

MONTE ROSA

Signaljoch. Signal Kuppe. Zinnstein Sp. Höchste Sp. Nord End.

Jäger Pass. Jägerhⁿ.

Fillar Pass. Kl. Fillarkuppe.

Fillarkuppe

OLD WEISSTHORS

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

1. Eltermui's
2. Tyndall's
3. Jazzikopf
4. Tuckett's
5. Imboden's

Cima di Jazzi.

Mittelthor. Neue Weissthor Sp.

Schwarzberg - Weissthor Sp.

Strahlhorn.

Spur of the Strahlhorn.

ROFELHÖRNER

Rothhorn (3237 m)

(3215 m)



Spreng & Co. 22, Martins Lane, Cannon St. EC

W.F. Donkin. Phot.

MONTE ROSA & THE WEISSTHOR RIDGE FROM THE PIZZO BIANCO.

THE
ALPINE JOURNAL.

MAY 1883.

THE PASSES ACROSS THE WEISSTHOR RIDGE. By W. M. CONWAY. (Read before the Alpine Club March 6, 1883.)

'Verè mendaces erant colles et multitudo montium.'

THE little story of a single day's climbing, which gave rise to this paper, is of so trifling a character in these days of impossible ascents made easy, that I almost feel as if some apology were needed for troubling the Club with it at all. The interest which may be lacking to the account of my own little bit of work I hope in a measure to supply by regarding it as a small portion of the collective holiday labours of several mountaineers at different times.

In the last days of June 1882, I was driven by the heat from the plains of Italy up to the snows and rains of Macugnaga. No other mountaineers were there, and I had to spend several days of bad weather in long discussions with the innkeeper, Franz Lochmatter. We talked over the history of pretty nearly every chamois he had killed, we investigated the geography of the drains of his house, we fed his chickens, and we got through a wearisome quantity of Alpine talk. After five days passed in that way I was determined that I would get away to Zermatt at once, 'weather or no.'

Everybody knows the general aspect of the mountains from Macugnaga. Looking along the ridge from left to right are a row of peaks against the sky, many of them mere mounds, but visible and deserving names, though the nomenclature is as usual confused. The Nord End is divided from the Jägerhorn by a clearly enough marked col, with a name of its own—the Jägerjoch, but from the Jägerhorn to the Strahlhorn names and localities have little connexion one with another. The Fillar Kuppe and the Cima di Jazzi are fixed points. Between the Fillar Kuppe and the Jägerhorn are a bunch of cols, led up to by couloirs from what everyone calls the Fillar

glacier,* and these ought all to be named Fillar Joch. Then between the Cima di Jazzi and the Fillar Kuppe are another bunch of cols, likewise reached by couloirs from another glacier, called the Jazzi or Alt Weissthor glacier, and all these cols should be classed as varieties of the Old Weissthor. Then come a couple of cols, which go close to the peak wrongly called Cima di Rofel on the Federal map; it might be named Neue Weissthor Spitze, and the cols are New Weissthors.† Last of all comes the little peak marked Weissthor on the Federal map, and there a whole quantity of routes meet, leading from Zermatt or the Riffel to Mattmark or Macugnaga, and all these are varieties of the Schwarzberg-Weissthor.

Now almost every one of these cols had been crossed in every conceivable direction. The passages in the neighbourhood of the Jägerhorn have been thoroughly worked out. Messrs. Morshead and C. E. Mathews ascended the great arête running down from that peak, and when near the summit turned to the left and got over the true Jägerjoch; others have ascended the same arête directly to the summit of the peak; and Signor L. Brioschi turned to the right and crossed the watershed at a point north of the Jägerhorn.‡ Brioschi's col was, of course, a variation on the Jägerjoch; but one passage of the true Fillarjoch previous to mine, that is to say, one passage from the Fillar glacier to the upper snowfields of the Gorner glacier, seemed to be recorded; and about that I must say a word.

It is not possible now to rake up the question of where the real Old Weissthor, if such a pass ever existed, lay. Dr. Schulz, in a recent volume of the S.A.C. Jahrbuch (vol. xvii.), has gone very thoroughly into the question, and shown that all the early authorities—De Saussure, Engelhardt, and Schlagintweit—appear to agree in pointing out the col immediately south of the Fillar Kuppe, that is to say, between the Fillar Kuppe and the little peak which may be called Kleine Fillar Kuppe, as the point where tradition said the old pass lay. Schlagintweit's map seemed clear on this point, and at all events, in the winter of 1881, Dr. Schulz persuaded himself that here, at

* The Dufour map has Fillar glacier where it ought to have Jazzi glacier, and Rieghl glacier where it ought to have Fillar glacier.

† The peaks of *red rock*, 3483 m. on the Federal Map, and an unmeasured peak west of it, are those known as Rofelhörner at Macugnaga.

‡ Bollettino del C. A. I. x. 220–21. As a matter of fact he went from the Riffel to Macugnaga.

any rate, a comparatively easy passage might be made. He discussed the matter with Lochmatter, and the friendly inn-keeper spoke him words of caution, and so, in the following summer, he started off with good hopes. But when he was comparatively near to the point on the ridge for which he was aiming, he encountered the curse of the adventurous, in the form of 'Platten' somewhere on the south-east flank of the Fillar Kuppe, and so the thing had to be abandoned. Here, at any rate, Dr. Schulz concluded, the real Old Weissthor did not lie.*

My expedition has been already mentioned in the Journal (vol. xi. p. 116), and need not occupy much space here. It may have been made previously either by Schlagintweit or Brioschi. My guide was Louis Zurbrücken. It was for both of us the first climb of the year (July 3, 1882), and we suffered terribly from all the ills that want of training brings. Moreover, we left the rope behind at the breakfast place below the ice-fall, and did not discover our error till we reached the edge of the névé, whence Zurbrücken had to go back and fetch it. The only real piece of climbing was up the final rock wall. This we struck at the foot of the great couloir in the corner near the Jägerhorn. We might, perhaps, have walked straight up the couloir, but we thought it safer to keep away from any chance of falling stones, and so we climbed straight up the steep, but on the whole good, rocks to the edge of the névé of the Gorner glacier. Clouds were our constant companions, and so we never saw what, to my mind, is one of the finest views in the Alps, the gently declining Gorner glacier, with the Matterhorn and its jagged fellows rising beyond—'doubtless one of the most divertissant and considerable vistas in the world.' In descending to the Riffel we took a very circuitous course to avoid crevasses, a precaution advisable, seeing that we were only a party of two.†

* Prof. Schulz writes to me: 'I thought at first that Schlagintweit had crossed in 1851 between the Jägerhorn and Fillarkuppe, as he marks his route on his map; but from the picture of the Weissthor given by him it is clear that he went in the gully north of the Fillarkuppe.' The question will be further worked out in an article in the eighteenth volume of the S. A. C. Jahrbuch, which will also contain accounts of Dr. Schulz' expeditions over the Fillarkuppe, the Rofel pass, the Old and New Weissthor, and the Schwarzberg-Weissthor.

† The reader will observe that the Kleine Fillar Kuppe separates the Fillar Joch from the pass which Professor Schulz tried. Lochmatter tells me that a party crossed the ridge between my couloir and the Jägerhorn. They reached the snow slope at the foot of the couloir,

The next point we come to is the Fillar Kuppe, and over the summit of this lies, at any rate, one route. It was crossed by Professor Schulz on Aug. 7, 1882.* He slept at the Fillar Alp, and ascended the very steep east arête in nine hours (including halts) to the summit.

The Old Weissthor, or Jazzi glacier, and the rocky theatre, seamed with couloirs, at its head, lie between the main east ridges of the Fillar Kuppe and the Cima di Jazzi. All the passes leading from this glacier to the névé of the Gorner must be called varieties of the Old Weissthor. Wherever the ancient pass may have been situated, if ever there was an ancient pass at all, the name Old Weissthor is now far too firmly attached in Alpine nomenclature to the central col of this group to be henceforth altered. Professor Schulz considers that the employment of the name 'Alt Weissthor' to designate the passes between the Cima di Jazzi and the Fillarkuppe is a recent innovation on the part of the guides. The old traditions are opposed to it. He writes to me: 'Should the gap between the Lesser and the Greater Fillarkuppe prove impracticable at the point indicated as "Alt Weissthor" in De Saussure's engraving and Schlagintweit's map, at any rate the gap between the Jägerhorn and the Lesser Fillarkuppe is practicable. At this latter point Von Welden's sketch marks "*das weisse Thor*," and with it agree Engelhardt, Ulrich, G. Studer, Canon Berchtold, and Agassiz. Berchtold and Engelhardt call the Fillarkuppe "*Berg über dem Weissthor*," and that portion of the Gorner glacier which falls from the Jägerhorn and Fillarkuppe the "*Weissthor glacier*." This opinion receives confirmation from the fact that the depression between the Jägerhorn and the Lesser Fillarkuppe is the lowest along the whole ridge from the Nord End to the Schwarzberg-Weissthor. I should prefer to confine the name "Fillarpass" to the first couloir (Ellerman's) north of the Fillarkuppe, and to call the two cols (Tyndall's and Tuckett's) further north "*Jazzipass*."

In the centre of the glacier below the feet of all the couloirs is a large and conspicuous island of rock known as the *Castell Franco* (or *Frang*, in Macugnaga patois), where all the routes of this group join. The traveller from Macugnaga ascends to

and then bearing to the left took to the rocks on the N.E. face of the Jägerhorn, zigzagged up them, and then bearing back to the right at the end, reached a point on the watershed about 200 paces south of the top of the couloir.

* Oesterr. Alp.-Zeit. 1882, p. 279. S. A. C. Jahrb. xviii.

the Belvedere, crosses the ice to the Fillar Alp, and then mounts over slopes of snow of tolerable steepness to this rock-island. Above him are now three great couloirs. The one most to the left is bent, and leads almost to the summit of the Fillar Kuppe, the second and third are straight. They are separated by a rock buttress, which props up a small rocky head, and for it Professor Schulz suggests the convenient name Jazzikopf. The rest of the rock wall to the north is seamed by a multitude of smaller gullies, all trending towards the Cima.

The most southerly couloir, the bent one, which leads almost to the top of the Fillar Kuppe, was stated by Lochmatter to be the one which Professor Tyndall ascended in 1861. Such, however, cannot be the case, as it is clear from the Professor's published account* that he chose the left of the two couloirs visible from Macugnaga, that is to say the central one of the three. Tyndall's couloir was straight, and from the rocks beside it he could see into Tuckett's couloir. The bent couloir seems to have been first ascended on July 10, 1882, by Mr. J. Ellerman. He has kindly sent me the following account of the expedition:—

' We arrived at the foot of the couloir at 7.30 A.M. Hence we climbed the rocks above us, and then kept straight up the couloir to a corner of rocks on the right, formed by the bending of the couloir. We tried the rocks here, but they were impracticable (about 11.15 A.M.). We turned this corner of rocks, and kept for about a quarter of an hour up the couloir; then we took to some rocks on the left, then to some in the middle. After these we dodged from right to left for shelter from falling ice. When near the top we bore sharply to the right to turn a bad "cornice" (or rather wall of ice), and arrived at the top of the col about 1.10 P.M. There was every appearance of falling stones at the bottom of the couloir, but we did not meet with any; the falling ice was dangerous.'

Over the mass of rock that lies between Ellerman's couloir and the one next to the north of it (Tyndall's couloir) Schlagintweit seems to have descended in his passage of the Old Weissthor in 1851. The point where he crossed the ridge was the same as where Mr. Ellerman crossed, but Schlagintweit's route lay over rocks, and landed him on the broad patch of snow at the foot of Tyndall's couloir.

The graphic account of Professor Tyndall's expedition, made in the year 1861, is well known, and need only be referred to

* 'Mountaineering in 1861.'

here. He mounted by the central couloir of the three, took to the rocks on the right about halfway up, and by these succeeded in gaining a footing on the watershed. Considerable danger was experienced from falling stones.

'I clearly remember,' he says, 'the ice wall at the top of the couloir, which we never expected to scale. We hoped to get up the rocks to the right of it, and to these we had to betake ourselves earlier than we anticipated. It renders me uncomfortable even now (Jan. 1883) to think of the roar of the descending stones, hemmed in as we were in the ice gully.' A very similar route was followed by Prof. Schulz in 1881. I am indebted to Lochmatter for an account of another route which passes up Tyndall's couloir. He says you must ascend the couloir for about 200 mètres; then if you like you take to the rocks on the left, or you go further up the couloir itself for about the same distance. Now, at any rate, you attack the rocks on the left, and mount them, continually bearing to the left till you strike a chamois track, which is difficult to find. This leads you with tolerable ease to the col. Mr. Davidson seems to have been the first to go this way.

We come next to the route usually taken by climbers crossing the Old Weissthor from Macugnaga. It lies up the rock buttress of the Jazsikopf. The way leads first into the most northerly of the three couloirs. It soon turns to the left up a kind of gully giving access to a ledge.* From this it turns to the right towards the main ridge, and follows that till about half the rock wall is surmounted. Now an inclined ledge conducts to the right, *almost* to the edge of the couloir. Thence the rocks are ascended fairly straight up, till, just at the top, the snow is taken to and the col reached.

The third (most northerly) of the great couloirs was the one chosen by Mr. Tuckett in 1861. It is not advisable to ascend by this route unless in exceptional states of the snow, the gully being often swept by stones; but if the snow be good this is far the best way to descend in passing from the Riffel to Macugnaga. It was first descended by Mr. Whitwell in 1872. On August 5, 1878, after some days of snowstorm, I crossed with Messrs. Scriven and Penhall by this route. We found the snow in the couloir deep and firm, very little step-cutting was required, and we hardly touched the rocks. No stones fell, and in two and a half hours after leaving the col we were below the Castel Franco.

* The same ledge may be reached by a band of snow which leads up to it from the central couloir.

Between Tuckett's Old Weissthor and the Cima numerous routes may be taken, for the most part easy and safe. One of these routes was first crossed by Dr. Güssfeldt.* He followed over the rocks just to the north of Tuckett's couloir, keeping parallel to that. The same or a similar route is often chosen by Imboden, who calls it Fillar Pass, and tells me that he has crossed it many times. The point where the watershed is struck in the latter case lies about halfway between the Cima and the Jazzikopf. It is possible that the original Old Weissthor lay somewhere in this direction. The Cima, it will be remembered, throws out a great easterly rock spur, the north-east face of which looks down on the snow slopes mounted by travellers in crossing the ordinary Neue Weissthor, whilst the south-east face sends its loose stones down to the Old Weissthor glacier. The north-east face is not steep, and is moreover furrowed by easy and wide gullies, the home of numerous chamois at certain seasons. It would be very easy to mount this north-east face by one of the gullies as far as the ridge, and then to turn over on to the south-east face and reach a point on the watershed. Now Lochmatter states that there is a regular old path up one of these gullies as far as the ridge; further, he says that happening to be in that neighbourhood one day on the S.E. face of the ridge in the pursuit of chamois (the track being likewise a chamois track), he picked up among the rocks an old piece of wood, as thick as a man's arm, which was roughly carved all over with names. Lastly, he says that on the great Weissthor ridge, nearer to the Cima than to the Jazzikopf, there still stands a large and ancient stone man, which may have been a landmark in former days. One thing is, at any rate, certain, and that is that the route thus marked out is very easy, is one that any chamois hunter would be likely to hit upon, and is only dangerous when stones are falling.

The Cima di Jazzi itself has been traversed many times by routes more than one. Mr. C. E. Mathews reached its summit by the rocks from the Old Weissthor glacier.† On August 16, 1874, Mr. A. W. Pearson was on his way over the ordinary Neue Weissthor, and had just reached the foot of the great couloir on the north (the right looking from Macugnaga) of the Cima. His guide, Alexander Lochmatter, induced him to alter his plans, and they went thence to the left, over some rocks, on to the broad shelf of snow so conspicuous on the

* Deutsche Rundschau, vol. xi. (1877), p. 419.

† Alpine Journal, vol. viii. p. 52.

Italian face of the Cima, and by following this they reached a point whence they could cut through the cornice and get on to the summit.*

The passes north of the Cima likewise fall into groups. The first group consists of those which pass between the Cima and the Neue Weissthor Spitze. The lowest point between these two peaks is situated at the head of the great couloir already referred to, and by this couloir Mr. E. R. Whitwell obtained access to it from Macugnaga in the year 1872. He named his pass *Mittelthor*, and found that it could be reached in five hours from Macugnaga, and that the couloir was not so steep as Tuckett's.†

The Neue Weissthor, now in common use, though not the pass which originally bore that name, lies a few yards north of the *Mittelthor*. The traveller mounts from Macugnaga to the snow slope at the foot of Whitwell's couloir, then he turns up the rocks on his right and ascends them till he gets on the shelf of snow above them, which bears the same relation to the Neue Weissthor Spitze that the snow shelf previously mentioned bears to the Cima di Jazzi. He follows this snow shelf to its highest point, and then passes almost horizontally to the left, over rocks, to a point on the watershed. It is to be observed that this New Weissthor is not the pass originally so named, and to which reference will immediately be made.

If a climber were to take his stand on the Neue Weissthor Spitze, and then to advance northwards along the watershed, he would come, in a little more than a quarter of a mile, to a small rocky summit. This is the point (3612 m.) marked Weissthor on the Federal map, obviously because it was at this point that travellers prior to 1856, crossing from Zermatt to Macugnaga, left the névé of the Findelen glacier, and began to descend. Here a change takes place. The main ridge continues its northerly course, bending somewhat to the west, but it is no longer the boundary between the Macugnaga and Zermatt valleys. It is henceforward invisible from the Macugnaga side, and divides the névés of the Findelen and Schwarzenberg glaciers. Its place as boundary of the Macugnaga valley and the watershed between the Swiss and Italian rivers is taken by a new ridge, which starts from this insignificant peak and runs due east to the Monte Moro. Looked at from

* Alpine Journal, vol. viii. p. 52.

† These particulars have been communicated to me by Mr. Whitwell. The Laueners were his guides.

the valley of Macugnaga, or from the Pizzo Bianco, this Monte Moro ridge seems continuous with the main ridge from Monte Rosa and the Cima. It is only by observing the direction of the strata as marked by gullies and strips of snow that the exact point of junction of these two ridges can be discerned by a spectator from the Italian side. Standing on this little peak it is possible to look down three main valleys—those of the Findelen glacier, of the Schwarzenberg glacier, and of Macugnaga. To prevent mistakes I shall call this peak the Schwarzberg-Weissthor Spitze (3612 m.).

At this point there is a grand junction of routes. It may be reached either from Zermatt or the Riffel; and the traveller may descend from it by a choice of ways. Under any circumstances he must commence by descending on to the Monte Moro ridge. This for a few yards consists of a narrow snow arête, the once famous *arête blanche* which excited emotions a quarter of a century ago, though they are not shared by a less susceptible generation, who no longer recognise the 'precipices' on either hand as particularly alarming. In fact the Italian cliff was climbed to the crest, where it touches the Schwarzberg-Weissthor Spitze, gained from Macugnaga via the Rofel glacier and the rocks directly above it, by Mr. D. Freshfield and some friends in 1867. Their route lay some distance to the west of the passes subsequently described, and is steep but far from difficult; * the slope on its northern side soon becomes less steep, and a glissade will land him on the névé of the Schwarzenberg glacier. He may now descend, if he pleases, to Mattmark, or he may pass over a rounded snow-ridge and get on to the Seewinen glacier, and so go to the Monte Moro pass; but there are other routes which would take him to Macugnaga, and with them only are we now concerned. All these routes cross the aforementioned ridge which descends from the Schwarzberg-Weissthor Spitze to the Monte Moro.

In order to fix the position of the passes over this ridge it is necessary to refer to the nomenclature of the points along it which admit of easy recognition. Passing from the Schwarzberg-Weissthor Spitze the first peak one comes to is unmarked and unmeasured on any map. Its neighbour on the east is marked 3483 m. on the Federal map, and these two peaks together are

* These details are communicated by Mr. D. Freshfield. His guides were the late Daniel Ballej and Peter Michel, neither of whom knew the ground, and they made the 'variation' by accident. Having since crossed the ridge from Mattmark to Zermatt he speaks with confidence as to the relative position of his route.—EDITOR.

called Rofelhörner at Macugnaga. The next peak of any note is the Rothhorn, marked 3237 m. on the Federal map. From it runs the snow ridge which separates the Seewinen and Schwarzenberg glaciers. Next comes the peak 3215 m., to which the name Faderhorn, given to it in the Federal map, does not belong. The real Faderhorn is a small outlier, on the south ridge of the Rothhorn, and much nearer Macugnaga.

Just under the Schwarzenberg-Weissthor Spitze, on the Italian side, lies a little glacier, the left bank of which is formed by a ridge running south from the Rofelhorn (3483 m.). This Rofel glacier may be reached from the Schwarzenberg névé by a pass to which the name Rofelpass should certainly be attached. This Rofelpass is Mr. Marshall Hall's New Weisssthor of the year 1849. He describes himself (A. J. vol. ix. p. 175) as reaching the Schwarzenberg-Weissthor peak, descending along the Monte Moro arête 'for some distance,' and then going down a ridge of decayed rock to snow (probably the Rofel glacier), and thence to Macugnaga. The same route was evidently the one indicated by the guide Damatter, in the year 1843, to Mr. Malkin (A. J. vol. x. p. 44). The same, or a very similar, route was selected by Professor Schulz, on August 5, 1882, and described in the Oesterr. Alpen-Zeitung for 1882 (p. 279). He followed the Monte Moro arête for 20 min. from the Schwarzenberg-Weissthor peak, and then turned down the rocks and couloirs, which brought him in 1½ hour to the Rofel glacier. Near the foot of Whitwell's couloir he joined the New Weisssthor track. According to Lochmatter, a route differing little from this was commonly followed between about 1840 and 1856. Travellers descended by the *arête blanche*, then took to the Schwarzenberg névé, passed round the back of the west Rofelhorn, crossed the ridge between the two Rofelhörner, and thus reached the Rofel glacier, whence the remainder of the way is straightforward.

Another pass over this ridge lies between the Rothhorn (3237 m.) and the peak 3215 m., misnamed Faderhorn. It leads from the Seewinen glacier to Macugnaga. This pass has long been used by chamois hunters, but the first recorded passage of it was made by Mr. W. W. Simpson in 1875 (A. J. vol. vii. p. 324). The name Faderjoch is unsuitable, borrowed as it is from the misnamed peak; the pass should certainly be called the Seewinen Pass. It was likewise crossed on August 13, 1881, by Professor Schulz. In the descent on the Italian side many routes may be followed, the easiest being found by bearing to the left. Prof. Schulz bore to the right and passed just above the real Faderhorn. This pass also can

be combined with the Schwarzberg-Weissthor, but it is more suitable for climbers going from Mattmark to Macugnaga.

Lastly, there is a pass which Imboden tells me has been crossed and presents no difficulties. It connects the Schwarzenberg and Findelen snowfields and lies over the ridge leading from the Schwarzberg-Weissthor peak to the Strahlhorn. The main incident in the climb is the ascent from the Schwarzenberg glacier to the col, which lies up a somewhat steep, though short, wall of rock. Travellers going this way must of course lose the view into the Macugnaga valley, so that, though the climbing is more interesting, the expedition is not likely to be made except in dull weather.

TWENTY YEARS' CLIMBING AND HUNTING IN THE HIMALAYAS. By Major J. W. A. MICHELL. (Read before the Alpine Club, June 6, 1882.)

I HAVE been asked to give you a few details of my travels in the Himalayas, and in complying with this request, I trust my remarks may not be uninteresting to you.

The topic, I notice, is not altogether new, as there are occasional papers in the 'Alpine Journal' having reference to the same subject; but, as different travellers receive different impressions, perhaps additional light may present itself from a fresh, and I trust practical, point of view.

It is with a certain amount of diffidence that I appear in my present capacity before the members of the Alpine Club, because although I have, one way or another, done a certain amount of climbing, I cannot say that I have ever made an ascent with the same motive as mountaineering is now carried on in Europe—my principal object has been sport, but there can be no better training for those who wish to excel as cragsmen, than to hunt the ibex, the chamois, and other wild animals which are found on the precipitous mountain slopes near the snow line of the Himalayas.

Before proceeding any further, I wish to read to you an extract from a letter, written many years ago by the Indian Correspondent of 'The Times,' and which was published in that paper (Nov. 23, 1866). He writes from Simla, and contrasts the Alps with the Himalayas, speaking rather disparagingly of the Alpine Club:—'Here (in the Hills) October brings round once a year a climate which may challenge comparison with any in the world, and which may be described as resembling, but surpassing, that of Florence in the same month.'