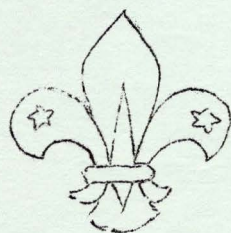


44



Venture

44

DECEMBER

1973

NUMBER

THIRTEEN

VENTURE 44. A sort of magazine, by, for, and about, the 44th
Gloucester (S.T.R.S.) Venture Unit

NUMBER THIRTEEN

DECEMBER 1973

Editor: Ian Simmons

Art: John Sweet & F.H.

UNIT OFFICERS

V.S.L.	F.Henderson
A.V.S.L.	W.R.Spear
Secretary	John Barnes
Asst Sec	John Price
Chairman	Ian Simmons
Treasurer	George Sánchez
Executive	John Sweet
	Martin Berry
	Angus King

CONTENTS

Editorial	2
The Matterhorn . . . by Steve Chalkley . . .	3
Scotland 1973 . . . by John Barnes . . .	6
Half Term camp. . . by John Price. . .	11
V.S.L.'s notes	13
Personally speaking . . by Andy Messan . . .	15

--O--O--O--O--O--O--O--O--O--O--O--O--O--O--O--O--

EDITORIAL

As the new editor of Venture 44, I would first of all like to thank the V.S.L. for all the help and advice he has given me. One doesn't realise the amount of work that goes into such a magazine until one undertakes to do it! Our leader has been editing and printing Venture 44 virtually single-handed over the past four and a half years, and I would like to formally thank him for all that he has done in this cause.

Since the last edition, produced nearly a year ago, the Unit has continued its evolutionary progress. The hut has taken on a new dimension, and is almost completely safe and water-proof, with internal furnishings and facilities which almost rival those of the Bowls Club! The numerical strength of the Unit is building up from an all time low of thirteen, and I think it is assured of a good future. The change of headmaster in April has not restricted the Unit. Under Mr Stocks we enjoyed his 100% support in everything we did, and we are confident that we can be assured of Mr Heap's continued support also, even though he has not the same personal commitment to scouting that Mr Stocks has.

One of the sureties of the Unit's future development came in July, when Mr Bill Spear agreed to become our assistant leader. Mr Spear joined the Rich's staff straight from Durham University and immediately became absorbed in many spheres of school life, not the least the Venture scouts. Humble as a novice, witty, but nevertheless resolute and sensible in leadership, he quickly made a favourable impression on all the members of the Unit. His willingness for hard work, his ungrudging giving up of valuable time, and his popularity, I'm sure will lessen the burden on our leader's shoulders.

On closing, I would like to wish all readers a very merry Christmas, and an extremely prosperous New Year.

The next edition of this magazine should be produced at the end of February, and any contributions of any sort will be gratefully received.

Ian Simmons

The Matterhorn

by Steve
Chalkley



If you asked a kid at primary school to draw a mountain, the chances are it would end up looking like the Matterhorn. The sole distinction of this peak is that it stands alone, it is big, and it looks like a mountain - jagged, pointed, and snow crested. It is not technically a difficult mountain to climb, as fixed ropes adorn the cliffs and much literature describes the route. We climbed it by the Honli ridge - the easy way, if you like. This is the ridge between the North and East faces, and the height is 14,500 ft, with Zermatt at the base, at about 6000ft. You climb (walk) first through meadows of cow-bells, goats, Julie Andrews, eidleweiss, up to

an alpine hut at 10,500 ft. This is very pleasant in swimming trunks and big boots, and 35 lb of ropes, ice axe, crampons, slings, etc, on your back. There are two pubs on the way up too!

After paying an extortionate fee of 9 francs, and having a meal (?) - prawns, chicken soup and bread, we turned in at 6 o'clock. "Long day tomorrow" we thought, but it turned out to be a long night - due to the altitude and lack of acclimatization, and a bottle of wine beside the bed! We did not sleep at all that night - a strange sensation - we were warm, drowsy, full up, but despite this we could not sleep.

At two in the morning we started off on the difficult part. One starts early in case of emergencies, and to give oneself more time on the route, and to cross frozen-over crevasses before the sun comes up. Still in the dark, we reached the first cliff. I was flabbergasted, as a party with a guide ahead of us was shooting straight up it. We found out why - there was a fixed rope, and we had missed this and had climbed rock of very severe standard with ice plastered on it. We didn't make the same mistake again! The route up the first 3,000 ft is very mixed - short cliffs with iced-up slopes between. The conditions were bad, and we were climbing in fine clouds, but there were a great deal of powder snow avalanche coming off the faces. We reached the Solvay Refuge hut at 13,500 ft at 11 o'clock, after passing a bean of wood below a slab - all that is left of Edward Whymper's camp of 100 years ago on the first ascent

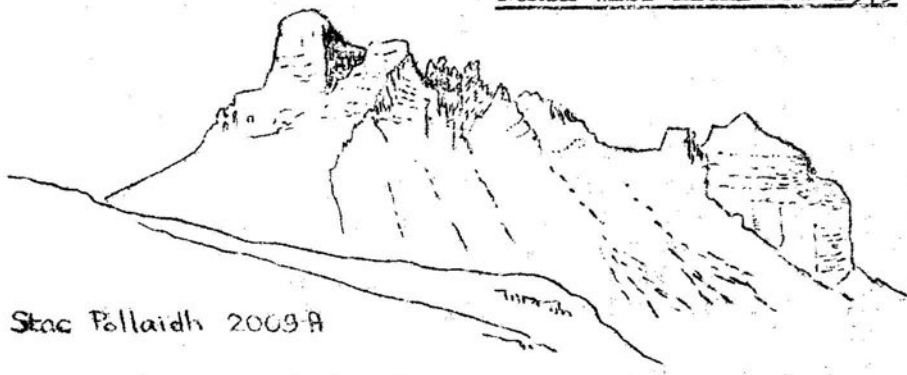
By now we constantly needed an ice axe for chipping out holds. We had worn crampons all the time. Suddenly we were above the cloud, a fantastic panorama of mountains could be seen, like islands sticking out of a misty sea. The awesome north face on our right dropped away 4000 ft, and beyond were the Dente Blanche, the Trifhorn, and the Obergablehorn; on our left, the Monte Rosa peaks. The head of the Matterhorn reared above us, and all that was left was an icefield at 60° for about 400 ft, and then the most exposed climbing that I have ever done, where the arete seems to hang out over the north face, poised high over the glacier, three quarters of a

mile vertically below. This was all on fixed rope, on to the summit icefield, 100 yards, steeper than the previous one, and by far the most dangerous part of the climb. The angle is about 70° , and it was made difficult by the powder snow over the surface. I was tied to one end of the rope, and Stuart on the other. In turn we would lead out 150 ft of rope, and stab the axe into the snow to bring the other up. The last 300 ft took an hour, and then we were on the summit, a knife edged snow arete. As I traversed along it, I knew that if I slipped over the north or south face, Stuart would have to jump over the opposite side to counteract, as the ice axe belays would be unsafe. We sat for ten minutes, nibbling biscuits, before starting on the long journey down.

Descending is a slow business as each run-out of rope has to be belayed, and it is easier to fall descending than climbing, especially when your thinking is slowed down by tiredness and altitude. We descended only about 600 ft in three hours. It was getting late, and we knew that we would be spending the night on the mountain, so we made for the Solvay hut, missed our route, and found ourselves 60ft vertically above it. We banged in a piton, and abseilled on to the roof. It was getting dark, and very cold, and our gloves and boots were freezing. We were desperately tired, not having slept for 36 hours. Amazingly we slept well, in spite of powder snow avalanches, and wind gusts threatening to blow us off the face. In the morning, apart from defreezing our gloves and boots, we were able to get away fairly quickly, and the rest of the descent passed without incident, as we were able to follow in the tracks of other ascending parties. Later, looking up from Zermatt, with a litre of lager in my hand, it seemed a completely different world, and it was hard to realise that we had really done it!

—O—O—O—O—O—O—O—O—O—O—O—O—

Since Steve's alpine adventures he has taken part in an important Himalayan expedition, and we hope to be publishing the full story in the next edition.

NORTH WEST HIGHLANDS 1973

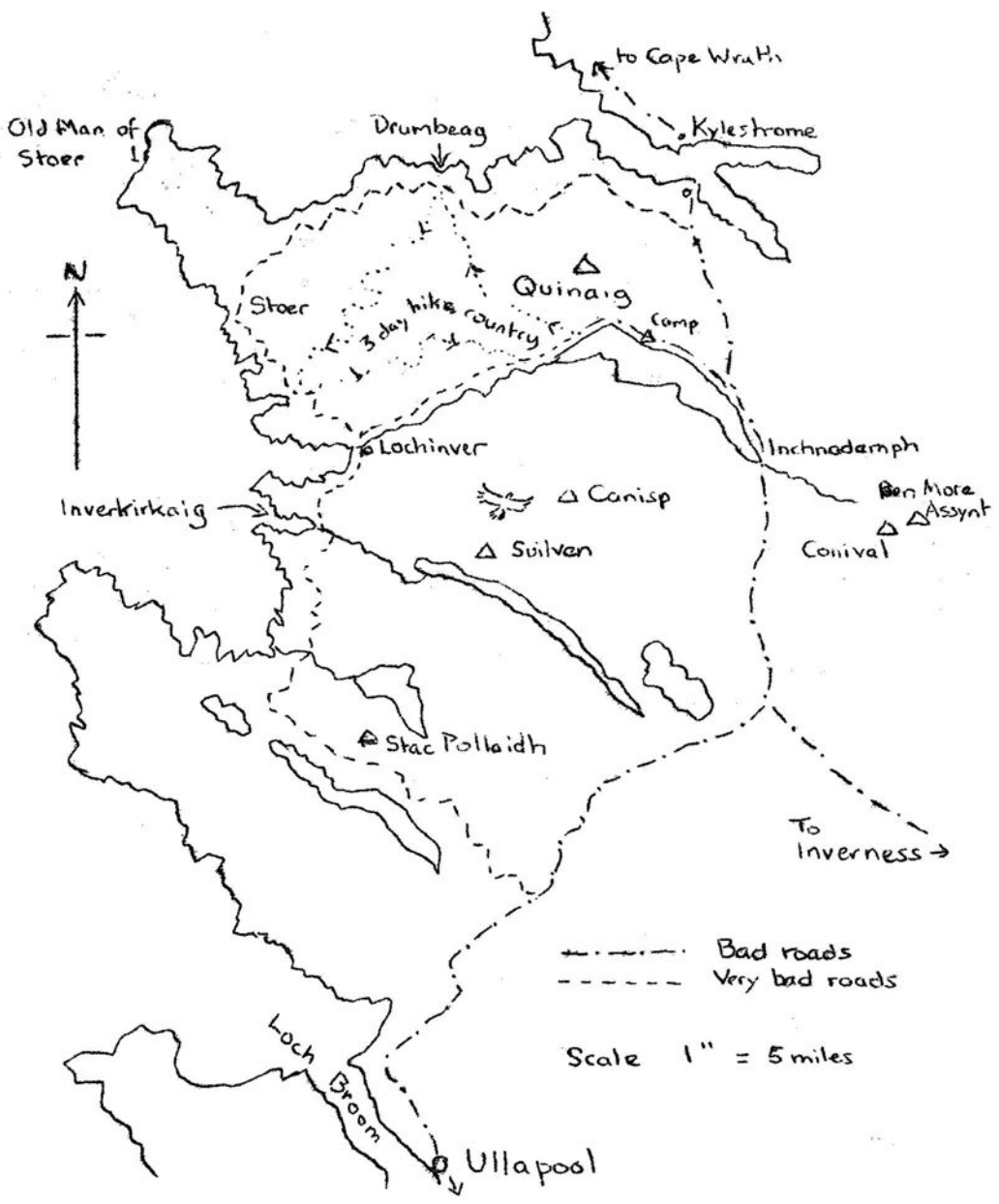
Stac Pollaidh 2009-A

At 0930 hours on August 20th, 1973, the party consisting of Mr Henderson, Mr Spear, Ed Badham, Mart Berry, Jake Davies Stan Gorman, Tim Holford, Andy Messan, Roger Smith and myself assembled at school to make the final preparations for the long journey to North West Scotland - destination Inchnadamph

We set off about an hour later, equipped with gallons of fly repellent, and travelled until early evening, with a few stops at motorway service areas. We stayed the first night at Dunkeld, over 400 miles from Gloucester, but still many miles from our final destination.

By late afternoon the next day we were nearing our destination, driving slowly along single track roads, and finding the trailer with our kit a nuisance when having to reverse in the face of oncoming traffic. We began to enquire about the positions of campsites in the area, but as none of our party seemed very adept at foreign languages, when we stopped at tourist information offices, we either drew a blank or went away confused. Eventually we ended up in a field near a sea loch at Inverkirkaig.

The day after our arrival, we set off on foot for the distant slopes of the spectacular mountain Suilven (2399ft). Our long walk took us through grouse country, along the bank



Old Man of Stoer

Drumbeag

to Cape Wrath

Kylestrome



Stoer

3 day hike country

Quinaig

Camp

Lochinver

Inchnadamph

Inverkirkaig

Conisp

Ben More Assynt

Suilven

Conival

Stac Pollaidh

To Inverness →

Bad roads
Very bad roads

Scale 1" = 5 miles

Loch Broom

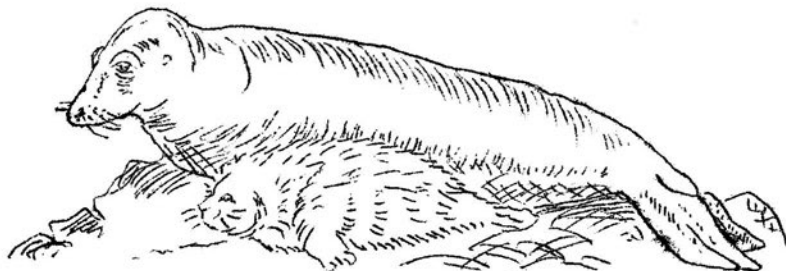
Ullapool

of a burn with many salmon pools, out onto deer stalking country. (We had enquired whether stalking was taking place and learned that our route would be all right). As we neared the summit we were aware that the midges were out in force in the warm still air, and they refused to leave us even when we enveloped ourselves in fly repellent. It was whilst we were on this mountain that we saw our first deer, and were lucky enough to see a golden eagle gliding into Glencanisp below.

The following day we set out to ascend another mountain, Stac Pollaidh (2009ft). This climb was made exciting by the fact that mist closed in on us, and after scrambling round an array of fantastic turrets, we found the summit was only attainable via a small, but nevertheless precariously situated rock climb.

The next day we moved on through Lochinver to a proper campsite, luxurious compared with our previous one. There were showers, toilets, a shop nearby, and a sandy beach. Many of us quickly took advantage of these facilities, and feeling refreshed spent the afternoon on the beach playing punch, and swimming. Then came the ceremonious throwing into the sea of a fully clothed person, who did not seem to take kindly to it at all!

Whilst at this site we walked along the coast to the Old Man of Stoer, a 220 ft sandstone sea stack. On our journey along the cliff top we saw many seals in the sea below us. We watched them disappear the instant that a stone thrown from the cliff hit the water surface hundreds of yards away.



After a few days we moved inland and camped beside Loch Assynt, which was to provide ample scope for our fishing fans. Our leaders set off to climb two peaks in the Quinaig massif, and next day we all set off to climb the northern peaks of the range. We reached three tops, before being forced down by bad weather.

We planned to make Loch Assynt our base for several days. The weather was not too good, with cold wind, mist and rain, and as a background we had the eerie and mournful cry of the red throated divers echoing across the loch. During our time there those of us who had not already done our three day hike set out on a prearranged route over boggy moorland. The party consisted of Roger, Mart, Stan, Andy and myself. The first day was easy, along well worn paths, and we camped near the settlement at Drumbeag. Next day, however, was a different story - there were no paths at all and our route was much interrupted by hundreds of lochans which were not marked on the map. We stayed overnight on a campsite, and made an early start - the next afternoon - after the casino had closed down. We met up with the rest of the party in the pouring rain driving along the road back to camp.

Whilst we had been away the rest of the party had been fishing, caving, collecting rocks, and had made the long trek to the top of Conival (3234ft) and Ben More Assynt (3273ft). We left the lochside on the day we returned from the hike to spend the night near Ullapool. Next day, we headed south via Loch Ness to Fort William, where some of us climbed Ben Nevis and saw the Ben Nevis fell race at close range. Then again we continued south, pausing only to see some bears on the bonny banks of Loch Lomond, and camped at Gretna Green. Some of us risked crossing the border that night to visit the first inn in England. We arrived home next afternoon after a most enjoyable expedition, which passed off smoothly without major incident.

John Barnes

N.B. How many minibuses come back from Scotland with scratches on it from the claws of a large brown bear?

Scottish Footnote

"Almost everywhere in the Highlands below 2000 ft there are vast herds of midges (Chironomidae) which affect the movements of mammalian life, including man, to a considerable extent. The stags are terribly irritated by midges while their antlers are in velvet. Midges are doubtless preyed on by several species of dragonflies, by the frogs which are numerous on the wetter moors and by the palmated newts. But nothing keeps pace with the ubiquitous midge which has been the subject of enquiry by a special committee and a research team. The place of the midge in human ecology is such that a greatly increased tourist industry to the West Highlands could be encouraged if the midge could be controlled."

From The Highlands and Islands (Fontana, New Naturalist.)

The Cormorant

The common cormorant or shag
 Lays eggs inside a paper bag
 The reason you will see no doubt
 It is to keep the lightning out
 But what those unobservant birds
 Have never noticed is that herds
 Of wandering bears may come with buns
 And steal the bags to hold the crumbs

Anon



HALF TERM OCTOBER 73

(This Epic perhaps loses a little of it's character when translated from the original german - or was it french?)

No shorts, no flagpoles, no knobbly knees,
 But guitars and airbeds, and such luxuries.
 They loaded the van, and John Kearsley's car,
 And studied the map for the nearest bar.

"A broken down cottage - a ramshackle shed"
 Would be their new dwelling, or so M.B. said.
 It was quite cold and dusty, it wasn't the Ritz,
 There was something about it that caused them
 to twitch,

When they arrived there, they put up a tent
 They rushed for the bedrooms, and all smelt the
 scent
 Of fanciful cooking, of "Smash" being mixed,
 That Stan was preparing for dinner at six.

During the daytime, they rode and they caved,
 They canoed down the river, they felt rather
 brave,
 When climbing up cliffs, and abseiling back down,
 Then a drive into Monmouth to look at the town.

John Sweet became expert at grounding canoes,
 Whilst several amongst them acquired a bruise
 In a delicate place, from a spell on the back
 Of Trigger, or Cupid, or some other hack.

During the evening, they'd sit round the fire,
 Bill sang "Twice daily", the rest formed a choir
 Raising welsh anthems roofwards, and songs of good
 cheer -
 Darrall got so excited, he felt rather queer.

V.S.L.'s Notes

There have been a great number of changes in and around the Unit since the last edition of this magazine. Some of them are of such real significance that they strike at the very heart of the Unit, and may well result in a change in the nature and character of it.

The most obvious and tangible change is in the internal construction of the hut. Over £100 has already been spent on this project, which even now is not fully complete. Once it had been decided to replace practically all of the inside fittings, and literally raise the roof, it was quite revealing to discover just how many unsound and rotten pieces of wood, wire and plaster were holding up our temporal structure. They have now been replaced by stronger and sounder members, and the building should last for many years more.

Around the same time that the building was undergoing a major change, so was the Unit itself, in that we lost twelve members between January and July. It has been my practice in past editions to write a few words in appreciation of those who leave, but on this occasion it would require much more space than the editor would allow me, and so I will simply say that to lose Rowland Lloyd, Tim Holford, Pete Irvine, Ed Badhan, Phil Stroud, Nick Pearce, Jake Davies, John Williams, Dave Vale, Chris Ramstedt, Paul Hodges and Nigel Gosden was a great blow to the Unit. Seven Queen's Scouts there, the backbone of the Unit for three or four years.

The pillars of our intangible structure have been removed but our building has not fallen down, as the foundations are sure. However, as there are only thirteen invested members at present we must rebuild on a scale hitherto untried and it is up to the present senior members of the Unit to make sure that new members are brought to realise what it really means to be part of the 44th Gloucester Venture Scouts.

The Unit has also been affected in a different, but perhaps more significant way by the fact that Mr Stocks has left us. Over the years he has been a tremendous help to the Unit in a great many ways. His support and encouragement have been

vital in the development and prospering of Venture scouting in the school, and it is up to us all now to show his successor the value of this. Mr Heap was mildly surprised to learn several weeks ago that he has inherited the mantle of our official sponsor; let us hope that it is a mantle he will wear with ease and pride.

The final changes involve a new look in leadership. Mr Spear is now a warranted assistant leader, and we have a new secretary in John Barnes, who may, perhaps one day be as good a venture scout as his big brother was.....

-o-

ODD ITEMS

Recently added to our every growing list of activities; Archery: The deer of Sherwood Forest would be quite safe in the near vicinity of most of us, but John Barnes, John Sweet and Steve Davies might cause a hart or two to quiver.

Basketball: Narrow victory over the Churchdown Venture Scouts - result may have been a little different if we had used the proper rules rather than our own!

Rowland Lloyd has been spotted in Gloucester on leave from his basic training as a Marine officer at Limpstoke - a sadder and a wiser man, maybe.

Several members of the Unit have been involved in Glosaid work, and one or two are quite expert at getting large items of furniture down narrow staircases!

Still needed for the hut; carpets and mats, in any condition
two thick curtains for doors,
valve radio.

Anyone able to help in the above, please contact secretary or V.S.L.

PERSONALLY SPEAKING...

This is the first in what may become a series of articles in which members are invited to express their own views or ideas on subjects of their own choice. To start the ball rolling, Andy Messam.....

Being only a dilettante in the finer arts of scouting, I find it only within the realms of my knowledge to give a personal account of my thoughts and opinions.

In the summer months of the year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and seventy two, when the summer sun moved slowly across the sky, I took it upon my person to participate in the probationary period so generously offered to those wishing to obtain membership by our intrepid, dauntless, brave, fearless and - dare I say - debonair, leader. The primary recollection that I have of the hair-raising, nay, exhilarating activities in which I participated took place on a rocky outcrop where the perpendicular oolitic limestone cliffs have put dread into the hearts of mountaineers; such famous names as "Dougal" Partridge, "Fearless" O'Berry, Jake "The human fly" Davies, and even "Jumping" John Barnes. I refer, of course, to the S. W. face of Cleeve Hill. Why waste time and money on molehills like Everest, Matterhorn, Suilven, Quinaig, when local dubs pose greater problems for human endurance? This was the beginning for me of an exciting adventure which has not yet reached its conclusion. (Except when Shylock Sánchez attempts to periodically extort the sum of seventy pence!)

Following these exploits that Friday night recalled from the dim annals of human memory, I bring your attention to the fact that we also participate in such activities as shooting, (remember "Wild Bill" Stroud, and "Sundance" Jones? Canoeing - say no more - orienteering, and that old favourite, paper stacking. It doesn't all consist of pleasure, but the best things in life come in small quantities, with the less enjoyable things thrown in for good measure.

In a state of apparent disorder, and against the better judgement of many of the Unit elders, I was accepted, and en-

rolled in a ceremony noticeably bereft of religion and formal-ity - this seems to me to sun up scouting 44th style, where religious observances are allowed to take a secondary place, and needless formality is forfeited. At last I was a member of the coveted Rich's Scout brotherhood. It indeed fulfilled a hidden desire in me, and lived up to my every expectatiior.

Contrary to popular runour, there is no favouritism in the scouts (well - there may be a little, but it is hushed up before it reaches the ears of the general public). We all try to remain brothers in the fellowship created by our founder. The meagre prenisies in which we meet and partake in our many and varied activities may one day serve as an example to the whole world - I don't know what as, but the possibility exists anyway!

I would like to make it clear in closing this article that there are some factors which may cause dislike in my mind in relation to this Unit, but I still find it interest - ing being a member. Please note that any references to characters in this article are purely ficticious, and if any person is offended by those afore-mentioned references, it's just too bad! Peace and love, keep the scout flag flying!

-o-

EPILOGUE

It was the beginning of youth, the most wretched age of man. And rightly, because it is the falsest, most unreliable, most worthless. Those who haven't discovered this have been so false that they have deceived even themselves. Childhood, manhood, age, they can all be meaningful and real for us. Youth is something unworthy of men. A rootlessness, an irresponsible freedom of personality, a fertilising disintegration insincerity, falsity, in life itself - but unworthy of men. No doubt that's why all the hollow phrasemongers shout about it; they got on best then. It was their time. It was then that least was required of them, and the most offered.

Par Lagerkvist

The Eternal Smile.

