

of 1680 francs. According to W. Winter Raffles,²⁰ who made the ascent the following year, it measured eighteen feet in length by eight in width, and the furniture consisted only of a stove, a table, and four rustic benches.

ZERMATT IN WAR-TIME.

By EDWARD A. BROOME.

(Read before the Alpine Club, February 1, 1916.)

ALL climbers have been punished by the War, and the only ones heard of or seen this year in the Canton Valais were Swiss, and not nearly so many as usual of these, though several bad fatal accidents had to be recorded. I myself was unfortunately the only English climber and representative of this Club visible to the naked eye. I might add that I doubt if I could have faced the innumerable worries, annoyances, and trials to temper of foreign travel, especially after the experiences of 1914, for love of mountains alone apart from other urgent calls. Then, of course, had I been thirty years younger it would have been impossible, and I trust I should have been still better employed.

Perhaps I ought to apologize beforehand for inflicting this paper on you, but it is not altogether my own doing. Papers, for obvious reasons, seem scarce. 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread,' and are sometimes only too pleased to deliver themselves of their foolish and feeble experiences!

I named my puny offspring 'Ex Nihilo Nihil fit,' but its godfather rechristened it 'Zermatt in War-time.' Let us hope he is right; anyhow, 'may difference of opinion never alter friendship.'

Zermatt in 1915 was a desert. Its busy street was empty. Its shops were shut. Half of its hotels were closed, and the other half more than half empty. The Zermatt-Visp and Gornergrat railways ran very few trains, and carried a very unremunerative number of passengers. Hardly anyone could be seen on mountain paths, no one on the peaks. The English

²⁰ 'Zermatt with the Cols d'Erin and de Collon and an Ascent of Mont Blanc,' 1854 (Reprinted from the *Liverpool Times*), p. 14.

¹ The preamble is omitted.—EDITOR.

churches both at Zermatt and the Riffelalp were not open at all, and as an anticlimax the curious breed of loafers who wander aimlessly about the village with a rope over one shoulder and an axe in one hand were conspicuous by their absence! The most pathetic spectacle of all was the sprinkling of dismal, unhappy-looking guides, most of whom had not had a single client up to the middle of August, though later some few ascents were made of the Breithorn, Monte Rosa, Matterhorn, Rothhorn, Dent Blanche, and Weisshorn; but all the passes into Italy (Theodul, Lysjoch, Weisssthors, etc.) were quite impossible (or I might say impassable) to the average climber for international and frontier reasons.

Yes! one felt very melancholy about the poor guides, especially the older ones, whose second bad season it was. The younger men seemed less in evidence and a good many were serving in the Army, while others had found temporary employment in the lower valleys on railways, electrical engineering, and in agricultural and even occasional urban work. One of the best known and most enterprising of all the young guides was reported to have been making some extra dare-devil ascents with a Bavarian, who had soon afterwards gone off his head and been taken to an asylum, to which place the said guide was invited, of course in the capacity of attendant to take charge of his Herr, and had then and there settled down with great success, 'as if a native and to the manner born.' After all, the difference between mountaineers and lunatics is not great:

'There is a pleasure sure in being mad
Which none but madmen know.'

Nothing gave us surer pleasure than to counteract our own tendency in that direction, by engaging for two or three weeks a couple of the best and most level-headed guides, both old friends; and we were almost equally pleased to recommend them and others to 'cohabitants' (a good Swiss word this) for suitable tariff jobs.

Then, again, the weather up to the end of July had been hopelessly unsettled, and the higher mountains coated with new soft snow, also much against the interests of the poor guides. Later, during August, it was generally brilliantly fine overhead for about five or six days together, and then came the invariably-recurring storm with a lot of fresh snow high up, making the bigger peaks impossible for at least two or three days more, and never giving them any chance to get into really

good condition. The few humble and meek aspirants who repaired to such huts as were open pensively recalled quite different evening rites. Overnight they filled the hungry rucksacks with good things, yet on the morrow from the rich mountains were sent empty away, and were fortunate indeed if they did not go down mighty hastily from the sleet ! On one such occasion late in the afternoon our whole party, comprising three generations, who had scrambled across the Gorner Glacier with the climbers, could not possibly get back that night, and all had to sleep in the Bétemps, much to the delight of the younger members.

Coming back to Zermatt, its hotels, its huts, and its visitors ; the Mont-Rose, the Victoria, the Beau-Site, and two or three others were shut up, and the only one that seemed to be doing a fair business was the Mont Cervin ; above the Riffel-Haus and Schwarz-See were also closely shuttered, and the maximum Census at our own favourite Riffelalp was about 50 against the usual 280 or thereabouts. All of the inns looked as if some substantial repairs and a coat or two of good paint were needed. It would also interest a good many members to hear that 'Bouvier' was not in demand, in fact quite a 'drug on the Alpine market,' and the food by no means up to the usual standard. We, however, found little to grumble at except perhaps the bread, which was of the 'Kriegsbrod' variety and very moderate in quality. It would be all right when quite fresh, but fifty folk were too few to bake for, and by the time the loaves had travelled up in the sun from Zermatt they had to be made (or say incinerated) into toast, which was obligingly done ! However, these hotels and the guests here were both better off than at Grindelwald, where we were told that the Bär, Eiger, Bristol, Alpenruhe, and all the larger hotels were closed, and the total visitors of all nationalities at one time nineteen ! Pontresina and Saas-Fee were a little better, perhaps about equal to Zermatt ; but the resorts that did best were the bathing-places, such as St. Moritz, Leukerbad, and Bex-les-Bains, mainly because the Austrian and German Spas were impossible to all outside nations.

The huts were some of them open, though it was wiser to communicate beforehand. The Bétemps seemed the most popular ; some of our party slept there four times, and we never once had it entirely to ourselves. The good Führer always made us very comfortable, and he was fortunately assisted by quite a fair cook. He reminded me one night of the present contrast with a very noisy evening some years

ago when I was also there with two of the Pollingers, and we were forty-three in all, a fair proportion of whom had to sleep under the canopy of heaven, and doubtless found it more wholesome than inside! There was a notice stuck up in the hut with instructions how to treat 'cohabitants,' but it is satisfactory to recall that we didn't find any, or rather that those we thought of were *not* those they meant!

The visitors in this district were, as I said, mostly Swiss, and, thank goodness, chiefly of the French-speaking variety, who all seemed more violently pro-Anglo-French than the French and English themselves, while there is no doubt that even the Swiss from Basle, Berne, and Zurich had learnt somewhat more about frightfulness and Kultur, and were much less pro-German than at the beginning of the War! There was also a sprinkling of Americans, Russians, and Poles, but with two exceptions we saw no Germans. One of these was a party of capable but exhausted-looking nurses from the front, who had accepted Dr. Seiler's proffered hospitality at the Mont Cervin, just the same as he, being very sympathetic and strictly neutral, had kindly offered at the Riffel (through the Alpine Club) to English wounded officers and to our nurses. The other exception was a Dresden professor and his officer son (badly wounded in France), who were very sad and quiet, and were both old clients of our hotel, or they would not have been accepted. We understood one reason Germans were so scarce in Zermatt was that they had no gold, and their paper money was too depreciated in exchange value to be acceptable to Swiss hôteliers.

I don't think I dare stand up before this distinguished audience and sit down again without saying *something*, however little, about climbing mountains, but here again it is emphatically a case of 'Ex nihilo nihil fit'; or at any rate next to nothing fit—for publication!

Our little family party had all agreed beforehand to go in more for long high-level walks than for real mountaineering, though I had made one mental reservation, and fired by the exploits of Farrar and Reade, and duly drilled by these good friends, had set my affections on a trip over a pass to Macugnaga, returning *via* the Loccie and Sesia Cols. Alas! I soon found out this was not to be, and indeed under this year's conditions the game was not worth the candle. Careful inquiries showed that the guide would first have to make personal journeys to get passports, and that then both they and I must make other journeys to Brigue to procure additional

visas for Italy. Failing all this, which would swallow up both time and money, we should certainly be 'run in' as soon as we got off Swiss soil, be locked up pending explanations, and then transported at our own expense to (say) Domodossola, and thence by rail! There was nothing for it but to hope for better luck another year, and for this one to fall back on our first programme of interesting and if possible original walks, perhaps varied by a mountain or two neither too near the frontier nor sensational, but as high as possible.

My initial attempt was enjoyable, and, though short, quite long enough for a first walk, especially as it had to be taken quite alone. It was the Gornergrat, Hohtäligrat, and Stockhorn. Although a fine Sunday morning, not a soul was to be seen on the Gorner or beyond; and thence onwards there was such a lot of snow, and indeed after the Col between the Hohtäligrat and Stockhorn it was so deep and soft, I began to wonder, if I went into a hole, how I was to get myself out. A careful mountaineer, like a good Freemason, says 'At my initiation I was taught to be cautious,' so I halted and ate my lunch on the arête, with probably as good an appetite, as fine a view, and a clearer conscience than the summit would have given.

The long walk that pleased us all most was a high-level tour from the Riffelalp to the Täsch-Alp, certainly seldom if ever made. We liked it so much that we repeated the expedition, taking probably 5-5½ hours, and returning each time *via* Zermatt. We went down to the lower end of the Findelen Glacier, across it, up beyond the village, and over the ridge that comes down from the Unter Rothhorn; then more or less on the level to a point above the Tufteren Alp, on steeply up to Galen, and thence across a nasty, steep, deep-cut rock couloir coming down from the Bösentrift to the very highest bit of the forest near the Täsch-Alp. The first time Aloys Pollinger led, and the second (he being on the Matterhorn) I found the way, selecting a higher and, I thought, a more sporting line, though no one else shared this modest view, and my route certainly took longer. Either way it was a glorious walk and can be recommended.

My first roped effort made with Aloys, just the two of us alone, was to the Adler Pass and with rather *nebulous* subsequent intentions. We slept out at the uncomfortable and for once crowded Fluh-Alp, starting next morning in doubtful weather, which later indeed prevented any of our Swiss fellow-sojourners attaining their happy haven, the Rimpfischhorn.



ON THE BÉTEMPS PATH, 1915.



THE SOLITUDE OF ZERMATT, 1915.



THE ALPHUBEL
(MISCHABELHÖRNER behind.)

We followed the interesting and rather complicated icefall route; and while Aloys cut a lot of steps up the last steep bit to the pass, I hesitated between the proverbial three courses, namely crossing the Adler, or ascending therefrom one or other of our old familiar friends the Rimpfischhorn by the rocks (left), or the Strahlhorn snow-slopes (right). A coming storm settled the knotty point; it looked like being too bad to venture much further from home, and the steep rocks could, we knew, be very nasty in wet snow, so up the Strahlhorn we went in cloud, hail, and sleet, which fortunately only lasted long enough to wet our skins and chill our bones, 'and so early home to tea.'

The Alphubel has generally been voted a dull mountain, and no one can call it very exciting climbing from either the Alphubel or Mischabel Jochs. Taken, however, up the Weingarten Glacier and the Rothengrat, it makes a thoroughly good sporting day,—about the best we had. I never seem to have heard much of this route, but it was climbed first in 1879 (the only record to be found in print), the steep rocks from the glacier to the top then taking 10 hours. We, that is Aloys and Josef Pollinger and I, slept at the Täsch-Alp, and, after going up the interminable moraine to the foot of the Mischabel Joch, crossed right-handed the steep glacier to the foot of the Rothengrat rocks. Aloys, who had been up once before, laughed at the idea of 10 hours, and as a matter of fact we took just $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours from the bottom of the rocks to the snowfields above them, and about another half-hour over the almost level *névé* to the summit. The rocks were of the best, very steep, difficult enough to be interesting, and for once in excellent condition. In descending the heat was great, and big *bergschrunds* forced us down some distance towards Saas-Fee, but as soon as possible the Alphubel Joch route up was joined and the pass crossed. The return home proved a costly experience. My companions had hurried down with a view to sleeping that same night at the Schönbühl hut, and attempting the Dent Blanche next day, but I descended leisurely to Täsch and on to Zermatt. The six o'clock train thence to the Riffel this year only ran for a minimum of three passengers, but to-night no one else appeared. Distance, decrepitude, and a desire for dinner all alike deprecated delay; so, alas! there was nothing for it but to travel up by 'Special,' pay the three fares, and possibly by that amount postpone the winding-up of the railway company!

Even at Zermatt and the Riffelalp there was no getting far

away from the War ; but a long day on Monte Rosa would at least get us as far *above* it as was possible. Having many pleasant recollections of the Grenz Glacier route, with ascents and descents by the nice warm south rocks, I stipulated for them ; but those recollections are now chastened, and the warm rocks have become a term of reproach ! Another night in the Bétémps was of course part of the programme, and we there forgathered with eight *fürherlos* Swiss also bound for Monte Rosa, who next morning decided on going our way. Our own party was five on the rope, and we made good progress to the foot of the Grenzsattel and round the glacier bay under the Zumsteinspitze to the place where the rock ridge ought to have begun, but which now appeared more like a rough, steep snow-ridge. The rocks, when we did get on to them, were full of snow and ice and very cold, so there was little inducement to linger ; and higher up we worked into as biting a blizzard as I can remember, so cold indeed that two of us found our fingers slightly frost-bitten. Our faithful guides soon rubbed life into these again, and Aloys reminded me of my similar experience on the opposite N. rock face some years back. The summit, when we got there, was as cold as the North Pole, and we could not have lost very much time, for our guideless neutrals did not reach it till $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours later. Going down the W. arête the wind soon dropped, and by the time the 'Saddle' was reached we were all quite warm and comfortable again, and later floundering on down through the deep snow to the Bétémps, and crossing the glacier to Gadmen was more Tropical than Arctic, at any rate in temperature.

Following this we had again for a day or two to content ourselves with long walks, for Monte Rosa had 'smitten us between the joints of our harness,' and more bad weather was brewing. Two of the party had designs on Castor and Pollux, but this expedition was only achieved (at any rate by the present writer) vicariously, and in point of fact through a telescope ! We could not quite make up our minds between a start from the Theodul, working along under the S. face of the Breithorn to the Schwarzthor, and climbing Pollux first (undoubtedly the better route) ; or going up the Zwillinge Glacier and the Felikjoch, taking Castor first. However, one more night at the Bétémps hut, instead of at the aromatic Gandegg, secured the casting vote, and we got to the former with the senior member of the party very lame. The ailment seemed to go off in the night, but next morning, after an hour or so on the ice, the lower limbs went on strike altogether, and



V. Sella, photo.

MONTE ROSA GROUP,
from the Rimpfischhorn.

thoughts turned sadly to Ben Battle, of pious memory. We could not quite appropriate his 'cannon ball,' but could and did shamelessly parody it, and say that Monte Rosa's

Chilly wall knocked out his legs,
So he laid down his arms ;

and returned painfully and alone to the hut, whence later we watched the guides with their active companion complete the steep climb, though under the circumstances they contented themselves with Castor.

This made rather a doleful finish to three lively weeks, but it could not be helped. What made it still more disappointing was that the following night (August 22) saw the last snow-storm of this *severe* summer, so that dates which had been provisionally fixed could have been actually kept, for both the Matterhorn and Rothhorn. Also, after we had gone away a letter came from our distinguished ex-President, with directions for two climbs (new to me) on the Riffelhorn which we should have greatly liked, for so far this year only four different ways had been achieved.

However, the word of command was Bex-les-Bains, and thither we repaired. It was a poor substitute for the beloved mountains, but possibly served us right for trying to climb at all this year ; and was also perhaps another illustration of the truth of the beautiful lines (attributed to Wordsworth) :

The plague of guide and friend, of wife and daughter,
Is Senex who will climb, and didn't ougter.

Before leaving Zermatt a comment or two on the number of fatal accidents in this and adjoining districts seems permissible. These were quite out of proportion to either the number of climbers or the amount of climbing, and all or nearly all occurred to guideless parties. During the latter part of August two at least were killed on each of the following peaks : The Allalinhorn, Weisshorn, Südlenspizze, Jungfrau, and Glarus Tschingelhörner, and only on the first-named was there a guide at all (making three on the rope), and he only escaped by something very like a miracle. The other parties were in each case two on the rope, or so we were told ; the Südlenspizze bodies have never been found ; and certainly the Weisshorn accident was caused by want of judgment and of technical knowledge. Reading between the lines, it seemed that most of the victims, all of whom were Swiss, might have been still alive if they had either employed

their unemployed fellow-countrymen or been somewhat more experienced.

So much for the mountains and their ever-recurring pathos. We descended to the bathos of Bex-les-Bains and its baths ; to heat, dust, flies, and mosquitos ; and a week later to a nightmare of numberless nocturnal sheep-pens where passports, visas, and luggage were examined, and suspicious passengers duly detained.

This, though vexatious to innocent travellers, is of course necessary in war-time ; still some of our friends might easily be a little more methodical and business-like in their consulates and on their frontiers. I had some experience of these both at home and abroad, which made me look back with regret to the peace and solitude of Zermatt.

Let us hope, however, that it may not be long before all these little difficulties will, with the War, be ended ; and we shall again be free to flock back to the High Alps, free to scramble up our favourite peaks at our own sweet will, and free to meet our brethren on common ground.

Above all, as we think of all that has happened during the last year and a half, let us hope that when the War is ended

‘ Our object all sublime
Will be achieved in time
To make the Punishment fit the Crime.’

RANDOM MEMORIES OF SOME EARLY GUIDELESS CLIMBS.

By J. STOGDON.

(Read before the Alpine Club, April 4, 1916.)

THE appearance of this paper, which I have been asked to write, would seem, in the face of some of our recent papers in the ALPINE JOURNAL, something like the appearance of the Neander Thal man or the Pithecanthropos of Java armed with a stone axe in the face of a 75-mm. gun. My adventures are so slight in comparison with the splendid guideless climbing of more recent years that I feel ashamed to talk of them, but I have received my orders from Captain Farrar, and the essence of discipline is that the Captain is always right when he speaks to the private. After all, even in the presence of the 75-mm. gun, there is some interest in