

viciously downwards gave sufficient upward impetus to enable my right hand once more to clutch the hold above. It was a near thing; but a moment later I swung into the cleft just vacated by the stone. My arms were numb, my lungs empty, my mind an utter blank. I felt, rather than heard, my late enemy thundering down into the valley, and meanwhile some one near me grunting and gasping out, 'autis—epeita—pedonde—kulindeto—laas—anaides.' The grunter was myself!

ZERMATT AND THE BREITHORN IN 1830: FROM THE DIARY OF THE EARL OF MINTO.

Aug. 25.—From Sion, after buying worsted gloves, coloured spectacles for those who had not already provided them, a provision of cord, and black worsted stockings, and sausages, we proceeded to Tourtemagne, where we slept. Here we saw a forest of considerable extent on fire. It had been burning for several days, and notwithstanding the efforts of some hundred persons it was obvious that it would consume all that remained to leeward. Like the other hills that bound the right side of the Valais, this was very precipitous, and the burning trees and logs rolling down carried the fire to all parts of the forest below them, and even created some alarm for the fate of a village considerably below the boundary of the forest.

Aug. 26.—The guides went on early, and we followed them about 7 o'clock. Between 8 and 9 o'clock we reached Visp. Our party consisted of the following persons:—Mr. Hildyard, William,\* and myself; Joseph Marie Coutet † was chief guide; Julian Devoussoud, Michel Devoussoud, Jean Michel Cachat, Mathieu Balmat, Michel Balmat, David Coutet, Alexis Devoussoud, and Ambroise Paccard. It would have been difficult to collect a more gallant company of adventurers than we had about us; indeed, most of our companions are men celebrated for their adventures, and had been selected by Coutet as the *élite* of the Chamouniards, upon whose courage and skill he could the best rely in any dangers or difficulties we might have to encounter. Our leader, Coutet himself, is unquestionably the most enter-

\* The late Earl of Minto, then a boy of sixteen.

† Lord Minto's spelling of proper names, both of persons and places, has been retained.

prising of the enterprising race of men for which the valley of Chamounix is so remarkable. He is the son of old Marie Coutet, a favourite guide of Saussure, who lived beyond the age of eighty, without an ache or an ailment, after having slept about half his life out of doors on the mountains. The last time I saw old Marie was in 1822; he was then upwards of seventy, and had just come in from an expedition on the mountains in search of crystals, having remained out several days and nights until his provisions were exhausted. His son Joseph, our leader, has been nine times on the summit of Mont Blanc, and has made ten unsuccessful attempts to ascend. He was the leader of Hamel's unfortunate attempt, in which three guides were lost, and his undaunted courage displayed itself in his offer to proceed after he had been extricated from the crevice in which his companions had perished, and into which he and Julien Devoussoud were also carried by the avalanche which caused the catastrophe. He is the only Chamouniard who had visited the summit of the Monte Rosa,\* to which he conducted Mr. Herschell in 1822, and it was on this account, in addition to his other merits, that I had long since engaged him to officiate as my chief guide, whenever I might be able to attempt my long projected visit to the Monte Rosa.

Next to Joseph Coutet, I should be disposed to rate Julien Devoussoud as the man to whom the conduct of a difficult expedition might be most safely confided; he is also a most attentive and obliging guide. His brother Michel is also a singularly active and intelligent person when he likes to embark in any enterprise. Coutet's brother David keeps the pavilion at the Montanvert, and is not a regularly enrolled guide; but he generally makes one in his brother's most arduous adventures, and is quite worthy of his descent from old Marie. He was one of Hamel's party, as was also Mathieu Balmat, the son of old Pierre Balmat, Saussure's chief guide. Being a man of great strength, Mathieu was alone of all the party able to keep his ground when the avalanche overwhelmed them, which he did by driving his pole deeply into the firm snow below. He was thrown down and turned over upon his face, but he kept hold of his pole, and remained clinging to it on the smooth bank of snow, far above the heads of all his companions who had been hurried down the slope to a great distance. His younger brother was one of those who perished. Cachat

---

\* By this, of course, the Breithorn is meant.

and Michel Balmat are also excellent men, and the only one of our party who I am disposed to mistrust is my old acquaintance Alexis Devoussoud. Ambroise Paccard, whom I had engaged to accompany me to observe the barometer at Zermatt, during our ascent of the mountain, is the son of the celebrated Dr. Paccard of Chamounix, who divides the honour of the first ascent of Mont Blanc with old Jacques Balmat. Paccard asserts that more of the merit of this first ascent is due to his father than has been usually assigned to him; that the course by which the ascent was effected was in truth suggested by Dr. Paccard from the observations he had made from the Brevent. However, Paccard has promised to furnish me with very full details from his father's papers.\* Whatever may be the precise share which each had in discovering the route to be taken, they are both incontestably entitled to the honour of one of the boldest enterprises ever undertaken, and of having dared to face the danger of a night upon the snow at an elevation where it was then the established opinion that no one would survive the cold.

Ambroise Paccard himself is an intelligent man, with an education superior to that of his neighbours at Chamounix, where he keeps a cabinet of natural history. He brought me two relics which I value much—one a letter from Saussure to his father, and the other the identical coloured paper carried up by his father on the first ascent of Mont Blanc as a standard of comparison of the colour of the sky at different elevations.†

About half-past nine o'clock we mounted our mules and quitted the valley of the Rhone, turning to the south-westward up the valley of Vispa, which forms the *débouchée* of the two valleys of Saas and St. Nicholas. The day was very fine, but the heat somewhat oppressive, as is usually the case in these confined valleys in summer. The lower part of this valley was more highly cultivated than I was prepared to expect at such an elevation. In many places on the side of the road we had fine walnut-trees, with a much better

---

\* Among Lord Minto's papers is a copy of the *Journal de Lausanne* for May 12, 1787, containing a certificate signed by Jacques Balmat to the effect that Dr. Paccard's previous study of the route, and his resolution during the ascent, had contributed materially to the success of the expedition.

† Through the kindness of the Hon. G. Elliot this interesting relic is now the property of the Alpine Club.

crop of fruit than is to be seen this year about Vevey, where the severity of the last winter has prevented the trees from bearing. Every little slope of soil is turned to some account, either as meadow or corn land, and patches of vines occupy each little terrace that can be formed in the rocks on the sunny side of the valley. The labour required for this cultivation, estimated in any manner, must greatly exceed the value of the produce, and it can only be as the occupation of time for which they have no other employment that it can at all answer to them. Throughout the whole of this valley the plough is unknown, and, indeed, could not be used. The soil is wrought by hand with a sort of great hoe, of which the blade is as large as one of our labourers' shovels, and forms a very acute angle with the handle. With this implement the workman begins at the top of the slope, and works down backwards. He strikes the point into the soil, which is loose and light, lifts a spadeful, and turns it out before him with great rapidity. But the labour is excessive, and the stooping posture required for this manner of trenching must be very oppressive. The carriage of manure is also an arduous operation. Where there are practicable paths, it is conveyed in boxes about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, two of which are placed upon a mule. But the vines are generally cultivated on steep and rugged rocks quite inaccessible to mules, and here the manure is carried by people in their *hottes*. The produce of all this labour is a scanty crop of rye or wine of the very worst quality and very lowest price. But as the people derive their chief subsistence from their dairies and their sheep, which occupy but little of their time, and as there is no other demand for their labour, whatever they can extract from the soil is sheer profit.

Two leagues above Visp, at Stalden, the valley separates into two branches. Our course led us up the valley of St. Nicholas to our right, the other, the valley of Saas, leading far to the eastward of Monte Rosa to Macugnaga. After passing Stalden the scenery became much more strikingly magnificent. The valley of St. Nicholas is one of the deepest in the Alps, nowhere, it is said, exceeding 300 yards in depth at bottom, and frequently barely wide enough to afford a channel to the river. It is bounded by perpendicular rocks of some 1,000 feet high, along the face of which the narrow path is formed far above the furious torrent that comes down in a continuous cataract throughout its whole course. It is seldom, however, that both sides of the valley are thus walled in—the one side, and that

generally the western, or left, bank, presenting its precipice of rock, and the other a steep mountain bearing magnificent forests. When our road carried us on the eastern side of the torrent we caught occasional glances through the chasms of the opposite rocks of the spire of a church or a sprinkling of *châlets*, indicating that there was another inhabited region far above our heads, but it appeared so totally inaccessible, and so entirely distinct from our world, that the effect was really very strange, that one could not but view it as a sort of *Laputa* hovering over us with its own airy people and establishments.

After a delightful ride we reached the village of St. Nicholas, two leagues above Stalden and four from Visp, and dismounted at the curate's. I do not remember that there was anything in the appearance of this house to distinguish it from others in the village, unless, perhaps, a greater air of decay and an outside stair very much after the old Scotch fashion. I was, of course, aware that we should be received here as guests who were to pay for their fare; but I confess that I was not prepared for the nonchalance with which Coutet ushered us in and began to call for all we wanted. The room contained a bed, and a long table with benches round it, and had quite the air of a very poor public-house. In one corner was a great arm-chair, with the curé's hat and cassock hanging on it, so that we evidently occupied his room. Indeed, there were but two other very small rooms, one of which was a carpenter's shop opening off it. As soon as the mules were disposed of, all our guides and drivers came in and seated themselves at the long table, calling for bread, cheese, and wine as unceremoniously as they would have done if there had been a sign over the door. They had placed a separate little table for Mr. Hildyard, William, and myself; and we made a very comfortable meal of bread and excellent old cheese. When we were all satisfied, Coutet quietly asked what was to pay; and we discharged our score and walked as unceremoniously out of the house as we had entered it, without having seen or inquired for the curé, who was absent, and left the charge of his house to the old woman who had supplied us.

Shortly after leaving the village of St. Nicholas, we again crossed over to the left bank of the torrent. The bridge was of a very rude and simple construction, and had a very uninviting appearance of instability and decay. The arch is formed by a succession of horizontal spars on each side laid over each other, the upper projecting a few feet beyond the

end of that below it, till the uppermost approach each other from the opposite sides of the river near enough to support spars or beams that form the central part of the arch. As all this is originally put together without much regard to symmetry—and in the process of decay many of the spars alter their position and are somewhat tilted—these bridges usually incline more or less to the one end or the other, and have a very crazy appearance. The roadway is, of course, only wide enough to admit of the passage of a mule, and there is no sort of ledge or parapet. In the course of our ride we had several times to cross the furious torrent by these bridges.

On the right bank of the valley we again travelled through a fine forest, in which we saw a rude, self-acting mill hard at work pounding bark. A beam of wood is hollowed out into a sort of spoon or trough at one end, near which it is traversed by an axis fixed on one side into the stem of a tree and on the other supported on a post driven into the ground. The other, or weighty end of the beam, extends further beyond the axis, and has a sort of pointed tooth or stake attached to it and projecting downwards. Under this tooth is a tub, in which the bark is placed. The other extremity, or spoon end, is so placed as to be filled by a little cascade from a rill of water. When full, the weight of water presses down that end of the beam till it is sufficiently inclined to empty itself, and then the weight of the other end, which has been raised, brings the tooth down violently upon the bark in the tub, which it breaks and pounds to powder. This machine was working very steadily though slowly, without anyone to attend to it, when we passed, and I presume that as soon as the tub was filled and the mill was set in motion, the man left it to collect more bark whilst it did its own work. We saw several sacks of pounded bark standing near it.

Soon after this we reached the little village of Randath, two leagues from St. Nicholas, having passed its curé on our road occupied in herding three cows. A few years ago this village was destroyed by a fall of rocks and an avalanche from the opposite or left side of the valley. They say that much of the damage was occasioned by the violent shock and gust of the air produced by the fall of so great a mass in its neighbourhood; but in truth we saw evidence in the heaps of stones since collected and piled up to clear the ground, that fragments of rock and possibly masses of snow had crossed the torrent and rolled up to the village at least 150 feet above the bottom of the valley.

Although the ascent of the whole valley of St. Nicholas is most rapid, there are, as is apt to be the case, in addition to the continued inclination, here and there abrupt steps by which it starts up suddenly to a higher level. Shortly after passing Randath, we mounted one of these steps and passed the village of Tesch. We were here amongst the glaciers, and in full view of the magnificent mountains that are ranged round the Monte Rosa. On our right we passed the glacier of Randath, and on our left the glacier of Tesch, and soon again crossed the torrent to its left bank by one of the most beautiful and picturesque bridges I ever saw. It stretches from rock to rock on the opposite sides, and we estimated its height above the torrent at about 80 feet. The surrounding scenery is in admirable keeping, and has all the beauty that wood and water can bestow. After this we soon had a more extensive view of the interminable fields of snow and glacier that we had come to explore, including the Monte Rosa and the still finer needle of the Matterhorn; and a short walk then brought us to Zermatt, where we were to take up our quarters for the night. Here, as at St. Nicholas, we made directly for the curé's, but Coutet, who had gone in first to reconnoitre, came out saying that we should find the house too hot and crowded, and that we had better take up our quarters at M. le Vicaire's, whose house was unoccupied, as he boarded at the curé's. He accordingly, without ceremony, told the curé's housekeeper that we should go to the Vicaire's, and desired her to bring us the key of the house immediately, which she did, and we all marched back to take possession of the smartest-looking house in the village, which Mr. Hildyard had remarked and coveted as we passed it on our way to the curé's. This house consisted of three rooms on the first floor, and, I believe, two more over them, with a bed in each; and, in addition to the comfort of having it all to ourselves, the accommodation was much better than we had expected to find. The dirt, too, was quite dry and of very old standing, so as to have become very little offensive; and we were all delighted with our quarters, in which we speedily established ourselves. M. le Vicaire speedily made his appearance to welcome us to his house, of which we had so unceremoniously possessed ourselves; and though his appearance was certainly not superior to that of the beadle of a Scotch country parish, with a beard of a full week's growth, I made some show of addressing him as a host on whose hospitality we had intruded. But he soon made me understand that, as far as we were concerned, he appeared in

the lay characters of innkeeper, waiter, and boots. With the assistance of the curé's old woman he brought us basins, towels, and warm water for our feet, and afterwards assisted in laying the table and carrying the materials for our supper. As our house contained absolutely nothing except the beds, chairs, and tables, and had neither fuel nor, indeed, fire-place, nor so much as a cup, plate, or pitcher in it, everything we required was to be brought from the curé's at the other end of the village; and I must admit that the can of water to make our coffee was not very hot by the time it reached us. After having made a comfortable meal, we finished all the observations we had to make and went to bed early.

Aug. 27.—This morning did not open very auspiciously. The barometer had fallen a little, the clouds had begun to collect and were flying alarmingly fast over the summits of the mountains before us, but all this was no more than an indication of doubtful weather, depending on the prevalence of the north and southerly winds which our guides asserted were contending for the mastery, and there was nothing to prevent us from making our attempt. As our day's journey was to end on the Mont Cervin,\* where our prospect of comfort was not tempting, we only wished to reach it in such time as to allow the baggage mules to return to Zermatt in daylight, and therefore did not start till about 9 o'clock. Soon after leaving Zermatt we commenced a steep ascent through a fine forest of larch, mixed with the *Pinus Cembra*, or *pin doux*, as they call it. This tree somewhat resembles the Scotch fir in its appearance and foliage, and is found only at very considerable elevations. The wood is the most esteemed of all the timber of the Alps, being soft and easily worked, and infinitely more durable than even the finest larch.

After passing this forest, the great glaciers of the Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn presented themselves directly before us, and it really was difficult to believe that we should find a track by which a mule could pass. These glaciers extend from side to side and form an abrupt barrier quite across the Valley of Zermatt into which they fall. The scenery now became singularly magnificent and wild. We were gradually rising above the highest sheep and goat pastures, and as we climbed the side of the mountain round the great glacier of Zermatt, part of which we saw far below

---

\* I.e. the Theodul pass.

us on our left, we had to cross the ravines and torrents descending from the superior glacier of the Matterhorn on our right. One of them descended in a splendid cascade to the spot at which we crossed it by a slender bridge, that looked as if it had been calculated only for the passage of the goats that pastured for a few months of the summer at this height. The roadway of these narrow bridges is formed of flat, slaty stones, loosely laid upon the stems of trees that stretch across the torrent, and in riding over them, notwithstanding the careful step of the mules, it does sometimes seem possible that a stone might tilt if the weight by any accident was brought towards either end. After a considerable ascent we lost all trace of road or path, directed only by occasional stones set on end to mark the course along the rocks leading to the upper level of the great glacier towards which we had again inclined.

We continued to ascend this stony ridge till it terminated in a great field of ice that extends in all directions as far as the eye can reach round the base of the Monte Rosa, and upon which we were now to enter. The most remarkable feature amidst the wonders of the Valley of Zermatt is unquestionably the Matterhorn. It is impossible by any description to give an idea of the grandeur of this vast pyramid as truly formed as if it had been designed by an architect, and rising to a prodigious height from the glacier that forms its pedestal.

Upon entering the glacier we were obliged to dismount from our mules, which sank in the snow at every step under our weight. We still continued, however, to avail ourselves of their assistance, taking hold of their tails and making them drag us forward as long as they could make their own way with tolerable expedition. At length, however, the snow became so soft that they could only flounder slowly through it. We therefore abandoned them and walked towards the summit of the col. The guides still continued to force forward the baggage mules, though sinking to the belly at every step, but their further progress at length became impossible, and the guides transferred the burdens to their own shoulders. It is always said that the mules in passing the Mont Cervin are much distressed by the rarity of the atmosphere. This was observed by Saussure and has since been repeated by all guides and guide-books. I must confess, however, that I could perceive no such symptoms. That the poor animals were much distressed and blown is very true, but not more so, I think, than was to be expected

from their unceasing struggles up steep banks of snow, in which they sank at each step under their heavy burdens.

After a good walk upon the glacier we at length reached the col of the Mont Cervin about two o'clock, and our first care was to seek a resting place for the night amidst the rocks of a small ridge that rises through the snow on the summit. The col of the Mont Cervin is formed by a ridge connecting the base of the Matterhorn with the Monte Rosa, and the glacier that crowns it falls over on the Italian side into the Val Tornanche, as it does into the valley of Zermatt on the Swiss side by which we had ascended. A small sheltered ledge was soon fixed upon, and our guides immediately began to level it by building up a platform of stones from the lower side in such a way as to admit of our stretching ourselves upon it without sliding down. Over this ledge it was intended to form a sort of tent by sewing together some sheets which we had brought for that purpose from Zermatt, and which were to have been stretched over our walking poles inclined against the rock behind. But before the work of levelling was completed I ran round to the top of the ridge to look for the remains of the hut that had been constructed there for Saussure's guides during his stay on the Mont Cervin. I found the four walls still standing, and on sending to inform Coutet of this, he came up and we decided that we might be better there than on the rock below, which was therefore abandoned. Our new dwelling, however, which was nothing more than four low walls, very loosely built, and enclosing a space of about six or seven feet square, would not admit the whole of our numerous party. We therefore threw down an end wall and extended the building till we had enclosed a space of 10 or 11 feet. We now perceived what had before escaped our notice, that our mansion was at least a foot deep of solid ice. We found that it would cost us too much labour to break up and remove this; the guides therefore threw a covering of large stones over it that we might be dry. There was a double disadvantage in this arrangement. In the first place these large stones, thrown in as they chanced to fall with a point or an edge upwards made anything but an agreeable bed; in the next place a foot of ice and 6 inches of stones raised us too high for the shelter of our low and open walls, which remained tolerably secure below but near the top were loose and broken, and lastly the ice-house below us contributed not a little to the cold we suffered. Mr. Hildyard, William, and I occupied this raised platform; our guides, who occu-

pied the new portion of our hut, were better off, as there was no ice at that end, and they consequently lay 18 inches lower, and besides being to leeward were sheltered by our platform and our bodies from the blast that streamed in upon us. Our next care was to roof in our dwelling; and this was done by laying our walking poles across from wall to wall, over which we stretched the sheets we had brought from Zermatt, which we secured with large stones on the top of the wall. All this had occupied a good deal of time and we were beginning to feel excessively cold, for we had been welcomed on our arrival at the col by a shower of snow. We, therefore, made what haste we could to set up our barometers and finish our observations, and crept into such shelter as our hut afforded us. Here we wrapt ourselves in our cloaks and opened our basket of provisions. We were at the height of about 11,000 feet above the sea, and the barometer stood scarcely above 20 inches, yet none of us were able to perceive the slightest effect of the rare atmosphere upon our feelings, and certainly the loss of appetite and loathing of food which is described as common in such situations were symptoms that appeared in none of our party, for I never saw eleven persons on whom a solid meal of cold beef, sausages, and cheese seemed better bestowed. Our only privation was the want of water; the guides had brought up a keg of sour wine, but I could not venture to drink any of it, and though we had brought up a bundle of sticks for fuel and might have melted some snow, we thought it better to economise our wood for our next morning's breakfast, or for any emergency that might arise, and to confine ourselves to a single glass of sherry. After this we proceeded to make ourselves up for the night; our guides put on their black woollen night-caps and huddled as close as they could together to keep themselves warm. This was ingeniously managed; one man, lying with his head to the wall, spread his legs, between which the next man sat down, resting his head upon the first man's body, and having in like manner a third man overlapping him between his legs. This occupied the whole breadth of the hut, and two other rows of the same kind were formed. When they were thus as nearly as possible compacted into one mass, the blankets they had brought up were drawn over them and they composed themselves to sleep. We were much less well off. Before we reached the col we perceived that the wind was carrying the clouds which had collected in greater abundance rapidly past the summit of the Monte Rosa and the neighbouring moun-

tains, and on our arrival upon the col we found it already blowing pretty strongly there. Our hut stood in the most exposed situation on the very summit of the ridge. The violence of the wind increased, blowing upon us through the chinks of our crazy wall and under the sheets which flapped close above our heads, raised as we were upon our bed of ice and stones. The sharpness of these stones made it impossible to endure the same position for more than a few minutes, and we soon felt that we had the prospect of a long and sleepless night before us. All we could do was to draw our cloaks closely round and to arm ourselves with patience while we lay shivering and waited for the day to break. I soon began to discover that the distressing effects of a rare atmosphere of which we had heard were not altogether a fable, for within an hour after we had finished our meal I felt a severe headache, pain in the back of the neck, feverish thirst, and a fulness and great quickness of pulse. This lasted for two or three hours and increased when I attempted to lie down. The headache then left me and I became comparatively easier, though the thirst continued unabated. I do not doubt that all this was the consequence of a heavy and hurried meal, and of the intense cold we suffered, but I am persuaded that the symptoms were greatly aggravated by the rarity of the atmosphere. The night, which was one of wind, snow, and hail, appeared quite interminable. We lay subdued, silent, and helpless, like the sea-sick passengers on the deck of a packet, and always felt that it was more like one of those wretched nights at sea than anything we could compare it to, with the addition here of more piercing cold. Towards morning the wind abated a little, and we had I believe some short moments of sleep at intervals, but it was hailed as happy tidings by all the party when I looked up and announced to them that the day had at length broken.

*Aug. 28.*—Before we began to move I was anxious to ascertain the rate of our pulses. Mr. Hildyard's I found so low as 58, so that in his languid circulation the cold had apparently been more than sufficient to counteract the effect of the rarity of the atmosphere. William's pulse ranged from 80 to 85, and mine was at 80.

As soon as it was daylight our guides got up and lighted a fire outside our hut. David Coutet made us a glorious pot of coffee which warmed and comforted us, so that in a few minutes we began to forget the miseries of the night. We again found that our appetites were not to be impaired at

least by a height of 11,000 feet, eating a hearty breakfast which completed our cure. On questioning the guides they declared that they had all felt headaches, and that some of them were sick for some hours after their meal the night before, and they said that this was usually the case at such great elevations. In the morning, however, we experienced no such effects from our breakfast, but all felt unusually well and gay and vigorous. The appearance of the weather, however, was very unpromising, the wind continued much too violent to admit of our further progress, the clouds covered all the higher summits as they swept past, and we only caught a few chance glimpses of the great summit of the Monte Rosa. In the meantime we employed ourselves in taking some observations of the barometers, and then enjoyed the luxury of basking in the sun in the shelter of the rock under which we had passed the night, from whence we saw a small flock of swallows pass steadily below our feet across the col into Italy.

We waited in the vain expectation of some improvement in the weather that might still enable us to make the ascent to-day, and when that became hopeless resolved to take the chance that another night upon the col might give us. All hands were immediately employed in closing some of the openings in the walls of our cabin, and Mr. Hildyard, William, and I, were glorying in our own success in rendering our end of it much warmer. The guides had drawn straws for the choice of places, and we had all disposed ourselves as comfortably as we could when Coutet, after a last look at the clouds, despaired, and came in to tell us that he had no hope of such weather to-morrow as could admit of our ascent, so that he advised our return to Zermatt. After some discussion this resolution was adopted, our cabin was unroofed and dismantled in a few minutes, the guides packed up our baggage which they divided amongst them, and we set off as fast as we could to Zermatt, which we reached in three hours, suffering very much from the heat and closeness of the valley after two days spent in the sharp air of the glaciers. The only event in this descent was the loss of Coutet's hat, which was blown off and carried down into the glacier below him beyond all hope of recovery. At Zermatt we made straight for our old quarters at the Vicaire's, where we arrived thoroughly drenched by a heavy rain which began about a quarter of an hour before we got in, and I must say that I then rejoiced that we were not shivering under a dripping sheet on the Mont Cervin where

the snow was probably falling fast. The good people of Zermatt greeted us as we passed through the village; they were not at all surprised that we should have failed in our attempt, as they were aware that the state of the weather rendered it impracticable, but they did marvel a little to see us return alive, conceiving it impossible that anyone could survive a night upon the glacier of the Mont Cervin, and they had unanimously predicted that we should all perish in the attempt. The only one of the party, however, who seemed to have excited much of their compassion was William, as they thought it hard that so young a boy should be led up to perish so cruelly.

The Vicaire and the old woman lost no time in supplying us with the means of making our coffee and with all that we required, and we endeavoured to console ourselves for our disappointment, and for the uncertainty if we should be able to renew the attempt to reach the summit of the Monte Rosa this season, by contrasting our present comfort with our last night's sufferings.

*(To be continued.)*

---

### THE AIGUILLES DES CHARMOZ AND DE GRÉPON.

BY A. F. MUMMERY.

(Read before the Alpine Club, Tuesday, May 3, 1892.)

IN a certain remote period, when a few unclimbed peaks were still to be found in the Alps, it was my good fortune to explore the various summits of the Charmoz, or rather of what used to be called the Charmoz, for the inventive genius of my successors has been so stimulated by the dearth of new routes that this peak has been hewn in twain, one half retaining the name of Charmoz, whilst the other and loftier has been dubbed the Grépon.

In company with Alexander Burgener and Benedikt Venetz, I made a very early start on July 15, 1880, and, being provided by M. Couttet with an admirable lantern (this expedition took place in the pre-folding-lantern age), we made very fair progress for the first half-hour. We then began to ascend something which Burgener averred was a path, but which insensible of, or possibly made bashful by, such gross flattery, hid itself coyly from view at every third step. After a long grind the grey light of morning began to overpower our lantern, so, finding a suitable stone, we carefully hid it and marked the spot with a sprig of pine.

x 2