



THE HUT ON THE ZERMATT SIDE OF THE MATTERHORN.

FROM WHYMPER'S ASCENT OF THE MATTERHORN.

THE  
ALPINE JOURNAL.

---

NOVEMBER 1879.

---

AN ASCENT OF MONT MAUDIT. By H. SEYMOUR HOARE.  
Read before the Alpine Club, May 6, 1879.

**B**EFORE describing the first ascent of Mont Maudit, I ought, perhaps, to say a few words as to the history of the name and how it came to be confined to the secondary summit which now bears it. A hundred years ago anyone who mentioned 'le Mont Maudit' would probably have been supposed to speak of Mont Blanc itself. He would have been thought only a little behind the fashion of the time, which was learning to admire the great mountain, and no longer found it good manners to speak of it, like the English bishop of the previous century, as 'the hill called Maudit, or Cursed.' It therefore put aside the peasants' name of 'Les Monts Maudits' as the principal title of the great Alpine mountain, and confined it to the neighbouring but secondary summits, rising between it and the head of Glacier du Géant, and finally to the peak whose ascent I am about to describe—the Mont Maudit of modern maps and travellers, 14,668 \* feet. The slopes of this peak had been often traversed by explorers seeking a way to Mont Blanc, but we have satisfied ourselves by careful inquiry that, previous to our ascent, no one had been within several hundred feet of the summit.

We decided to spend the night of September 11 at the Grands Mulets, and started for that 'machine infernale,' as a friend of ours expressively calls the hut, about 11 A.M., in glorious weather. A friend bound for Mont Blanc, and accompanied by Peter Anderegg and a Chamonix porter, was to start with us.

---

\* By an error, which had its origin in the substitution during the engraving of a 7 for a 4 in Mieulet's map, its height has been sometimes exaggerated.

The fact of my friend not being a member of the Alpine Club enabled us to render him a service before starting, as there was a difficulty about getting a Chamonix porter to accompany a traveller up Mont Blanc with only one guide, and that an Oberlander. Davidson, however, was equal to the occasion, and sought an interview with the guide-chef in the inner penetralia of his bureau. I would I could reproduce his exact French, but for want of the power, I may state that it was to the effect that our friend, it is true, was not a member of the Alpine Club, but that the two who now had the honour of speaking with him were humble members of that Society, and were to be on the mountain the same day as the gentleman on whose behalf they had sought the interview, who did not wish to be overburdened with the regulation number of guides and porters. The guide-chef was amenable, and there shortly appeared at Couttet's hotel the stalwart youth with the generic name aforesaid. I am told that the next afternoon, after repeated discharges of heavy pieces of ordnance from Couttet's garden, our friend at the bureau on hearing an unusually loud one, inquired what it meant; on being told that a Monsieur with an Oberland guide and a Chamonix porter had safely returned from Mont Blanc, he shook his head and began to think all was not quite right, but when some two or three hours later a second discharge was fired, and he was told that it was to celebrate the return of his two interviewers of the day before, there was tearing of hair in the 'bureau des guides.'

I am glad to be able to add that, owing in great measure to the exertions of the French Alpine Club, these obnoxious rules were abolished before the commencement of the present season.

But to return to the Maudit: we followed the oft-trodden route past the Pierre Pointue. The ascent of the glacier, below the Grands Mulets, was last year unusually easy. Whether it may have been owing to very heavy falls of snow in the winter and early spring, or to the fact that almost continuous bad weather in August must have prevented the usual number of pilgrimages made in that month to the Grands Mulets and even higher, by the bulky tourists of various nationalities, certain it is that the surface of the glacier was more even this year than usual, and the snow bridges over the crevasses more numerous and more consistent than I have ever known them. Owing to this state of things we were enabled to wander about much as we liked, and unroped as far as the hut, a style of proceeding which exactly suited

Jaun.\* The Chamonix porter flitted about uneasily, and no doubt thought a great deal, but deferred what he had to say until our arrival at the cabane, where he lectured us seriously on the pace at which we had come from the Pierre Pointue, which he said was far too fast. We received his lecture with derision, being much elated at finding no other parties established at the Grands Mulets, and at the prospect of having it to ourselves for the night. Having dined, and flashed signals down to the valley below for the benefit of our friends at Couttet's, we turned in for the night. We were called shortly before 1 A.M., and looked out on a not very promising morning.

At 1.50 A.M. we were under way, and commenced the well-known laborious grind up to the Grand Plateau; the darkness of the night was aggravated by a dense mist, through which we plodded on. I was in the condition known as three parts asleep when a certain amount of excitement was infused into the two parties by a suggestion from someone that we were not on the right route. Not having taken the slightest interest in our route since leaving the Grands Mulets, I did not feel competent to give an opinion, but began searching in the knapsacks for a certain bottle of Marsala I knew of. I believe we had reached somewhere about the point where Chamonix guides are wont to inform the party under their charge that here travellers ordinarily partake of their first meat lozenge. Though it was only between 3 and 4 A.M. I found the wine-can an excellent substitute for the more conventional lozenge, and having started the bottle my example was soon followed by the rest of the party. This, however, did not solve the question of whether we were on the right route or not. It was carried unanimously that we were somewhere near the summit of the Petit Plateau; the Chamonix porter did not feel competent to fix our locality more exactly, and there were no visible tracks of former ascents to guide us. I heard Jaun talking mistily at the other end of the rope about some crevasses which would enable him to fix our whereabouts if he could only see them; but the upshot of it all was that we had to spend half an hour on the Petit Plateau in a dense fog, waiting for the arrival of the sun. I am told that to make a very early start

---

\* This season a roped party narrowly escaped an accident on this part of the glacier. A bridge gave way, and three out of the five went into the crevasse, whence they were extricated with some difficulty. The bridge was one which had been in constant use, and was therefore probably trusted without examination.—EDITOR.

is one of the cardinal virtues of mountaineering; truly in this particular instance virtue did not bring its own reward.

But it is soon sufficiently light to proceed, and we push on to the Grand Plateau, where we separate, my friend with Peter Anderegg and the Chamonix porter going to the right to ascend Mont Blanc by the Bosse, while our way is to the left towards the Corridor. The snow is deep and rather loose on the tedious slope, or rather ravine, which culminates in the Col de la Brenva, 14,111 feet, the highest point of the Corridor. The summit of Mont Blanc seems strangely near us on the right, but, as my friend, Mr. Schutz Wilson, has observed of the slopes above the Corridor on another occasion, the sun is shining dimly on dull green ice, which looks like hard work for the guides when we come to attack the Mur de la Côte later on. But our work lies to the left, and just above us is a nicely rounded snow summit, which I fondly imagine is our peak. I need hardly observe that my pet peak was not the summit of the Maudit, Von Bergen, observing grimly that that was 'weiter oben,' an expression which from an Oberlander may mean anything from one hour to a whole day's work. Just below the summit of the Corridor the guides deposit their knapsacks, and we turn to the left. At this part of our route we found the greatest care to be necessary, as an enormous cornice overhung the Brenva Glacier, and obliged us to keep well away from the Italian side. My previous experience in cornices had been confined rather to such as could be cut away by the powerful arm of a Lauener or an Anderegg, but this one was of a different calibre, for that grandest of all Alpine glaciers the Brenva disdains to culminate otherwise than in an imposing and substantial canopy. A loud crack under our very feet warns us to keep still more to the left, and startles even the imperturbable Jaun into suggesting a slight descent. We are soon on firmer ground, and see that there is no particular difficulty likely to stop us in the ascent of the final peak. This proved to be the case; the final slope leading up to some convenient rocks just below the summit is very steep and hard ice, but the rocks are good, and in  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hour from the Corridor we reach the summit of Mont Maudit, the height of which is correctly given by M. Charles Durier in his recent work upon Mont Blanc, as 4,471 mètres, just 1,200 feet lower than the highest mountain in Western Europe, and nearly on a level with the top of the Mur de la Côte. The view over the whole Mont Blanc district, especially towards the north-east, is magnificent. We look towards the Dru, but powerful field-glasses reveal nothing of the feats of rock climbing which must be

performed there. To the south-west is Mont Blanc, whose somewhat clumsily-shaped and rounded summit does not gain by comparison with gracefully tapering and spire-like Aiguilles. We build a small cairn, which Von Bergen further ornaments with a huge red pocket-handkerchief, and soon after 8.30 we commence the descent. The Corridor is quickly regained, and we turn our attention to Mont Blanc, the ascent of which today we find means continuous step-cutting from the foot of the Mur de la Côte to the summit. However, we relieve Von Bergen of his pack, and his axe is soon at work. After a very monotonous climb we spend but a few minutes on the summit of Mont Blanc, as we had intended to descend to the Pavillon de Bellevue by the Dôme du Gouter and the Aiguille du Gouter; but just before it would have been necessary for us to leave the ordinary route of descent to the Grands Mulets, I was beguiled into a glissade down a slope, which, though the guides declared it to be snow, I know for a fact was hard ice. Anyhow, I managed to lose my footing and fell, cutting two fingers of my left hand to the bone. This mishap decided us to abandon our original plan, and we accordingly descended to the Grands Mulets, the snow on the descent being in an abominably loose and treacherous condition.

At 3.45 we again left the hut, Davidson and I preceding the guides by several minutes. There were three or four parties on the Glacier des Bossons, under the charge of Chamonix guides; we had stopped to speak to one of them when a strange noise was heard above our heads, and on looking up we were aware of two falling bodies coming right at us — they were none other than Jaun and Von Bergen—who, seeing us some distance below them, and being determined to rejoin us, had chosen the most direct way by simply glissading straight down the glacier. The pious horror of the Chamonix guides as the Oberlanders shot past them was a sight to witness, and only increased Von Bergen's determination to show them how they managed those things in Switzerland. He finished up by shooting straight down an ice-slope, pulling himself up at the bottom on the brink of an enormous crevasse. It took him some time to extricate himself from this predicament, and he did not rejoin us until some distance lower down, not having gained much by this last piece of audacity. I will hurry over the remaining portion of the descent, as we did on this occasion, our haste enabling us to reach Couttet's hotel in time for the *table d'hôte*, and in 1½ hour after leaving the Grands Mulets.

In conclusion, let me recommend the Mont Maudit to anyone

who may find himself on the Corridor, and may wish to gain a more extended view over the range by a climb less monotonous and far less fatiguing than the ascent of Mont Blanc by the Mur de la Côte.

---

AN ASCENT OF ARARAT. By G. PERCIVAL BAKER.\*

**T**RAVELLING last year with my father through Persia and the Caucasus, we arrived at Tabreez, and there, in concert with two friends, arranged to attempt the ascent of Ararat. With some difficulty we managed to get made some rough alpenstocks, and providing ourselves with small hatchets and very large thick felted socks (which we put over our boots when the footing was slippery, and transferred to our hands when protection for them became necessary whilst we were clambering amongst boulders), we journeyed on to Kumarlu, a junction post-house on the military road of Armenia, between Tabreez and Erivan, whence the base of Ararat is distant about 35 versts, where we arrived on September 3. We set to work at once to secure a guide and horses, and to obtain what information we could about the mountain, so as to judge of the probabilities of success. We heard the same objections to the attempt as we did at Tabreez; but these were mainly repetitions of the well-worn tradition that no mortal could ever reach the top. The old Armenian post-house official, full of prejudice and superstition, was especially foremost in denouncing it most strongly as an impossibility. For guide, one Boghos, of most honourable repute (which we afterwards found was far from merited), was engaged, and he managed to find us horses, a matter of very great difficulty, as they were out on the plains at harvest work.

The next morning (September 4) we started again, and passing through the village to the right of the post-house, we turned a sharp corner to the left, and entered a track leading to the Araxes river, which we were obliged to ford, and after going through a bog of reeds, we had in view, some 3 versts to the S. W., Aralyk, the Cossack station, and the starting-point

---

\* The following account of an ascent of Ararat seems worthy of insertion, even after Mr. Bryce's recent narrative, as it shows that the mountain is accessible to any traveller with good legs and pluck, and also what risks are run in the descent by such travellers, if they are not mountaineers. Half the climbers of Ararat have come down it faster than they intended, and it is more from good fortune than anything else that they have all come down alive.—EDITOR.