

ARTHUR CECIL PIGOU

1877-1959

ARTHUR CECIL PIGOU was born in 1877 at Pembury in the County of Kent. He was a scholar at Harrow, where he was contemporary with Sir Winston Churchill, George Trevelyan, and Leo Amery. He entered King's College, Cambridge, as a Major Scholar, where he remained as Fellow, Professor of Political Economy, and Elder Statesman until his death on March 9, 1959.

Endowed with an intellect of the highest order, rare insight, and utter integrity, he brought to the study of Economics not only a masterly and comprehensive analysis upon which further discovery could be firmly built, but also an unfailing sympathy and awareness of the human situation and human needs which transformed an academic study into a living challenge. It is small wonder that Alfred Marshall chose Pigou, at an early age, to be his successor and second holder of the Chair of Political Economy, and that his most important work was entitled, *The Economics of Welfare*. The Economists' hope, he once wrote, was 'that by carrying out well and truly this task of positive analysis, this

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economic anatomy and physiology, they might help other men, better trained than themselves for the practical work of government and administration, to fashion remedies or palliatives for the many evils they descry'. In all his teaching, his books, his evidence before Royal Commissions, his letters to *The Times*, that was his abiding inspiration : that was the secret of his influence, and the measure of his greatness.

Pigou's first introduction to climbing came during Cambridge Reading Parties in the Lake District. His first season in the Alps was in 1907, and by 1911 he had ascended the Laquinhorn, Argentière, Rimpfischhorn, Titlis, Portjengrat, Allalinhorn, Trifhorn, Ober Gabelhorn, Dent Blanche, Finsteraarhorn, Zinal Rothorn, Matterhorn, and Weisshorn. All these were climbed with guides, but were only a preliminary to his seasons of guideless climbing, in which he most rejoiced. In 1912 he went to Norway with Philip Noel-Baker, and among other climbs traversed the complete ridge of the Store Skagastolstind on a 'thirty-nine-hour day'; and he repeated the visit in 1913, the year in which he was elected to the Alpine Club. In 1914 he was caught for a few days at Zermatt at the outbreak of war, and had a night out with a slow party below the Solvay Hut. On this occasion he sang, to keep up the spirits of the party—though he always maintained that the only way he recognised God Save the Queen was that people stood up ! After the First World War, with J. H. Clapham and others he led the Dôme de Miage, Périades, Tour Noir, Mont Velan, and in 1919 after climbing the Grande Casse, Moine, and the Grands Charmoz, he shared in an ascent of the Rochers route over Mont Blanc with George Mallory. Between 1920 and 1922 Pigou led the Ruitor, Tour Noir, Périades, Grande Ruine, Aiguilles Dorées, Grands Charmoz, and Géant, and a number of other lesser peaks. In 1923 I joined his party for my first season in the Alps, and was introduced to his own peculiar methods and ethos. Route-finding was not one of his major qualifications, and it was as well if another member of the party had consulted a guide-book and a map beforehand. On one occasion we entirely failed even to locate the Cresta arête of Monte Rosa, and on another Pigou set out from the Jungfrauoch steadily downward towards Concordia when our objective was the Jungfrau. In his notes he speaks of 'roping down a waterfall' and 'an unpleasant traverse across a rotten face', and he had some amusing stories about 'nights out'. But the joy of climbing with Pigou came in the adventure, the partnership, and the achievement. In 1923 we climbed the Riffelhorn by the Matterhorn Couloir, the Rothorn, the Requin, Mont Blanc, and the Matterhorn. This last climb was made in thick mist and a snowstorm,

For Pigou himself never committed himself to a pitch or to a mountain unless he felt quite sure it was within his powers to overcome it, or that there was a reasonable way of retreat. Although he had at one time and another held on the rope a considerable number of the inexperienced who had fallen off, he never had a serious accident. He was meticulous about belaying and other proper precautions, and we all knew that to take an unjustified risk to him was sheer bad mountaineering. Consequently we trusted him, and in this trust lay a great measure of our enjoyment. Moreover, he was always glad when others (if he thought them competent) wanted to lead. An expedition was, for him, an occasion where everyone played an essential part: he did not care for 'passengers'. In 1924 we climbed the Gspaltenhorn, Finsteraarhorn, and traversed the Grands Charmoz; and with another party Pigou traversed the Bec de l'Invergnan by a difficult and rotten route.

1925 was a critical year. After traversing the Mont Tondu, we next day crossed the Béranger and reached the second summit of the Dômes de Miage. It was at this point that the first signs appeared of that fibrillation of the heart which checked, and finally ended, his climbing career. At the time he thought that the indisposition was due to mountain sickness, and after a few days' rest we joined Philip Noel-Baker at Haudères. ♦ Choosing the Petite Dent de Veisivi as a 'walk', Pigou decided to cut up the hillside before the usual vallon, and twelve hours later we relaxed at last on the summit, after he had led throughout an entirely new route over snow-covered rocks. It was only when the rope was finally removed at the foot of the *route ordinaire* that he admitted to exhaustion and allowed himself to be conveyed on a mule from the valley to Arolla. Yet after a day's rest we climbed the Pigne, and two days later the Mont Blanc de Seilon. On this last expedition he was clearly tired, and Noel-Baker and I left him on the Col de Serpentine and finished the climb alone. Mist enveloped us as we rejoined him, and we followed the wrong tracks. After a series of disastrous failures to find the right route, we finally struck it at 8 p.m., climbed the Pas de Chèvres in the dark, lost our way lanternless in the stony glen and steep woods above Arolla, and at 11.30 p.m. sat down to wait for daylight. It was Pigou who arose a few minutes later to continue the infernal descent, and who led us soon after through the hostel door of the Hotel du Mont Collon. It was an astonishing *tour de force* for a sick man. Three days later he led what Noel-Baker has described as the finest climb of his career, an ascent of the face of the Aiguille de la Za in icy conditions. Here was a climb in which he excelled. Using great ingenuity to enable his two companions to safeguard him and

later we climbed Monte Rosa and he led the Wellenkuppe—Ober Gabelhorn traverse. This was his last big climb. In 1926 he led a party of novices up small peaks around Engelberg, and in 1927 likewise from Pralognan, though this time he reached the summit of the Grande Casse and made attempts on the Blaitière and the Tour Noir, both foiled by bad weather. But his notebooks speak of fainting attacks and sudden exhaustion, and in 1928 he was so seriously ill that no one thought he would return to the Alps. Yet his spirit was undaunted, and in 1929 he twice reached the Petersgrat, and accompanied me to Zermatt, where he took the greatest delight in securing Hans Brantschen to lead me on four fine expeditions. He himself toiled up to Täschalp and the Schönbühl Hut to greet us on our descents. In 1930 we went out again together, and content now to leave leading and snow-plugging to me, he managed the ascent of the Sustenhorn, the traverse of the Löchberg from Goeschenenalp to Realp, a crossing after new snow of the Löt-schenlücke from Eggishorn to Fafleralp, and that of the Petersgrat to Lauterbrunnen. His delight in achievement was as great as ever, as was his care for the party's safety. Thereafter he went out year by year to share and enjoy in retrospect (and to finance!) the expeditions of his younger friends, notably those brilliant climbs done by Wilfrid Noyce in 1937 and 1938. After the Second World War he was persuaded to sample travel by air, and to his great joy was able to climb vicariously for another ten years. In 1958, at the age of 80, he still walked slowly, but with great distinction, up and down the street of Zermatt; but he fell ill there, and it was only with difficulty that he managed the journey home. A lesser spirit would have given up the struggle long ago.

If Pigou was known to a small circle of friends on the mountains, he is remembered as a host at his house, Lower Gatesgarth, which he built in 1912, at the Honister end of Lake Buttermere, by a long line of guests, young and old. Four large Visitors' Books record, over a period of nearly fifty years, the doings of all those who in reading parties, families, climbing parties, honeymoon couples (a rare privilege), or as passing visitors, were welcomed, regaled, and refreshed in that solid house of Cumberland stone, poised in its enchanting surroundings. Life there was informal, but never idle; easy, but never empty. The young were encouraged (but never compelled) to perform heroic deeds on the hills, and were rewarded with Medals of the First, Second, or Third class at the evening meal, if their host judged that they had been worthy of it; or were compelled to wear the Brass medal 'for distinguished incompetence' if they had failed to tie up his boat properly

them was unbounded. On one occasion one of them brought a dog up to Lower Gatesgarth, which escaped from its moorings one morning and slaughtered a sheep in the garden just at breakfast time. The owner, utterly distraught, staggered into the room and announced the catastrophe, almost in tears. ' Sit down and have breakfast, you are late ', said the Prof., and disappeared. Twenty minutes later he reappeared, having walked to the farm, interviewed the irate farmer, and paid him the full value of the sheep.

Pigou contributed a number of articles to the ALPINE JOURNAL, and in 1952, clad in borrowed raiment, he was persuaded to attend the Club Dinner with members of his old climbing parties. It was a happy occasion. But perhaps the happiest moment of his life came in 1953, when the telephone at Lower Gatesgarth rang at midnight to announce to his guest, Mrs. Wilfrid Noyce, that on the eve of the Coronation Everest had been climbed. For him it was the reward of a long and intimate friendship ; and he always rejoiced far more in the successes of those whom he loved than in any of his own.

H. C. A. GAUNT.