

EARLY DISCOVERERS

XVII

LOUIS AGASSIZ (1807-1873)

Two notes recounting comments on specific subjects by this great pioneer of glaciological research have already appeared in this section of the *Journal of Glaciology* (Vol. 1, No. 5, 1949, p. 294, on glaciation, and Vol. 1, No. 9, 1951, p. 510, on "extrusion flow"). Nevertheless it seems appropriate to add a third which has been prompted by an article in *Die Alpen* (Jahrg. 37, No. 4, 1961, p. 237) which describes one of three old inscriptions cut into the rock on the old track leading to the Grimsel Pass.

We publish this by permission of Dr. M. Oechlin, the Editor of *Die Alpen*, and with considerable assistance from Herr Th. Hauck of Porza, Lugano, who found the inscriptions in 1931. Thirty years later he revisited the locality with the guide, H. Bysäth of Innertkirchen, but they could only find one of the three carvings; this is illustrated below.

The old Grimsel path lies to the west of the road from Meiringen to the Grimsel Pass. A short distance south of Handeck one gains access to the old path and to the Helle Platte—a steep ice-polished rock face into which Agassiz' name has been cut. The exact position of the inscription is shown by the circle in the photograph. It is not known who cut the inscription, but it was probably inspired by the very pronounced glacial striae on the smoothed rock surface.

It is not inappropriate to give a few personal details about Agassiz as they have not been mentioned in either of the two notes cited above.

Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz' native town was Môtiers which lies close to the Lake of Neuchâtel; he emigrated to the United States in 1843, and in due course became Professor of Natural History at Harvard University, a post he held until his death thirty years later.

He was buried at Mount Auburn (Cambridge, Mass.). The headstone on his grave shown in the illustration on the next page is a boulder from the moraine of the Lauteraar-Unteraar



Glacier, which is not far from the place where Agassiz' favourite observation post, the Hôtel des Neuchâtelois, used to stand.

A full account of the life of Agassiz appears in the two-volume work *Louis Agassiz; his life and correspondence* edited by his widow Elizabeth Cary Agassiz in Cambridge, Mass., and published by Macmillan and Co. in London in 1885.

