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MONT DOLENT, AIGUILLES ROUGES DE DOLENT & THE NEUVAZ GLACIER

FROM THE GRAND DARREI.

THE
ALPINE JOURNAL.

MAY 1907.

(No. 176.)

SOME TRAVERSES IN 1906.

By HAROLD RAEBURN.

(Read before the Alpine Club, December 17, 1906.)

IT has been well said by a French writer in the pages of 'La Montagne' that to know a mountain one should not only have climbed it, but should also have traversed it and retraversed it in every possible way. This, no doubt, is what every mountaineer, who really loves the mountains, and who is not simply a tourist, ignorant of the art of climbing and only intent upon running up a long list of 'peaks,' would choose to do had he the leisure.

It is a counsel of perfection, I fear, and not to be readily attained. We can, however, often arrange that our peak is traversed, and thus in one day gain a closer and truer knowledge of it than can be obtained by a simple ascent. This was the plan of campaign fixed upon by my friend Mr. W. N. Ling and myself in settling our Alpine holiday of 1906.

The sub-title of the 'Alpine Journal' is 'A Record of Mountain Adventure.' Now I regret that, owing to the absolute smoothness and hitchlessness with which all our plans worked, and to the extraordinarily accommodating manner in which the somewhat patchy weather of July arranged itself for our benefit, adventures, except in the sense that all the climbs might be said to be adventures, were conspicuous by their absence. Not even a night out occurred to make contrast, with its darkness, cold, and discomfort, to the glorious days of sunshine and pleasure on the ridges and summits of the great peaks. I feel, therefore, some diffidence in bringing before the Club an account of the Alpine doings of our party. We were visitors to well known districts and to

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old and favourite mountains. Only on one of our traverses did we explore any extent of new ground. The actual interest, therefore, must be sought for in the general idea of the campaign, which was designed to bring back as far as possible some of the charms of the old days of exploration.

The pioneers of this Club were fortunate men. They came to the Alps, all round them they saw unclimbed peaks, unmade passes, and untrodden glaciers. They conquered these, and now the would-be mountain explorer and maker of first ascents must go far afield if he desires to emulate or surpass their exploits. Indeed, the great peaks of the Himalaya will soon be the only possible field for conquest on a great scale at the rate at which the dominating peaks of Africa, North and South America, New Zealand, and the Caucasus have fallen in the last few years.

These early pioneers of the Alps were also true 'guideless climbers,' for the Swiss and Savoyard peasants they employed were rather in the capacity of comrades or porters than as guides in the modern sense of the word. The amateurs of those days, if not in most cases the actual physical leaders of the party, were almost always the mental. They were the planners of the battle and the organisers of victory, and oftentimes drew their hesitating companions to the icy summits by the rope of will.

The modern 'Alpinist' (hateful word in English) is quite a different being. Without going so far as to dub him 'the fibreless contents of fashionable clothes,' for, to do him justice, he is often a sufficiently active and athletic young man; yet he may be styled the 'Kodaker' of the art of climbing. He is content to 'press the button' of his breeches pocket; the guides contract to do the rest.

Naturally enough, the pioneers climbed the peaks by the easiest routes; all others, to an explorer, are wrong routes. There came a time, however, when the Alps ceased to be a field for any large exploratory climbing. Then all the so-called wrong routes afforded means of making practically new ascents, and they were done for the new interest, sport, and training thereby afforded. Nowadays, almost all the wrong routes that should be done, and some perhaps that should not, on the great peaks have been accomplished, and on the traverses included in the title of this paper our party has on only one any portion of novelty to report.

To ourselves, of course, all the routes were exploration, and to carry out our plan of campaign we agreed that all tracks of other parties, ropes, chains, tin cans, broken bottles, &c.,

should be avoided as much as possible. We had been struck by the fact that, though members of this Club for several years, we had never visited the Oberland. The Swiss section of the chain of Mont Blanc was also unknown to us. There is a well known advertising phrase, 'Come early and avoid the rush.' We resolved to apply this advice to the Alps, and to go at the beginning of July. We should, no doubt, if the weather was at all unfavourable, find the peaks iced; but, on the other hand, the glaciers were likely to be less troublesome. Chief advantage, we should be able to almost dispense with the lantern. Personally I should prefer to deal with 1,000 ft. of iced rocks, than hunt along in the dark over moraine and scrub for the alleged track on the lower slopes, Diogenes-like for the non-existent. There may, I suppose, be a non-existent track as well as an invisible hold. This is truly a game which 'ne vaut pas la chandelle.'

Wishing to extend our knowledge of the Alps as much as possible, but looking upon the dictum that no two nights should be spent in the same place, as the mere fanaticism of eccentricity, we divided our time of three weeks between three districts—the Swiss Val Ferret, the Oberland, and Zermatt. In the second of these we had the pleasure of the company of Mr. Eric Greenwood. In one respect we fell from exploring and sporting grace (like the modern big game shooter, who smashes his lions with explosive bullets). We took guides, three in number, crammed full of local information and of a convenient bulk to go into the breast pocket. We cannot sufficiently praise their 'intelligence,' though occasionally finding their times too fast for Herren who were also porters as well. Their names were the well known ones of Siegfried, Conway-Coolidge, and Kurz.

On July 13, 1906, Ling and I strolled down the Val Ferret to Praz de Fort, past chalets still untenanted except by black redstarts, and through uncut hay meadows bright with Alpine flowers, where numerous pairs of whinchats chided with harsh notes the disturbers of their domestic peace. On the previous day, a fine one, sandwiched in between two bad nights, we had succeeded in making—thanks to information kindly given by Monsieur M. Kurz through Monsieur E. Philidius—the first ascent of a hitherto unclimbed pinnacle of the Aiguilles Rouges de Dolent. From its slender spire, as from a wrecked ship's mast, we had enjoyed a marvellous view. Below our feet, and stretching to the horizon, lay a white plain of cloud like a frozen sea. Out of this soared the mighty form of Mont Blanc, a great Arctic island, its

attendant aiguilles, like islets, rocks, and stacks, clustering round its shores.

Two sleepless nights had we spent under a boulder, above the Neuvaz glacier, dodging by the flickering light of a fire of pine roots the cunningly pursuing water drops from the roof of our *gîte*.

Now we felt we had earned a day off, and it was so just as well, as it gave the new snow, fallen even far down on the Catogne, time to melt.

On the afternoon of the 14th we walked up to the Saleinaz *cabane*, by a well-engineered track on the right bank of the grandly shattered ice cataract of the lower Saleinaz glacier. The hut is splendidly placed on the shoulder of the Planereuse, a good many meters above the placider upper portion of the Saleinaz glacier. It is a very comfortable hut, with central kitchen, and sleeping-rooms on each wing, is in charge of an attendant, one Ferdinand Droz, but is not as yet provided with provisions.

The evening was a fine one, and we sat long outside the hut admiring the magnificent surroundings, till at length driven indoors by the increasing cold.

Traverse of the Aiguille d'Argentière by the Saleinaz Ice Wall and over La Flèche Rousse (South Peak).

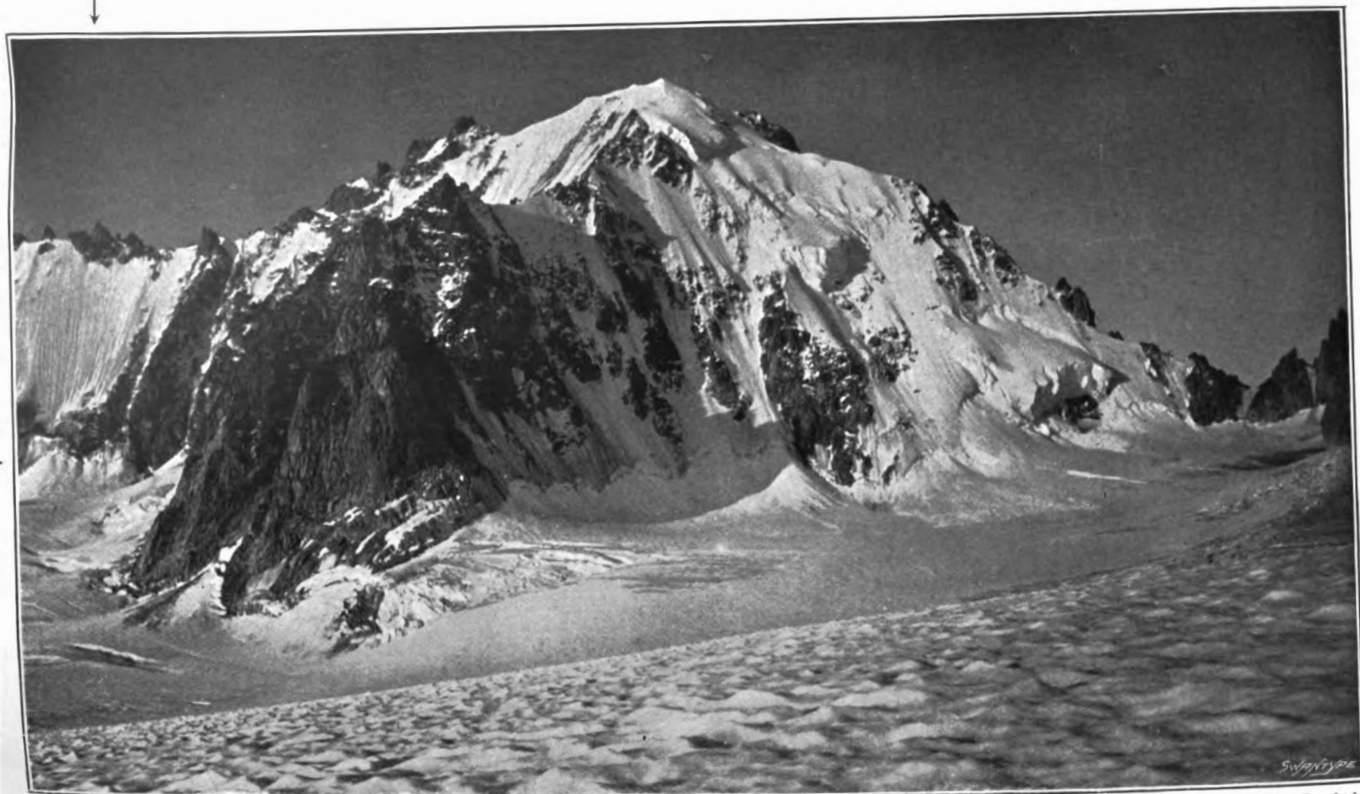
We were duly called next morning by the attentive Droz, and at 3 left the hut. Bright starlight and a faint expiring moon allowed of the lantern being dispensed with, as we descended by a well marked track across snow slopes and scree to the Saleinaz glacier. The route for the Col du Chardonnet at once crosses to the left side of the glacier, but we soon left it, and after roping, turned straight up the glacier in the direction of the great E. buttress of the Aiguille d'Argentière. Now slowly came the dawn; but what words can paint the colour glories of dawn on the great ice peaks, the million infinitely delicate tones and gradations of shade that are so ever new, and so fleeting before the full blaze of the risen sun? As we gradually neared the mountain we hoped to cross, we had its whole east side exposed to view, and could readily discover its weak points and its strong. The former, it appeared, were decidedly in the minority.

The Aiguille d'Argentière was first climbed on July 15, 1864, exactly forty-two years ago, by Messrs. Adams Reilly and Whympers, with Croz and Couttet, after two previous defeats. They attacked it from the Chardonnet side on the

Fleche Rousse.
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W. Inglis Clark, photo.

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AIGUILLE D' ARGENTIERE
FROM NEAR THE FENÊTRE DE SAUBAZ.

N.W., still the ordinary way of ascent. A way up on the Saleinaz side was discovered by a party composed of MM. Albert Barbey and Eug. Zschokke, with the guide Justin Bessard, in 1884. This leads up from the great ice bay under the S. side of the E. buttress, on to that ridge, which is then followed to the top.

In 1893 a strong guideless party, Messrs. Morse, Wicks, and Wilson, invented a new route.* A long, high, and very jagged ridge connects the S. peak of the Argentière with the Aiguille de la Neuvaz. Reaching this ridge to the N. of a minor peak, just N. of the Col du Tour Noir, from Lognan, this party traversed the ridge, avoiding some of the great towers and gendarmes, and, skirting the S. peak on the Saleinaz side, gained the arête beyond, and so reached the central point. Six years later another party, Mr. E. L. Stewart, with two guides,† ascending by the Glacier des Améthystes, crossed the S.W. ridge, and, skirting the S. peak on the Argentière side, succeeded in gaining the arête beyond, and by it the central summit. Thus up to that time the S. peak was still unascended. Though hardly expecting that this would still be the case in 1906, the fascinating appearance of the great gendarme-studded S.E. ridge made us resolve that the traverse should be attempted this way. A route on to the S.E. ridge had now to be found, without going so far along as the Col du Tour Noir. The difficulties on the Saleinaz side of that col, crossed but once in either direction, have led Ball's 'Guide' to describe its passage as 'one of the greatest *tours de force* in the Alps,' and our force we considered not strong enough to attempt the *tour*.

About midway between the Col du Tour Noir and the S. peak of the Argentière, two rock ribs, separated by an ice couloir, run up the Saleinaz ice wall. The larger, or N. rib, runs from a short distance above the bergschrund to the top of the ridge, where it terminates in a steep gendarme; the S. rib, more slightly marked, begins higher up and dies out under the ice about halfway up the slope. Could we once gain a footing on this N. rib the rest of the ascent to the ridge should go fairly easily.

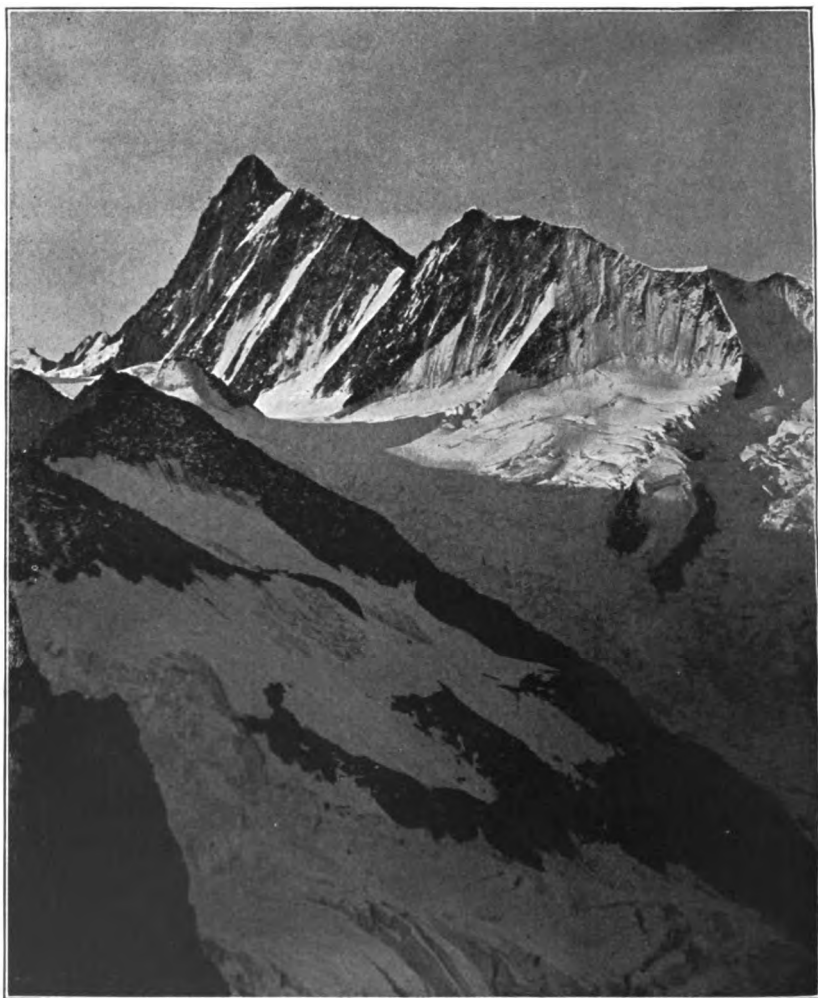
The bergschrund below the N. rib was reached at 5. It was here a wide gulf, but further S., a little past the S. rib, it proved well choked, and after a struggle the sneering upper lip was mounted. The thin snow here soon gave place to

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xviii. p. 207.

† *Ibid.* vol. xx. p. 15.

hard ice, and heavy cutting became necessary. On the rocks being at length gained they proved iced and difficult. So steep is the wall here that handholds were necessary. Fortunately it was often possible to obtain, with judicious cutting, good holds for the fingers between the ice and the rock, and we gradually hauled ourselves up. Thin streams of powdery snow came from above, and evinced a rather malignant propensity for taking refuge up one's sleeve, or down one's neck if given a chance. A guided party—they probably considered us misguided parties—which had left the *cabane* shortly after us, now settled down for breakfast on some rocks at the foot of the E. buttress, and we should have been glad to follow their example. It proved several hours later, however, and after a great deal of cutting, that we at length gained a small niche in the S. rib, where a sit-down meal could be indulged in. A short distance above the breakfast place we cut across the ice couloir to the N. rib. The rocks here, though loose, were almost ice-free, and fairly easy scrambling led us rapidly up to the top of the gendarme on the ridge, and to a splendid view of all the peaks surrounding the upper part of the Argentière glacier (10.55). Serious difficulty for a time now over, we followed the ridge, climbing and cairning two gendarmes *en route*. Turning the last great tower below the S. peak on the Argentière side, we halted for a second meal where some snow water trickled over the sun-warmed rocks, then climbed an ice couloir, mostly by rocks, on the right bank to near the ridge. Here the rocks of the S. peak become exceedingly steep, and are, moreover, in large slabs, like those of the aiguilles round the Mer de Glace. The S. peak is a double one. From this point, Mr. Morse's 'false col,' an ice couloir runs up between the two peaks to a connecting ice arête. This, if in snow, would be the obvious and easy way of gaining the foot of the final peak. On our attacking it, however, it was evident that, like the cold lady of the Frenchman's apostrophe, it was 'pure ice from head to foot.' Our severe spell of step-cutting above the bergschrund had made us think that a change was now preferable, and we accordingly attacked the slabs. These did not prove easy, and, as they were out of the sun and, moreover, somewhat iced, they were rather cold. The climbing, in fact, will compare not unfavourably with the more difficult parts of the Dru or the Charmoz-Grépon ridge.

The summit of the lower peak is composed of great blocks, through letter boxes of which one creeps. A short drop then led down to the ice arête between the two peaks. To keep up



Eric Greenwood, photo.

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**THE FINSTERAARHORN
FROM THE SCHRECKHORN.**

the interest to the last this arête abutted against the foot of a nearly vertical wall.

Fortunately, however, this was cleft by a narrow chimney, which, though a little iced, let us up without serious resistance to where a short scramble led to the summit. Here was a small cairn. Across a narrow cleft and somewhat higher there shot into the air the projecting 'Cannonstone' of the 'Flèche Rousse,' many feet overhanging the ice wall above the Saleinaz glacier. A seat on the point of the 'Arrow' gives a curious sensation of insecurity, almost of flight, so narrow is it and so much does it project. We gained the top at 3.7 p.m. The 'Flèche Rousse' (name only on the 1905 revision of M. Kurz's map) was first ascended by a party consisting of M. Kuhlmann with two guides on August 18, 1901.* They climbed it from the central col, returning by the same way. We left the top at 3.25. The first drop to the ridge on the N. is well-nigh overhanging, but the reserve cord, which our party is never without, was not uncoiled.

The arête soon becomes easy, and we strolled up to the central peak, a beautiful snow cornice, at 4.10.

Willingly would we have spent an hour or two there in admiring the splendid views from this frontier coign of vantage, especially as we had 'no guide to point the way, no porter chiding our delay,' but thoughts of evening's fading light, and of the long traverse before us for the morrow, drove us at 4.25 down the ordinary way to the Glacier du Chardonnet. The toil up from there to the col, slipping and slopping in the semi-soft snow of the track, 'the sun,' if not 'the knapsack, full upon the back,' was about the stiffest work of the day, but by 6.25 we stood once more on the Swiss frontier. The rest was easy, and we had gorgeous visions, revealed and veiled alternately by strange forming and vanishing masses of vapour, as we wandered down in the glowing evening light to the Saleinaz *cabane*, which we entered precisely at 8.

The Finsteraarhorn 'from End to End.'

The following morning we left our comfortable quarters at 4, and, bidding *au revoir* to the obliging Droz, dropped down the steep track under the walls of the 'Clochers de Planerense,' past 'La Gare,' where the whistling of a numerous colony of marmots had to do duty for the engines,

* *L'Echo de Alpes*, 1903, p. 95.

down the 'Pas des Cables,' and through the dim cool aisles of the pines, out into the already glowing and tremulous light of the Val Ferret at Praz de Fort. Thereat bath and breakfast, and a walk to Orsières to catch the diligence, and at evening we found ourselves at Fiesch. An interrogative wire to the 'Jungfrau' brought a diplomatic reply from our complementary party for the Oberland traverses, Mr. Eric Greenwood. We, however, felt stifled in the thick, dusty air of the underworld at Fiesch, after our free life among the peaks above the Val Ferret, and went up to the Eggischorn that evening, not, I may here confess, on our own feet. On the following afternoon, accompanied by a porter, Greenwood, Ling, and I, took the charming walk past the Märjelensee, and up the Aletsch glacier to the Concordia Inn. A comfortable little place we found it, with excellent cooking, good food, and reasonable charges, considering that everything must be transported on men's backs. The eggs and coffee were particularly good, and a haunting and punning French rhyme I had picked up and infected Ling with—it became a kind of 'Punch Brothers' to us—of no application. The libel runs—

Dans les montagnes de la Suisse
Le café noir est très mauvais,
Mais il est bon pour l'alpiniste,
Car il est encore pi-o-let.

As evening came on the 'white maiden' wrapped herself up in multitudinous folds of thick mist, and we were told, 'For to-morrow it will be fine; but after?'

In the morning we crossed, *sans porteur*, the Grünhornlücke to the new hut at the foot of the Finsteraarhorn. This hut, built out of the materials of the old Oberaar hut, is placed on some rocks above the Fiescherfirn, close to the figures 3,237 on the Siegfried Map. It is neat and clean, but very small, has wood in a lean-to outside, and a small supply of provisions, in case of need. Little more than an hour above the hut runs the bergschrund which marks the junction of the Fiescherfirn with the rocks of the great S.E. arête of the Finsteraarhorn. For our purpose of going over that peak from 'end to end,' it was necessary to find a way on to this ridge fairly low down, before the actual peak begins to rise more steeply. We did this, and returned to the hut for dinner. We were congratulating ourselves on having the hut to ourselves when, about 6, a party of fifteen Swiss and guides turned up from the Oberaar hut.

At 3.10 on the morning of the 19th we left the hut, and, steering an E. course, threaded our way through some crevasses, and reached the bergschrund at 4.15. Thunder, with some hail and rain, had been going on all night, and now the weather was rather threatening, thick mists veiling all the upper crags of the Finsteraarhorn. We were, however, too glad to escape from the stifling, overcrowded hut to think of waiting till it cleared. Thunder still growled faintly in the distance as we crossed the bergschrund, and, by our steps cut yesterday, mounted an ice couloir. Escaping from this soon, by a somewhat rotten chimney on our left, we came out on an easy slope of rock, ice, and snow which led with no difficulty up to the ridge. This was at a snow arête, between two rock towers, just before the ridge begins to rise more steeply.

Here met us a keen wind from the Finsteraar glacier, and, after a smart snow shower, the mists began to open out, and gradually the wonderful panorama visible from the highest ridge in the Oberland unfolded around us as we gradually rose up the steepening arête. We reached the summit at 11.15 in perfect weather.

The S.E. arête of the Finsteraarhorn is long, and broken into many rock towers, and was at this date tolerably snow and ice clad; but at no place is the climbing really difficult, while always full of variety and interest. Like Kederbacher, Mr. Farrer's leading guide in 1883, I had wasted a good deal of the party's time in a well-meant attempt to follow the arête straight up to the right of the 'slab.' I am still misguided enough to think that, in good conditions and with scarpetti, or without boots, this could be done.*

* Since writing the account of our traverse I have been much interested in reading Mr. W. C. Compton's well illustrated and capital paper of his party's ascent in 1905, in the *Alpine Journal* for November 1906, and also Mr. Coolidge's comments on that paper in the *Journal* for February 1907. It appears that the chief point about which there seems to be a question is in regard to the time occupied in getting from the 'slab' to the top of the mountain. I regret that I cannot give exact records of this from our notes, but our recollection makes it about 30-35 minutes. If I may be allowed to suggest, however, I think any discrepancies may be easily reconciled by the conditions encountered by the various parties. Certainly Mr. Valentine-Richards's photograph shows that the conditions were very good in 1899, and Mr. Compton himself indicates that they were similar in 1905.

When we did it the conditions were not really bad. There was a little fresh snow on the rocks, and a good deal of ice in the final

After a glorious hour on the summit we left at 12.15 and rapidly descended a well-worn track to the Hugi Sattel, 12.45, but from thence to near the Schwarzegg, the snow and ice of the mountain, passes, and glaciers, were traceless as an Arctic waste.

After a short piece of horizontal snow on the Hugi Sattel, the slope plunges down pretty steeply, the good snow gradually thinned out till the ice axes had to be set a-swinging, and a good deal of step-cutting was necessary before we gained the cornice-free rock arête leading down to the Agassizjoch. This arête is loose, but easy, and we reached the Agassizjoch at 2.25.

I don't know if the couloir here is ever climbed in the afternoon, but we did not consider it attractive. The loose snow cornices at the top lay on hard ice, and small avalanches were constantly sliding down. We mounted the Agassizhorn for a short distance, and then descended the rocks on the left bank of the couloir. These rocks are disagreeably disintegrated, but nowhere difficult, and in a warm niche we made the longest halt of the day—about 2 hrs.—boiled water, and made afternoon tea. Towards the bottom it became necessary to leave the rocks, and cut down the last

gully. The rope was partly buried, but it was only used to save the cutting of a few steps, in swinging across to the right wall, practically free from ice, and offering good holds and no difficulty. One could easily understand, however, that if completely iced this part of the climb might be really difficult, and take a considerable time. One might say, generally, as regards the S.E. arête of the Finsteraarhorn, that while Mr. Compton has given a perhaps slightly too favourable account of the ease of the climb, Mr. Valentine-Richards is by far too flattering in comparing it with the Italian ridge of the Matterhorn. Cut the bonds of rope, chain, and ladder from that 'Samson bound to make sport for the Philistines' and no comparison will hold for a moment.

As regards the attempted ascent by the N.E. buttress by a lady in 1902, this is mentioned, as Mr. Coolidge reminds Mr. Compton, in the *Alpine Journal*, vol. xxiii. p. 322.

We had the good fortune to meet on the summit of the peak Fuhrer (with a party by the Hugi Sattel) who led on that occasion. He indicated to us the place—'100 meters from the top,' he put it—where his party finally stopped. They were altogether 60 hours on the mountain, and were lucky to get off with only a few frostbites. He gave, he said, information as to the route to Fritz Amatter, and this young fellow, in 1904, with Mr. G. Hasler, completed the ascent of the Finsteraarhorn by this splendid climb (*Alpine Journal*, vol. xxii. p. 322).

part of the couloir—out of the avalanche tracks—to the choked up bergschrund. This was the only place during our whole season where any real risk had to be run. The snow had mostly run off here, and what remained merely adhered loosely in sodden strips, so a lot of cutting had to be done. Occasionally stones came sailing down, but no large flocks flew. The steps were made as small as consistent with safety, and the axes swung and the splinters flew in double quick *tempo*. Over the bergschrund with a jump into deep snow, and we plunged to the Finsteraar glacier, 6.35. A brisk ten minutes' rather heavy going then placed us on the Finsteraarjoch, 6.45. Here we gazed on the great unknown—to Ling and myself—ice-filled valley of the Obereismeer, the vast crags of the Lauteraarhorn and the Schreckhorn rising high above on the right, and great ice cliffs ranging round to the Eiger on the left. We gazed also down into a black gulf, the Grindelwald valley, whence ominous-looking thunder clouds were rising. The orthodox way from the Finsteraarjoch appears to be to climb to the right, N.E., to meet the route from the Strahlegg; but we, considering that it was so early in the year, resolved to try the direct descent through the séracs and by the right bank of the glacier to the Schwarzegg. Keeping well to the right, we succeeded in forcing a way through the séracs, having some weird glimpses of the under-world depths of the ice caverns from rickety snow bridges. Then we went across snow and ice slopes to a rock island. Here a short halt was called for a period of 'hydropathic treatment,' combined with the 'open air rest cure' for 'that tired feeling,' and one of the party then discovered a couloir on the N. side of the island cliffs which let us down the precipices to the snow slopes below. The bergschrund was just a convenient jumping width for loaded, and somewhat *ennuyés* mountaineers, and in the fast gathering darkness we traversed rock and snowslopes, many tracks of chamois, and got down a short snow couloir on to the almost level, moraine-strewn Eismeer.

For some time before this we had had a magnificent display of lightning, brilliantly bringing up the outlines of the great peaks. The thunder rolled and crashed, but, like the old fox in the song, we thought, 'That is fine music, still I'd rather be in my den, O.'

We did eventually reach the hut, at 10 P.M., by the aid of our little aluminium lantern, just in time to escape the heavy rain now beginning. The hut was in the sole occupancy of a German

climber, who had, it appears, made rendezvous with three friends, and who, I fear, was somewhat disgusted to find he had risen with alacrity to give admission to three somewhat uninterested and taciturn strangers. After a meal, of which the *pièce de résistance* was pea and maggi soup with a dash of cognac, we dropped off into delicious slumber, soothed by the dashing of the rain outside the hut. The morning was again fine, and we walked down to Grindelwald past the Bäregg, again almost rebuilt after its destruction by an avalanche this spring, and to the 'Bear' for *déjeuner* and rooms.

The following day, July 21, the weather was thoroughly bad, and, while Greenwood, the *blasé habitué*, loafed, Ling and I, as in duty bound, according to our plan of campaign, made another traverse, the little Scheideck. We did it by the easiest route, *i.e.* by train, but got no view. We could hear the avalanches falling from the great ice cliffs of the Jungfrau, but of the grand scenery saw very little. The mist was dense and rain fell at intervals all day. The 22nd, however, saw the weather again fine, and we sent a man up in the morning to the Schwarzegg hut with a heavy sack, and in the afternoon walked up ourselves.

Traverse of the Schreckhorn. Up by N.W., Down by S.W. Arête.

Twenty-eight people in the hut overnight, but our party luckily the only one for the Schreckhorn.

We left the hut—sleepless of course—at 3.15, and walked up the great couloir of the ordinary route, taking to the rocks on its left when it became too steep for our nails to 'bite.' At the top we crossed and followed the route to the N.W. ridge, except that we kept higher up and close under the steep rocks of the peak, crossing rubby rocks and ice slopes above the upper Kastensteinfirn. A good deal of cutting was necessary, as the party was not using crampons. Crossing the couloir running into the N.W. face of the Schreckhorn, near its head, on ice, we climbed a steep chimney and rock wall to the N.W. arête just before it suddenly steepens. The N.W. arête, or Anderson Grat, as it is called—the first ascent was made in 1883 by J. Stafford Anderson and G. P. Baker, with Ulrich Almer and Aloys Pollinger*—affords a first-rate climb, continuously steep, but without any passage of serious difficulty. It is apt to be pretty icy early in the season, and

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xi. p. 364.

was so at this date. It appears to be the better plan—and there is certainly no necessity of doing otherwise—to adhere to the arête as closely as possible. At one point, not far from the top, a very sensational, though perfectly safe, passage occurs, reminding one somewhat of the arête of the Ecrins close to the 'Almer Gap.'

Two and a half hours' interesting climbing landed us on the summit at 11 o'clock.

Perfect weather and glorious views rewarded our efforts. Already the new snow was melting, and running in streams of water off the S. side of the summit, and we were able to get water and set our aluminium stove a-boiling. Thereafter we lay, basked, and admired for over an hour. Few Oberland peaks can beat the Schreckhorn for views and pictures seen from it.

At 12.15 the descent was begun.

At first the S.W. ridge is of easy angle and narrow, and was now crowned and adorned by a tall corniced edge of ice and purest snow, the lovely wind-carved curves and flutings of which it almost appeared like sacrilege to shatter by the brute force of the ice axe, but it had to be done.

Soon broadening and steepening, the ridge became almost snow-free. It is, lower, almost vertical in places, but convenient chimneys and ledges always appear, and our spare cord was not uncoiled. At 4.55 we were down at the foot of the steep upper portion, then, getting on the west-running buttress, descended this for a time, first on good, then on loose rock. Then, crossing an ice couloir to the left, gained easy rocks, which soon led down to avalanche-marked snow slopes above the bergschrund. A jump across this landed us on the Schreckfirn. Descending this, and crossing the rocks, we jumped into the great couloir and had some capital standing glissades back to the hut. Our taking this route over the Schreckhorn was the outcome of a suggestion of the discoverers of the 'S.W. passage.'* I here most heartily endorse the opinion expressed in Mr. Bradby's paper of the S.W. route up the Schreckhorn as a good climb, and a safe and interesting route, and one which, under the leadership of good guides, ought, I believe, to become the quickest, as it is the most direct, from this side. This does not mean always that the nearer the climb approaches the right angle the righter the route. The formidable appearance of the great red bluff of the upper

* See Mr. Bradby's paper, 'A Month's Climbing in the Bernese Oberland,' *Alpine Journal*, vol. xxi. p. 499.

part seems to frighten most parties off, but there are in reality only two or three places of actual 'technical difficulty,' to use an expression much in favour with our Continental friends. No doubt the descent, as usual on really steep but good rocks, is considerably easier than the ascent, but the risk from falling stones is practically nil, unless sent down by the party themselves, and this risk, with a properly trained climbing party, should be extremely small. The route our party took off the ridge to the Schreckfirn might require modification. No stones or snow fell at the hour we crossed the couloir, about 6 P.M.

Greenwood's time was now nearly up. We discussed crossing the Jungfrau or the Eiger. He had ascended both, Ling and I neither. Ling rather inclined to the Jungfrau, I to the Eiger, but Greenwood would not hear of the latter. His memory of it had been for ever spoiled, he said, by the spectacle of an intoxicated guide standing on his head and singing on the very summit of the peak. Rather a test of sobriety, I should think. Our discussion was settled the same day, however, by the weather, and we went to Meiringen by rail and steamer in pouring rain, and in the same and a closed cab crossed the Grimsel col. Emerging from a wall of mist into sunshine again in the Rhône valley, we drove down to Brieg, our party again the poorer by the loss of Greenwood, who dropped off at Fiesch to rejoin his baggage.

Arrived at Zermatt on the 26th, Ling and I found the 'Wall' lined with 'unemployed' guides, all climbing stopped for over a week by bad weather. To give the new snow time to evaporate, and still to keep up the character of the expedition, Friday and Saturday were devoted to traverses of various kinds, including the 'Shoehorn' by various routes and the Riffelhorn by the Matterhorn couloir.

Traverse of the Matterhorn to Italy by the Zmutt Arête.

On Monday, July 30, the attractions of the Matterhorn traverse had finally prevailed over the charms of the Dent Blanche, and, accompanied by two porters, procured through the good offices of Joseph Biener, a former guide of Ling's, we set out for the Tiefenmatten face of the Zmutt arête. Two porters were taken, as we wished to carry with us plenty of wood, and to send them back from the *gîte* the same day. One of these porters proved a good man, but of the other the less said the better.

We walked up the lovely path to the Staffel Alp, and then,

without halting, except to collect wood at the last dead trees, along the grass slopes to the side moraine of the Zmutt glacier. Here we came upon a brood of ptarmigan, the young, though little larger than a sparrow, already able to fly. Getting on the ice we rounded the first rocky promontory that projects into the glacier from the lower part of the Zmutt arête. This arête is divided near the foot into two projections or capes, which enclose a steepish little glacier or icebay. Ascending this we then turned to our right, and, leaving the place known as the lower *gite* on our left, reached a shoulder or col of the W. promontory, which leads over to the upper part of the Tiefenmatten glacier. On the ice here we passed the much-weathered remains of an unfortunate chamois, probably killed by a fall some years ago. From the top of the little col we descended slightly to the Tiefenmatten glacier beyond (height about 2,900 meters), and then skirted along below the Zmutt ridge. We had here to wait over an hour for the porters, who had lagged behind, and on their at last coming roped them up.

Plenty of stones come down here at times, and at this hour—about 1 P.M.—we could not think of going up a gully, so it was necessary to find a safe access to the face. This was found at the buttress or rib forming the true right wall of Penhall's couloir. Penhall's party of course did not climb the couloir, but, as his diagram shows, crossed it at a narrow place pretty high up. Little difficulty was found in crossing the bergschrund, and effecting a lodgment on the rocks. We then ascended the rib a good way, and, bending to the left, slanted up towards the arête, crossing the rock couloir that bounds the rib on its right. The rocks here are easy but very loose.

We now began to look about for the alleged 'upper *gite*.' One of the porters was supposed to know of its whereabouts, but we speedily found that he knew about it less than we knew ourselves. So, leaving Ling to bring on the impedimenta slowly, I took half the wood and went on to prospect.

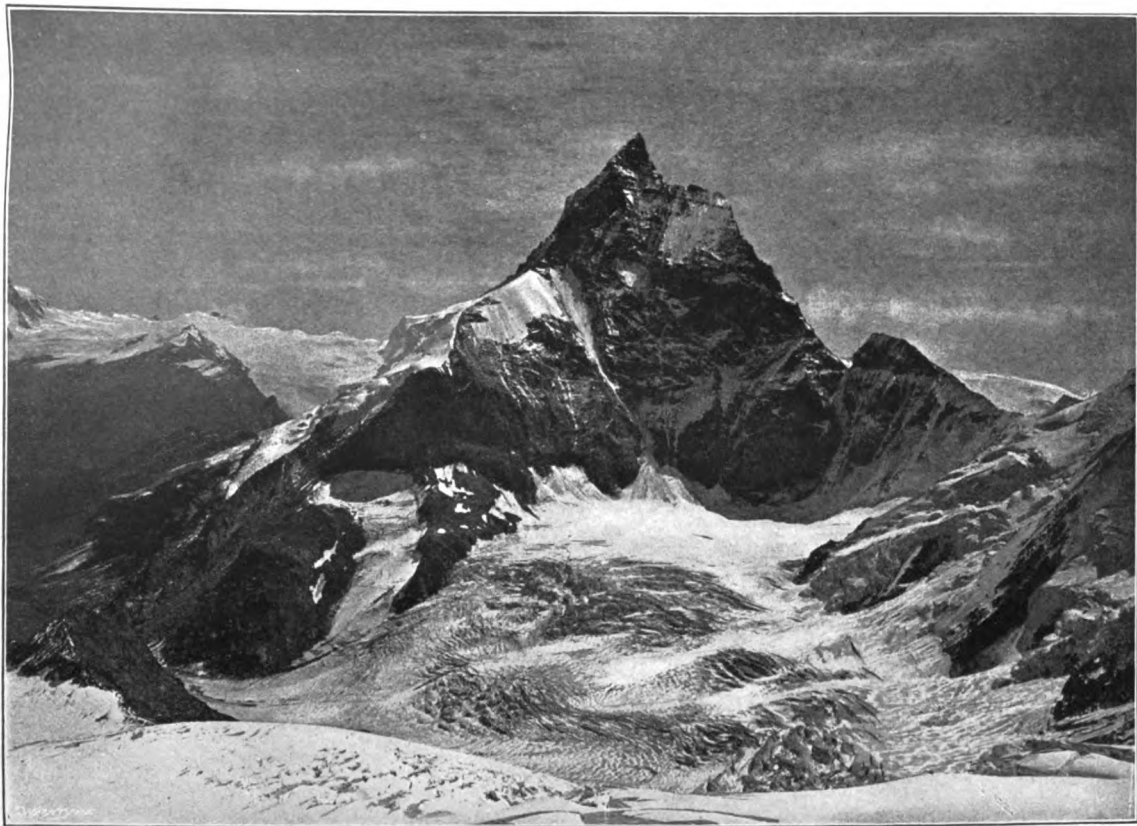
After some hunting, I came upon an excellent shelter rock, with a ledge underneath just large enough for two. With a wall in front to prevent our rolling off it would do capitally. We therefore pitched camp here, at a height by aneroid of 10,900 feet. Water ran down plentifully on either hand from melting snow beds, so afternoon tea was soon ready. We gave the porters a good rest, several cups of tea, and a share of our fare, and then sent them off. They got back to Zermatt that night, but I believe pretty late. Free at last,

Ling and I built up our wall, made the *gite* as comfortable as possible, and spent a heavenly afternoon and evening basking in the warm rays of the westering sun and admiring the grandly impressive views, ranging round from the stone-swept western face of the Matterhorn, to the avalanche-rushing ice cliffs of the Dent d'Hérens, and to where the sun set behind a crimson cloud above the shoulder of the glorious Dent Blanche. For a few hours in late afternoon our locality grew lively with falling stones; they buzzed and sang down the slight channels on each side of our rock, and one bolder than the rest would occasionally use our roof as a leaping off place. But these are birds that fly by day, and when the sun set they rested from flight and song.

Gradually it grew dark, but occasionally flickers of summer lightning lit up the ghostly white ice cliffs of the Dent d'Hérens opposite. From thence reverberated the whole night through the growling thunder of the ice avalanches. In our comfortable shetlands and blanket bags we were quite warm, but nothing, not even a coil of rope, could mitigate the uncompromising hardness of our rock couch, and sleep fled far from us.

There is, however, a kind of uplifting excitement, a nervous tension of a healthy kind, in such a situation as ours. So very different is the sharp, clear air from the stifling reek of a crowded hut, that one does not feel the want of sleep, and I think we went none the worse the next day on that account.

At 4 A.M. on July 31 we left the *gite*, incidentally also two blankets, a large bundle of wood, and one *pain*. Some aches we did at first take with us, but soon dropped them as, with crampons on for the first time this season, we scrambled up the broken rocks above the *gite* to the big ice patch below the arête. The angle of this is fairly steep—43° measured—and even with the crampons a little cutting was necessary. It was full dawn as we reached the arête, 5.15, and gazed down on the sleeping world of the Zermatt valley. The arête was of ice with a thin, delicate, semitransparent cornice of snow, of infinite beauty, adhering to the east side. The angle soon eased off, and walking up this true 'highway' we reached the first of the great 'teeth' at 6.15. These in normal condition would offer little difficulty, save that arising from the looseness of the rocks. To-day, there were at any rate no loose rocks; all were iced firmly into their places. The first two teeth were traversed, the third passed on the Tiefenmatten side, the fourth mostly traversed.



H. Walker, photo.

Swan Electric Engraving Co. Ltd.

**THE MATTERHORN,
FROM BELOW THE COL D'HÉRENS.**

Above the 'gap,' cutting off the 'teeth,' the arête rises very steeply, and we were forced out a short distance on the Great Zmutt Couloir side; but the work was so hard, everywhere iced and snowed up, that, to shorten the labour of the cutting and hacking, we presently turned straight up and got back to the arête again.

Though still very steep it went better for a while, but then became almost vertical and as iced as ever. Nevertheless we refused to be forced into the couloir, which looked a convenient path for stones, though we saw none fall, and at length gained the short level shoulder which the top of the couloir cuts off from the main arête, only a few yards to the left (E.) of its edge. The climbing now became less difficult for a while as we followed the arête, or rather the edge of the W. face of the Matterhorn, on the upper side of the Zmutt couloir.

Above here it becomes necessary to go out on the face to the right. Most parties on this climb appear to have kept too far out here, some as far in fact as the 'curved couloir,' Penhall's route.

The rocks here are all 'wrong,' speaking in a climbing sense. They rise in two great steps, like an overlapping double roof. The intermediate spaces, again, are composed of overlapping, downward tilted edges, like slates. To-day all, except the edges of the slates and the steepest portions of the steps, were covered with ice. It was perfectly safe from falling stones in such condition. From the overhanging rocks on the left, however, the edge of the great cliff of the 'Nose,' depended vast quantities of icicles, and these were continually breaking off and rolling down the 'roof' towards us, luckily broken into fragments too small to cause much inconvenience.

To shorten the cutting necessary, we only moved a little way out on the face, and discovered a narrow vertical chimney, which let us up the first step without much difficulty. We then started up to the right, cutting, and scraping where the ice was thin, to the foot of the next 'step.' This was rather smooth and difficult, and was also iced, and it was with considerable relief that on vanquishing it we then found ourselves level with an obvious traverse, over the usual disagreeable, sloping, ice-covered rocks, back to the arête. It was now plain sailing, but at one tower, turned on the E. side, a good deal of digging and cutting was again necessary. In fact on this arête our feet hardly ever touched bare rock till we reached the top. Here we arrived at 3 P.M. The time was very slow—11 hrs., including all halts—but I do

not think it could have been materially shortened under the conditions without incurring needless risk. We both wore crampons, but my right one broke shortly after leaving the lower arête, and I do not think I went any the worse without it. At the angles of much of the climbing, steps—and hand-holds—had to be cut even with crampons, and the steps must be larger for a cramponed boot to give an equal security.

The weather had been fine hitherto, but now light wisps of mist began to form and drift about the tremendous cliffs on the Italian side of the Cervin. After an hour spent in greeting old friends, both near and far—and they were many—among the peaks visible from this glorious view-point we commenced the descent down the Italian ridge.

Fine displays of the Brocken Spectre greeted us on the shoulder, and a small snow shower with thunder coming on we were treated to a considerable manifestation of electrical energy on the part of the rocks, and the ice axes sang their weird 'chanson du piolet.'

The wet snow made the rocks—and the ropes—rather slippery, and the way a little difficult to find, and we were not sorry to step into the Italian hut about 8 p.m.

Here a comfortable night was spent, no other party being there, and next morning, in brilliant weather, we continued the descent and then climbed the upper Furgjoch back to Zermatt, whence our next traverse, alas! had to be that of France, homeward-bound.

Perhaps I may be allowed a few comments on the Zmutt arête route. The great charm of it is that it gives the mountaineer a chance of making friends with the unspoilt Matterhorn. It is utterly free from any 'artful aids,' and long may it continue so! Then in scenic impressiveness it can hardly be surpassed by any route in the Alps. The guides have a considerable respect for it, and would refuse to go for it except when in good condition, and they are right, as the position of a party containing an incompetent or exhausted 'Herr' on that western face in icy condition would be one of considerable peril. In places it would be very difficult to check a slip.

Mr. Baumann, who made the ascent shortly after Mummery (behind Emile Rey), characterises it as 'a good rock-climb.' This may possibly be the case in September, after a long spell of fine weather, but I think must rarely be a fitting description for the climb in July. In fact it gave our party about two and a half times as much ice work as the traverse of the Aig. d'Argentière by the Saleinaz ice

wall. With regard to Penhall's route up the western face. This is altogether inferior both in scenery and in point of safety. Penhall's route has apparently never been repeated. Messrs. Lammer and Lorria, it is true, made what Mr. Whymper calls a 'mad attempt' to ascend the Matterhorn by this route in 1887,* with results that were nearly fatally disastrous. They are said to have reached a point 'not very far from the top,' but I think could not have been less than 1,000 ft. below it. Their principal mistake appears to have been in not traversing to Mummery's route on the arête, when the ascent appeared impossible, instead of retreating down the western face in the afternoon. Any one who has lain on the Tiefenmatten face of the lower part of the ridge, and seen and heard the stones fall from the western face of the peak, would take good care not to expose himself to the risk of being caught there in the afternoon hours.

Herr Lorria's comment on the adventure seems to me a very just one. 'The lesson,' he says, 'to be learnt from our accident is not, "Always take guides," but rather, "Never try the Penhall route on the Matterhorn" except after a long series of fine hot days, for otherwise the western wall of the mountain is the most fearful mouse trap of the Alps.' †

THE ALPS.

By A. D. GODLEY.

(Read before the Alpine Club, February 5, 1907.)

CANDID friends have taken me to task for the too ambitious title of this paper. Who, they have asked me, am I, that I should lecture the Alpine Club on the Alps? and I need hardly say that the same question has occurred to myself. I can only plead my attitude of mind at the moment when the title was demanded of me. This address was not at that time actually written; and having before my mind the case of the essayist who was described as 'singularly unfettered by a given subject,' I feared that I might fall into his error if a too narrowly specified theme tempted me to stray outside it. Hence I chose a heading which at least allows a minimum of possibility of wandering from the point.

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xiii. p. 399.

† I wish to take the opportunity of thanking various friends, Messrs. Greenwood, Clark, Wilson, Priestman, Nettleton, and H. Walker, who either lent the negatives or allowed me the use of their slides.