

A week later we began another series of peaks and passes, and had great success, with thoroughly good work.

A few words as to sæters and their accommodation may not be amiss. As a rule, sæters are infinitely preferable to any Swiss mountain châlets it has ever been my misfortune to sleep in, and the horrors of an Arpitetta hut, with the pigs running in and out at night, do not often occur in the north. A sæter, too, is as a rule much more comfortable for an Englishman to stop a night at, than a farmhouse in the lowlands, where lazy men seem to delight in expectorating all over the floor. The girls at the sæters often take a pride in having their temporary habitation as cleanly as possible. Good milk is of course always obtainable, and curds half an inch thick, which, with a little sugar spread over, helps, I am sure, much to form good muscular tissue. The beds are rough, it is true; straw or hay with sheep and goatskin coverlets are the worst, but clean sheets are met with sometimes. Naturally enough the agile insects are often present, but never B flats; but there is a proverb about 'familiarity' and 'contempt,' and it is astonishing how true it can become even with respect to—fleas. Log-built huts are always preferable to those built of stone, mud, and sods, which are seldom wind or water tight; and if there be a boarded floor, one can be absolutely luxurious. A fire of birch logs soon dries wet clothes, and boils one's soup or chocolate, and makes one really happy.

THE DENT BLANCHE FROM ZINAL. By J. STAFFORD ANDERSON. (Read before the Alpine Club, Feb. 6, 1883.)

AFTER a stay of nearly a fortnight in the Bernese Oberland, which, owing to the atrocious weather, was principally spent in teasing the Grindelwald monkey, or criticising the daily visitors from Interlachen doing Switzerland in extravagant costumes and high-heeled boots, the monotony of these occupations being occasionally varied by watching the antics of a performing camel, who seemed quite at home in a mountaineering centre, the evening of Friday, August 4, found the Rev. F. M. Govett and myself, with Ulrich Almer, strolling up the much-neglected Turtman-Thal, *en route* for Zermatt. This little valley is, to my thinking, one of the loveliest in Switzerland, the combination of water, wood, and pasture, being all that one could wish, to charm the eye or refresh the soul.

Pollinger was waiting for us at Gruben in the comfortable and clean little inn, and led us the next day, by a new route,

over the little-explored region lying between Gruben and St. Niklaus. This route to Zermatt is an agreeable alternative for the oft-travelled and somewhat monotonous one between Visp and St. Niklaus, and I can strongly recommend it to active mountaineers, a short day only being required to reach Zermatt in time for table d'hôte.

Before leaving England I had arranged with my friend Mr. G. P. Baker that he should come out to me for a week's climbing if the weather were settled, and a telegram, in answer to one I had sent him from Leukerbad, awaited me at the Monte Rosa, saying, 'Coming at once, reserve Matterhorn.' To fill up the time and keep in training, Almer and I strolled up to the Riffelberg the following afternoon, and then up the Riffelhorn from the west, by what was evidently the wrong way.

The weather now appeared firmly settled, and I waited anxiously for Baker's appearance. Sunday and Monday passed; he was still coming; and two of the best guides in the country kicking their heels around, and roosting in a most melancholy manner; but I dared not start on any long expedition without him. At last, on Tuesday morning, August 8, he walked in from St. Niklaus, and we were soon engaged in earnest consultation. As we found that about thirteen people were going to sleep that night in the Matterhorn hut, we altered our intended arrangements, deciding to try the Rothhorn direct from Zermatt to the Mountet hut the next day, the Dent Blanche by a new route to the Stockje the day after, finishing up, if possible, from the Stockje to Zermatt over the Matterhorn, a rather *too* ambitious programme, as we afterwards found out.

Starting on Wednesday, August 9, at 3 A.M., it was 6.30 P.M. before we reached the Mountet hut, the direct change from the air of London to that on the Rothhorn being too much for Baker's serenity, but the slowness of the pace gave us every opportunity of enjoying what is well described as one of the finest rock-climbs in Switzerland. The mountain was in perfect condition, and, under the circumstances, we may fairly claim, I think, the *longest* time on record. We had the cabane to ourselves, and slept the sleep of the just, not turning out till seven o'clock the next morning, as we had only an idle day before us, which was spent in lying about on the rocks, reveling in the sunshine, drinking in the magnificent panorama spread before us, and now and then trying to catch its beauties in the camera. The *cirque* of mountains as seen from Mountet has, I think, few rivals, and was quite new to us. When tired

of looking at the view, we descended from the sublime to the ridiculous, and proved to demonstration that the best way of hitting a bottle stuck up on a rock is *not* to aim at it. Of course many careful examinations of the Dent Blanche were made during the day, and the chances of success or failure discussed *ad nauseam*, and always with the same result. 'It may be possible, but it does not look it.'

In the afternoon a German mountaineer and two of the Taugwalders turned up from the Trift, making our number eight, which, considering the size of the cabane, was quite enough for comfort. When, therefore, our provision-laden porter came up from Zinal with the news that a party of six was on its way to the hut, visions of a sleepless and uncomfortable night at once presented themselves. About four o'clock the weather showed signs of changing for the worse, and very soon heavy black masses of thunder-cloud came rolling up the glacier from the valley, gradually increasing in volume till they completely hid the Grand Cornier and Dent Blanche from view, and rain commenced to fall. When shortly before sunset the clouds lifted a little, we saw that the whole north-west face of the Dent Blanche was sprinkled with a thin coating of snow; what had been rain at our level had been snow on the mountains. Peter Taugwalder said to us, 'You won't get up there to-morrow, *now*;' and Almer and Pollinger, shaking their heads in a despondent manner, made us feel that the Fates were dead against us, and that it would have been more sensible on our part to have stayed in ease at Zermatt, than try to make difficult expeditions in such a season.

In our list of provisions, written partly in German and partly in French, which was read out for the amusement of the table-d'hôte guests at Zinal, we had included a fowl, principally to oblige Baker, who was very anxious to show us his culinary powers, which he said were very great, especially in the way of fowl. The art of cooking has no charm for me. I prefer the inglorious part of watching other fellows do this necessary evil, but, as far as I could see, Baker's method simply consisted in dropping the fowl into boiling water and prodding it with a fork at regular intervals, though I must confess that the result amply justified his reputation. There is a great absence of knives at Mountet, and one learns to the full the slippery nature of a boiled fowl when trying to carve it with a spoon.

Just as we were finishing our repast the party from Zinal appeared, and proved to consist of two Americans and an English clergyman with three guides. It was the first glacier

expedition of the Americans, and they did honour to it by attiring themselves most magnificently in regulation pith helmets, the rain droppings from which, trickling down, had deposited some of the colour of the green lining upon their faces. As they had to change their clothes in a space about three feet square, and afterwards sleep six in a bed, their ideas as to the jollity of sleeping out, and its necessity for such a pass as the Trift, must have undergone some little change, but the fact that they had an Almer for company seemed to give them great consolation. They told us afterwards that they had arranged with the Taugwalders to be *taken up* the Matterhorn at so much '*for the job*,' as they elegantly expressed it.

We got very little sleep that night, as we were packed like herrings in a box, and rose reluctantly about 3 A.M.

The night had been fine, the early morning gave every promise of turning into a perfect day for mountaineering, and we chatted over what was to be done, discussing almost everything in the neighbourhood (except the Dent Blanche), from the Trift to a new route up the Gabelhorn, and it was only on preparing to start for *somewhere*, in a most listless and apathetic manner, that we decided to make for the Col Durand. This, we argued, would give us, at any rate, a nearer view of the Dent Blanche, which looked aggravatingly beautiful in the clear morning air. Leaving the cabane at 3.50 A.M., we were soon fairly on to the glacier, Pollinger leading off at a great pace, and keeping well to the left to avoid crevasses. This gradually brought the north-west face of the Dent Blanche more and more into profile, its appearance decidedly improving as we advanced, and when we had been out about an hour, the rocks seemed so much more within the range of possibility that, after a hurried consultation, Almer said in a decided tone, 'We'll try it.' He had scarcely spoken when, the summit we were gazing at catching the first rays of the morning sun, its cold whiteness was suddenly transformed into a rosy flush—a solitary pinnacle of gold in the icy world around us. We accepted it as a good omen, and saluting the mountain with mock gravity, all indecision vanished, and with a '*Vorwärts und schnell*' from Pollinger we turned to the right, making straight for the second of two snow couloirs which we could see running up to the arête on its east face. As it became lighter, and we got nearer to our work, both the arête and the north-west face seemed to offer good chances of a conquest, causing one of us to make the remark, 'Why, there are half a dozen ways up;' to which Almer promptly responded, 'I should be quite satisfied if I could only see one.' At 5.30

we reached the foot of the couloir, taking first to the rocks at its right, and then, when about half-way up, cutting across it to the rocks on its left. These were quite easy, and in a quarter of an hour we were just under the crest of the arête, but both it and the rocks on the other face were too steep to be attempted, compelling us to keep to the left some little distance below the arête, along easy ledges and good rocks at first. They afterwards changed their character, and finally, after we had turned a nasty corner, brought us to a complete standstill. In our progress we had gradually risen, and were now many hundreds of feet above the glacier.

Our position was not a satisfactory one, standing as we were on a narrow ledge, running round an almost perpendicular rock couloir, or chimney, very much the shape of a horse-shoe, the corner we had come past forming one of its extremities, a corresponding rock about fifteen feet away, and exactly opposite, forming the other. Above us, and, in fact, all round the couloir, the rocks rose perpendicularly up to the arête, and were quite impracticable, while below us we could see no way. Our only hope of progress seemed to be by following the ledge we were on to its termination, some three-fourths of the distance round the couloir, and finding our way, if possible, past the protruding rock in front of us. Fortunately for us, the ledge widened and deepened considerably in the centre of the couloir. Here Baker planted himself firmly, his back to the rock and feet pressed against the lip of the ledge, which was here nearly two feet wide. As soon as he was fixed I went up to his side, and Pollinger, leaving us, found precarious footing some few feet below on the further side of the couloir, and wormed himself slowly and cautiously along for a few yards, till the increasing difficulty stopped his further progress. Our position was now as follows: To the right, facing the mountain and some fifteen feet away, Pollinger was fixed, with hardly any hold for either foot or hand, endeavouring to find a way round a smooth protruding rock rising almost perpendicularly to the arête above. Below him was a straight drop of twelve to fifteen feet, after that a steep couloir with very little to stop a falling body but the glacier many hundred feet below. Baker and I were close together, and could just see Almer's face appearing at the extremity of the couloir to our left. We thus formed something the shape of an inverted S, Pollinger and Almer being at its two extremities, while we were in the centre of its upper curve, both the guides being some distance below us. Pollinger seemed to make no progress, and every now and then looked back at us with an

anxious face and a remark as to keeping the rope tight. The suspense, as he got more and more round the projecting rock, with less and less hold for his right hand or foot, and apparently none at all for his left, became almost unbearable. To relieve his feelings Baker now and then turned to me, saying, 'Now, Anderson, hold fast.' It was all very well for him—he was firmly fixed—but the ledge under me was narrow, so that all I could do was to pass the rope over his shoulder in close proximity to his neck, and let my weight on it give assistance in binding him to the rock, at the same time putting on an appearance as if holding up a weight of twelve stones were a mere bagatelle. In reality, as far as I was concerned, the slightest strain on the rope would have detached me *nolens volens* from my perch, and resulted, I imagine, in Baker's instant strangulation.

At last, after what seemed to us an age, Pollinger by some means or other managed to get his left leg round the obstruction; with the help of what may be called cohesion of the waistcoat his right followed suit and he was out of sight; just as the rope had reached its limit, he cried out in a cheery voice, 'Kommen Sie ein wenig, Herr Baker; jetzt bin ich ganz fest.' Baker was soon round, with the help of the rope from both sides, and my turn came; but when on the point of striding round the corner Almer stopped me to pass round the ice axes, which were piled together in a crevice in the rock. If there is one thing that is disagreeable, it is trying to pass an ice axe to an unseen friend round a bad rock, with one foot and hand resting on scarcely perceptible holds, the other hand and foot being projected into space; at the moment when self-congratulation arises at the neat and graceful way in which the operation is being performed you are asked for 'just one inch more.' The inch is given at the imminent risk of dislocation; the axe at once asserts its independence, comes down with a bang, and either flies headlong out of sight, or inflicts a smart blow upon that part of the person which happens to be nearest its line of descent. When they and I were fairly round, Almer coolly untied, retraced his steps, clambered down for some distance, and, re-tying, we pulled him across over some bad rocks lower down.

Turning our attention to the ascent again, we pushed on up a very steep and narrow rock gully, leading, we could see, in a lateral direction to within a few feet of the arête, with a ledge of a foot or so wide as a termination. From the latter we could reach with the left foot a projecting piece of rock, enabling us to get the right knee over the rock above, and

working ourselves by the usual form of cohesion under such circumstances, with a pull from the rope and a scramble over rough rocks, we at last gained the arête.

Once there we had good standing ground, and, breathing freely again, were able to take note of what lay before us. The aneroid barometer gave 10,500 feet, or nearly 4,000 feet of vertical height yet to be surmounted; it was after six o'clock and the summit looked as far away as ever. 'Sehr lang und sehr schwer' was the only encouragement we could get from our guides. Everything was uncertain except the difficulty. The arête seemed very broken in outline, with one or two formidable-looking 'gendarmes' between us and the peak. 'If we can get past that one,' said Almer, pointing to the most distant, which apparently rose from the very crest of the arête, towering above it as a perpendicular pinnacle of rock, 'we shall succeed; if not—' What would happen if we did not he left to our imagination. We were, however, fairly in for the work now, and after readjusting the rope, Almer taking second place, myself third, and Baker last, Pollinger led off up the steep rocks of the north-west face of the mountain, making for a little break in the arête some 1,500 feet above and in front of us. We should have preferred the arête, but for a considerable distance it rose very steeply and was quite out of the question, afterwards running almost horizontally for a short distance, at the further extremity of which was the break alluded to. The rocks were very steep, and our hands were seldom unemployed, but the holds were generally firm and good; consequently we made rapid progress, playing the game of following my leader in silence, broken only by occasional requests for more rope or anxious inquiries as to the firmness of those in front.

After nearly two hours' continuous climbing of this description we regained the arête at 7.30 and halted for breakfast, the barometer showing 12,000 feet. Thus far we were quite satisfied with our progress, but we could see that the worst was yet to come; and, as light mists were beginning to play around the summit, hiding it from view, Pollinger would only allow us a quarter of an hour for our repast, starting up the arête again at the same rapid pace. For some time we stuck to the arête. At one place it narrowed to a knife-edge, with steep slopes on either side, down which the stones we discharged thundered and clattered in an unpleasantly suggestive manner, disappearing from sight after two or three mighty leaps. The ridge shortly becoming impassable, forced us again on to the north-west face of the mountain. It was much

steeper and more difficult than before, and gave us considerable trouble. One bit I remember, composed of smooth slabs of rock at a steep angle with infinitesimal holds, and some of these rotten, which engaged Pollinger's attention a long time before he could reach secure footing, and give us the benefit of the rope. It was one of the nastiest bits of rockwork I have yet met with. In fact, from the moment we left the arête a second time to the moment when we reached the second gendarme *en route*, the climbing was of a decidedly serious nature; sometimes we were working along narrow ledges, sometimes hanging on to the rocks with tenacious grip, whilst the leaders made themselves secure, at others clambering by the help of narrow clefts and gullies straight up the face, occasionally cheered by a bit of easy going, only to be thrown into despair again immediately by increasing difficulties, and at all times with the consciousness that a slip must *not* occur. When a halt was made for a few seconds at the base of the gendarme, we were some twenty feet below the ice-capped arête, in a little hollow at the foot of a difficult and nasty-looking crack, half ledge, half gully, which ran up the face of the rocky pinnacle, and made a break at its upper end in the continuity of its profile. To our left, the rocks up to the arête were rounded and impassable; to our right, the mighty face of the mountain fell at a steep angle 3,000 feet or more to the glacier below; in front of us the profile of the gendarme merged into the general angle of the mountain-side 100 feet down, which, from this point to its summit, rose at an angle of anything above 50° and hid everything beyond from view. We held fast whilst Pollinger cautiously made his way in a lateral and downward direction, till he could see what lay beyond. He gave one glance, shook his head, and, shouting, 'Da geht es nicht,' returned to us as quickly as possible. Our only chance was to take to the gully, and without waiting he struck up it, calling Almer to him when at the top, and shortly after disappearing from sight. From my position, some two-thirds of the way up, I could see from Almer's movements that something interesting was going on; and, after about five minutes' expectancy, he beckoned me to follow, and stepping on to the ridge by his side, the nature of the difficulty was at once revealed.

The farther side of the gendarme was quite precipitous, but, just at our feet, close to where the arête joined, at right angles, the upper face of the rock to our left, the chasm was only a few feet wide, and Pollinger, dropping down, keeping his left arm over a convenient stone, had managed, with his long legs

and the help of his ice axe resting against the opposite wall, to get his toe on to a projecting tooth of rock, and from there on to the arête, from the other side of which he was now looking at us. Almer and I were both too short of limb to reach it quietly, and had to give a little spring and trust to landing safely, though the help of the rope quite made up for other disadvantages. As I held the rope tight for Baker, I watched his proceedings with interest. Of course *his* legs were just long enough, and he joined us in the coolest manner possible; and throughout the whole of the ascent he behaved in this (to me) most aggravating way, though for the last two days he had lived almost entirely on Brand's meat lozenges and weak brandy and water.

From this point to the last gendarme, which looked worse and worse the nearer we got to it, our route lay mainly over the arête, or near it, and was one of very slow progress and monotonous difficulty. It would be tedious, and in fact impossible, to give an account of it in anything like detail. For the greater part of the distance, the arête was capped by an almost perpendicular snow-wall, crusted with ice, along the base of which we crept with cautious steps, finding precarious footing on dizzy ledges, the interstices filled with snow, the snow wall into which we dug our fingers as we proceeded, almost touching our left shoulders, the axes in our right hands planted in every available crevice in the rock below to give assistance. Occasionally the continuity of the ledges was broken by steep ice-couloirs, varying from 10 to 30 feet wide, necessitating cutting of large steps; or an incipient gendarme of ice and snow, round which we had to cut our way as well as possible, would intercept us. Sometimes we had to climb the snow cap and work up the other side of it, and in many cases we were out of sight of one another as we wormed in and out in a serpentine manner.

Perhaps the most difficult bit of the whole expedition occurred on this part of the climb. All foothold either above or below us came suddenly to an end; we were forced straight up the snow wall resting on the arête—a height of about 20 feet. The crest here narrowed to a knife-edge, descending steeply on either side, and rising up to a point some 30 feet away from us, afterwards falling where the rocks again appeared. The whole ridge was in a soft and nasty condition, and as Pollinger stepped on to it, he went up to the knees in the yielding snow. We must either turn back, or trust to it however, so we paid out the rope, as he cautiously worked along it just below the summit on its eastern side, his ice axe

planted up to its head on the western slope. We all followed his example in silence, having first arranged that if the snow gave way under the leaders, those behind were to throw themselves on the opposite side; but it held, and just as Baker stepped on to the ridge, Pollinger recrossed it, and found once more a safer footing on the rocks. We were still some distance from the gendarme in front, which seemed to rise precipitously from the arête without a break. It was after mid-day, and thoughts of spending the night in an exposed position, without the slightest shelter, or room to move about in, would obtrude themselves. Almer no doubt felt the same, for he was as solemn as a judge. We had, however, without knowing it, got past the worst, and as we made more rapid progress, our confidence returned and hopes rose. On reaching the foot of the rocky pinnacle which towered above us for 200 feet or more, our doubts and fears were all dissipated as the mists which had been hanging round our peak most of the day cleared off, and we saw that in a very short time we should stand in safety on the lofty eminence. Turning off to the left along a convenient ledge on the eastern face of the gendarme, and cutting a few steps across an ice couloir running down from the snow arête, we took to the rocks on its further side, and after a little delay, caused by Pollinger's demolition of a mass of ice that barred our upward progress, and a short scramble up some steep rocks, we once more stood on the arête, and the ascent, as far as difficulty and uncertainty were concerned, was over. Almer, who up to this time had been unusually grave and quiet, began to *jodel* and sing, and would, I believe, have executed a *pas seul* on the spot, had the spot admitted of it. Pollinger soon put a stop to his rejoicing by starting off again, and quickly working up the last few hundred feet of snow arête, at exactly 3 P.M. we were gathered round the flagstaff at the southern end of the ridge which forms the summit of the Dent Blanche.

Our first proceeding was to shake hands all round, then Almer, grasping the situation in its entirety, exclaimed in a loud and solemn manner, 'Wir sind vier Esel,' a sort of concentrated summary of the day's proceedings, which, it has since been suggested to me by a friend, who I need hardly say is *not* a member of the A. C., might be appropriately worked up into a motto for our club.

After this oracular declaration, we turned our attention to the injuries we had sustained; constant contact with the snow and ice in the latter part of the ascent, had turned our hands into a half-frozen and pulpy condition, and the steel of

our axes being frozen, every time a finger rested on it a piece of skin peeled off. I had suffered the most, and for an hour or two the blood had oozed from my finger-tips, sullyng the purity of the snow, and leaving quite sufficient traces to show our route up. Not having tasted food for seven hours, our thoughts naturally turned to the provision bag, and a very scanty one we found it—about two cubic inches of very dry tongue, one leg of a fowl, some bread-and-butter, and a little wine and brandy. We did not smoke, for the simple reason that we had not the wherewithal, but were too much elated to grumble at anything, and when Pollinger produced his *one* little joke, which always comes out with the brandy, ‘Nur schmecken, nicht trinken,’ we laughed immoderately.

Baker still preferred his meat lozenges. I did not argue the point with him, but cheerfully consumed his share of the provisions as well as my own. After about half an hour spent in this way, and trying to get up some enthusiasm over the view, Pollinger became restless again, and we prepared for the descent, first abstracting a trophy from the summit in the shape of a piece from the flagstaff as a proof of our ascent.

We followed the usual route down; it is too well known to need any description. We were very light-hearted, chatting and laughing as we hurried down the rocks on the south-west face, and as we crossed the *mauvais pas* of this route, Pollinger received some chaffing from us on his fondness for bad places. We little thought in our gaiety and high spirits, that on the morrow these same rocks would be the scene of the most fatal accident of a fatal season. About seven o'clock we were well on to the upper névé of the Ferpècle glacier. It was very soft; at every step we plunged through the thin crust and sank up to our knees, and all excitement being past, the strain of the last fifteen hours began to tell upon us. Baker reeled about in a careless sort of way, and I plodded after him in a dreary and mechanical manner, with just sense enough left to put my feet in the holes he made in order to ease the strain. We longed for a rest, but Pollinger marched on with impatient strides, every now and then turning round to us, and muttering in an under-tone in the patois of his district. I fancy he was indulging in some rather bad language, but the only word we could catch was ‘bergschrund,’ from which we inferred our troubles were not yet over. Twilight was coming on apace, and when, to our relief, we halted on the rocks of the Col d’Hérens, it was just about eight o'clock, and the darkness of night was round about us. Looking down the steep snow slope on the

eastern side of the col, we could just see, very faintly, the outline of the bergschrund appearing like a black wavy line stretching across the slope before us. It was not a pleasant position to be in, as none of us knew whether the usual bridge was in good condition or not, nor could we see exactly where it was situated. To add to our discomfiture, the weather, which had been threatening for some hours, became rapidly worse: heavy mists quickly hid everything in front of us from view, and soon the sound of thunder, reverberating about the crags of the Matterhorn, was borne to us across the icy plain below. A discussion ensuing as to what was to be done, I proposed staying upon the rocks and passing the night as well as we could. Almer would give no decided opinion either way, and Baker seemed quite indifferent as to staying or going on. Our feet were quite wet through; all the wine and most of the provisions were gone; Pollinger said there would be snow before midnight, and that for his part, he preferred sudden death in a bergschrund, to a lingering one of a frozen nature on the col; and the matter being practically in his hands as leader of the expedition, he ended all further discussion by starting down the slope with a 'Vorwärts! courage!'

The snow was very loosely packed. Our leader dug his heels in as far as possible, beating down the yielding substance, while we paid out the rope carefully and slowly, the same process being repeated with Baker and myself, Almer holding on above till there was no more rope, when we all held fast as he left the security of the rocks and came down to me, showing his estimate of the gravity of the situation, by making a little grave for his feet in the snow, and planting his axe up to its head, with the rope coiled round it for additional security. As we only moved one at a time, the descent was a painfully slow one, the slower too, because in the dim light we could barely discern each other's movements, and had to wait for the signal from below before moving. After about half an hour of this work, Pollinger made a longer pause than usual, and we could indistinctly see him probing about with his axe. He had reached the upper edge of the bergschrund, and was testing the stability of its bridge, which, with a true guide's instinct, he had struck at the right place. After a few minutes' suspense, and with a caution to us to hold fast, he sat down, and trusting himself to it, came to an anchor in its centre by the side of a large stone, where he remained till Baker reached him, and paid out the rope again, a shout from Pollinger soon announcing that he was safely over; and in five minutes more we were all standing together on its farther

side and looking back at the width of the schrund, which had a grim and ghastly look in the darkness.

The excitement of the descent had completely dispersed our previous languor and fatigue, and we prepared to find a way to the Stockje with renewed energy. With his usual foresight Almer had carried two pieces of candle and an empty bottle in his pocket through the day, ready for an emergency. These he now triumphantly produced, and in a few minutes rigged up a very fair lantern, which behaved itself better than this sort of lantern generally does, not requiring to be relighted more than half a dozen times or so in the first half-hour. The crevasses on the route to the Stockje are neither so large nor so numerous as they might be, but still, the process of threading through them in the misty darkness was a very eerie and unpleasant one, the flickering light of the lantern being of very little service to those twenty to eighty feet behind it, except to show the route the leader was taking. About ten o'clock we came upon the traces of a former party, and were able to push on with greater speed and confidence; at a quarter to eleven the last crevasse was left behind, and the expedition was virtually over. Pollinger relieved the great strain which had been upon him for the last three hours, by scooping a hollow in the ice with his axe, and drinking again and again, as if he would drain the glacier of its last drop. We all know the pleasures of tramping over a moraine in the dark, and what a perfect temper one needs to have to enjoy it—how the rope will persistently get in places it ought not; how the lantern only serves to make the darkness more visible, turning rocks into holes and holes into rocks; how every tuft of grass is a snare, and every hollow a pitfall; and how the small of the back and the pit of the stomach come in for alternate blows. Add to these discomforts, our weary limbs and a general feeling of having had quite enough of it, and our relief at the welcome announcement that the hut was close at hand may very easily be imagined. We reached it shortly after 11.30 P.M., or nearly twenty hours from the start. Pollinger's *Jodel* as we approached brought a reply from the hut. We found it tenanted by Mr. Gabbett and the two Lochmatters. Whilst Baker sought at once the arms of Morpheus, I chatted with them, answering their natural inquiries as to the state of the mountain; and our commissariat being almost exhausted, Gabbett, with the spirit of a true mountaineer, offered us the free use of his provisions, and Almer soon made us a soup, which, despite the fact that its principal flavouring ingredients were the refuse of chicken

bones, and perhaps the candle ends, was most acceptable and warming. As they left in the early morning for their last expedition, Lochmatter, as a final act of kindness, thoughtfully threw over us the blankets they had been using, in addition to those we already had.

After a sleepless four hours we pushed on to Zermatt at early dawn, knowing that there would be some little anxiety because of our non-appearance the night before. As we walked past the old church Johann came out to meet us with a shake of the hands and a 'Glücklich zurück,' and Seiler greeted us with unusual warmth as we turned into the Monte Rosa. We heard later on in the day, that at St. Niklaus we were reported lost on the Dent Blanche, and Pollinger found that his wife had walked into Zermatt during the night in great distress.

I was in a 'shockingly bad state of repair'—a hole in each elbow of my only coat, and two larger ones in my only pair of knickerbockers. The latter, the artistic nature of the Zermatt tailor induced him to convert into a nocturne in two greys, by the insertion of two large patches of a different shade from the original material; while the former soon assumed its normal condition, under the skilful hands of a lady at the Hôtel Zermatt, whose sympathies were enlisted by my tattered appearance.

And now, in conclusion, a few words as to the general nature of the expedition, and the conduct of our guides. One usually, and very naturally, is inclined to exaggerate the difficulties of a first ascent, and this, I think, will always be the case so long as mountaineering exists.

My experience of first-class expeditions is so limited, that the best test of the nature of an ascent, *i.e.* a comparison, is scarcely available. We had crossed the Rothhorn under much the same conditions of weather two days before, and found it child's play in comparison, and Almer declared that his latest climb was the most difficult expedition he had ever made; but that may have been caused by its being his latest. The mountain was in perfect condition for attack, the rocks throughout warm and dry, without a trace of ice—at any rate on our line of route—and yet we were $9\frac{1}{2}$ hours making the ascent after reaching the arête, and for seven consecutive hours our progress was at the slow rate of about 280 feet per hour, without any halts throughout the whole of this time except those incidental to the difficulties of the work. Taking these facts into consideration, and also that it was almost the only new expedition left near such a mountaineering centre as Zermatt, we may, I

think, without exaggeration conclude, that this route up the Dent Blanche will always be a long and difficult one, though it is *just* possible a better and easier line of attack might be found. In bad weather, or with ice on the rocks, it would be madness to attempt it, but in good weather such as we experienced, there is no reason why the expedition should not be repeated. Much time would be saved by sleeping out at the foot of the arête.

Of the behaviour of our guides I cannot speak too highly. Almer is so well known as not to need much eulogy on my part. Being next to him on the rope, I had abundant opportunity of watching and admiring his fertility of resource under all circumstances, and the ability with which he overcame all difficulties, which made me painfully conscious of the immeasurable difference there is between professional and amateur climbing.

Pollinger is not, perhaps, so well known. He led throughout the whole of the 19½ hours of the expedition without faltering; nor had we at any time to retrace our steps. He showed himself, as I have always thought him to be, one of the finest rock climbers in Switzerland, and is, in addition, one of the simplest and most true-hearted men in his profession that I know, combining the fearlessness of a good guide with the simplicity and honesty of a child. It says a great deal for them both, that they were quite as eager as ourselves to make the expedition. The whole credit of the climb rests entirely with them and I consider that it is only owing to their exceptional abilities that success crowned our efforts.

THE FIRST ASCENT OF THE EIGER.

[As no account of this expedition has ever been published, the following letter will be read with great interest, and is a valuable document for the purposes of Alpine history. We are much obliged to Mr. R. M. Barrington for communicating it to the 'Alpine Journal.']

To the Editor of the 'Alpine Journal.'

Sir,—My brother has just sent me the following letter about the first ascent of the Eiger, in 1858. As he never thought of publishing anything relating to it, no detailed account of his ascent has been kept. The facts may interest some readers of your journal, as the Eiger is such a well-known peak. The name of Harrington has been erroneously given in every notice of the ascent I have seen. Perhaps you will excuse me sending you a copy of my brother's letter instead of a more elaborate and descriptive account. Yours sincerely,

RICHARD M. BARRINGTON.