20. A friend noted the contents: "On top were the jumping skis with all sorts of attachments, along with the carefully waxed cross-country skis. Then, wrapped in the ski costume and underclothing, still warm from use, came a two-litre bottle, tea paraphernalia, ski wax, soldering-lamp and bindings; while below, as a sort of filter, right against heavy underclothing, were dress clothes, with two pairs of extra skis at the very bottom."

Oliver III, was born there and was photographed on skis when 18 months old. The shadows of war were creeping over Europe. Perry-Smith was not yet 30 years of age. In September, 1914, he and his wife left for America and never returned.

His old companion, Hans Pohle²¹, penetratingly sums up his character: "Perry-Smith was a man full of extremes and surprises, true to his friends, retiring with strangers, sometimes tender and lovable as a child, sometimes raging in anger. He was frivolous and untroubled, foolhardy and audacious, and did things on a grand scale as long as his means lasted. His only fear was of the German police. His picture rounds out with mention of the unique fractures of his German speech. And so it is understandable that he is not forgotten by us in Saxony, in Austria, in Switzerland and Norway."

Here we may leave Oliver Perry-Smith²², remembering him as the most agile American climber of his time, the first man to consistently climb 6th degree walls and the first American skier to succeed in international competition. He would be the first to say: "The Deed is everything, the Renown nothing." One final note: In his 80th year he still cherishes the dream of reascending the Guglia di Brenta!

21. H. Pohle, 'Erinnerung an den Skimeister Oliver Perry-Smith,' *Jahrbuch für Touristik*, 1954, 24.

22. Perry-Smith had four sons, all of whom became expert jumpers and cross-country ski-runners. His youngest son, Crosby made both F.I.S., and Olympic (Sweden, 1954) teams was in the 10th Mountain Division in Italy, and for six years after college served as technical adviser to the Army in winter and summer mountaineering. He writes: "I am sure father could be considered as one of the early pioneers in climbing and skiing. It seems that he is not interested in recognition of the many feats he accomplished. Climbing was an obsession with him, and for this reason — along with natural ability and courage — he was probably one of the finest this country has produced (classical climbing)."

PLATE 87

Hauptwiesenstein. Perry-Smith leading. His route on the south angle, September 23, 1913, is VIIa.



PLATE 90

Schiefer Turm (VI). Perry-Smith leading. He led the first ascent, December 3, 1905, as well as the first ascent of the east angle, July 1, 1906.