

AN ATTEMPT ON THE EAST FACE AND AN ASCENT OF THE
ITALIAN FACE OF THE MATTERHORN IN 1867.

IN Mr. J. M. Elliott's 'The Second Ascent of the Matterhorn by the E. Face,' reprinted in 'A.J.' xxviii., there is an allusion to a previous attempt on that face by Mr. Jordan, to which I regret to have added a footnote that 'it is probable that Mr. Elliott was misinformed.'

Turning over lately a little book, 'La Vallée de Valtornenche en 1867,' par G. Carrel, I found the following :

'Tentatives d'ascension en 1867.—Par le nord Mr. Leighton Jordan, anglais, est arrivé avec des guides valaisans à une très grande hauteur le 21, le 22, et le 23 août et le 9 et le 10 Septembre, mais il n'a pu atteindre le sommet.'

It would appear, therefore, that Mr. Elliott was quite correctly informed.

I have learned since from Mr. Wm. Leighton Jordan himself, formerly a member of the A.C., who, it is refreshing to find, retains interest in his old achievements, that he thinks the notes of his attempt in 1867 on the E. face of the Matterhorn with Peter Knubel and J. M. Lochmatter, and of his successful ascent of the mountain, the fourth by the Italian route, a few days later, with J.-J., J. Pierre, and Victor Maquignaz, are still in existence. He has kindly undertaken to inquire about them, and eventually to send them to me for the use of the JOURNAL.

Meantime Mr. Mumm has drawn my attention to the Bollettino del C.A.I. for 1867, which contains a translation into French of Mr. Leighton Jordan's note in the Visitors' Book at the hotel at Breuil upon his ascent of the Italian side and descent and re-ascent of the upper part of the Swiss face of the Cervin.

It would appear that, inasmuch as Mr. Leighton Jordan descended from the summit to the point on the E. face to which he had ascended a few days earlier, he may be said to have made, *virtually*, the first traverse of the mountain, as well as making the fourth ascent by the Italian route.

I have, since writing this note, had the great advantage and pleasure of discussing with Mr. Leighton Jordan, now a vigorous, erect veteran of some eighty years, with photographs before

us, his enterprising attempts on the E. face. I found his recollection of the ground as clear as though the event had happened a year or two instead of nearly fifty years ago. It will be remembered that for at least two or three years after the accident in 1865 the E. face continued to be regarded with such respect that neither guides nor travellers were to be found to attempt it.¹ Mr. Jordan's attempts, which were the first after the accident, are therefore all the more remarkable.

At my suggestion he has been good enough to write down a few notes. Surely it is of great significance for the continuance of interest in mountaineering when we find, as I so continually do, that no young mountaineer can be more enthusiastic than the splendid veterans who have made Alpine history.

J. P. FARRAR.

In the first of the two attempts on the Zermatt side alluded to above, my companions were Tobie Couttet, of Chamonix, and Peter Knubel, chamois hunter, of Zermatt (afterwards a renowned guide). We slept on the night of August 21, 1867, on the Hörnli arête, at the spot so used by the Hudson-Whymper party in 1865. The mountain above that was new to all of us ; but below it was Knubel's hunting-ground. On the 22nd we climbed in splendid weather with brilliant sunshine, and on reaching the snow-slope just below the Zermatt shoulder I felt as if nothing could mar the complete success of our ascent. But when half-way up the slope clouds rushing up the Breil valley made immediate recognition of defeat imperative.

As, in descending, we reached the rock where the old or upper Matterhorn hut has since been built a pelting of hail-stones made us shelter to rearrange our clothes for the change from sunshine to storm. A dense mass of clouds formed round the base of the mountain just below the protruding granite belt, and as we entered it a flash of lightning struck me on the shoulder and looked like a glittering corkscrew round me. Couttet called to me to throw away my knapsack on account of the barometer in it ; but my hands were too busy with the rocks, and in a deafening roar of almost continuous thunder we worked steadily downwards, the sheet lightning greatly helping us. We passed our sleeping quarters of the previous night without stopping. It was covered with snow which

¹ Cf. *The Alps in Nature and History*, by W. A. B. Coolidge, p. 240, for the estimate of 1868.

was driving over it from the Théodule ridge. After ten o'clock we were below the storm lower down the arête, but were stopped by the inky darkness with a vertical fall before us. A few more flashes of lightning would, I think, have helped us to the grass-slopes below. Knubel was now on his hunting-ground, and he led us down to the glacier on our right, abandoning the route by which we had ascended, and a little later we surprised, and turned back with us, a well-equipped party of mountaineers just started from Zermatt for our rescue.

Couttet was a man to be relied on for cool judgment and unflinching courage in any emergency, but on the morning of September 9 he declared that it had been too great an effort for him to keep pace with Knubel and myself, and I found that he had arranged to give his place in my second attempt, then starting, to Joseph-Marie Lochmatter, who therefore ascended with Knubel and myself to the position in which we had met the first hailstorm in our previous descent; and we slept partially sheltered by the rock under which the upper hut has since been built.

In the morning we breakfasted on the Zermatt shoulder amid ominous signs of changing weather. It was evident that if the summit was to be reached that day it must be done quickly. Example being better than precept, I left Knubel and Lochmatter to repack the knapsacks, turned out of their sight to the right of the arête and climbed on solid rock, clearly recognising Whymper's line of descent farther to the right, and that we should have to come down that way. I soon found myself on the top of the mountain, in the sense in which anyone who climbs the wall of a house on to the roof is on the top of the house. It was still brilliant sunshine, and an easy walk to the summit. I went over to the rock where Taugwalder had fixed the rope which broke in the Hudson accident, and, in reply to loud shouts from Knubel and Lochmatter, told them that the summit was quite easy and we must get to it quickly. Whilst they were ascending I went to a small couloir leading down the Zermatt face, and it seemed to me that, by taking off one's shoes to get a firm footing on the rock, it would give easy access to the shoulder where we had breakfasted. I could not be sure, as fine snow had commenced to fall thickly, shutting out the view. I ascended again and met Knubel and Lochmatter just above Taugwalder's rock. I considered that any danger we were in would be very slightly, if at all, increased by going to the summit; but argument was useless, as they had

firmly decided to turn back at once. I roped and went first, they holding the upper end of the rope, which I used slightly once or twice, having agreed that they were not to attempt to help with it unless I called to them to do so. I got to firm rock just above the shoulder, so that Lochmatter had a good balustrade to bring him quickly to the shoulder just below me. In deference to my opinion he got clear of the rope; and Knubel tied the end of my rope (which he had been holding) to his belt, as, in reply to his objection, I told him he could not pull me down if he fell, as I was firm enough to stop any fall. Then came the feat of the day—Knubel to descend without any rope from above. My great difficulty in picking my way down was the falling snow pouring down the mountain-side; but Knubel did not pick his way at all. He came down in fine style, and almost too quickly for me to take in the slack of the rope as he descended. I easily joined them on the shoulder from my position to the right of their line of descent, and we all, in good form and spirits, set to work downwards as fast as possible through the falling snow. I believe they were both thankful to me for having forced the last part of our ascent, and perhaps afterwards regretted not having gone quite to the summit. We reached Zermatt not late in the evening.

When I found that Zermatt had decided the season to be too late for any further attempt, I went over the Théodule to Breil. The Taugwalders, father and son, were there and wanted immediately to go for the ascent with me from Zermatt; but the Maquignaz party were then in sight descending the mountain and within an hour or two of the hotel, and I arranged with Joseph Maquignaz to wait for the Indian summer and then repeat the ascent he had just made.² I wanted to cross the mountain, and could not do that without guides for the Italian side.

To keep fit we did some mountaineering every day, keeping within easy reach of the Matterhorn, until when crossing the Adler Pass from Saas to Zermatt it became evident that the weather we wanted had arrived. Standing about the middle of the great plateau of the Adler glacier, Couttet and I explained to Maquignaz the route for our descent of the Zermatt face of the Matterhorn. The weather was so fine that we regretted not being already on the mountain, and resolved to reach it as

² This was the ascent by the party of guides on September 12 to 14, of which Jean-Joseph Maquignaz was the leader.

soon as possible. I had been leading, and before we had got the rope extended between us in resuming our route the ground vanished from under me and I found myself in a great crevasse. Far below me I saw a swiftly-flowing river, with its waves gently lapping a beautiful beach of fine white sand on its right bank. There must be a wide opening between the mountain and the right bank of the glacier just there, as what was almost broad daylight could not have come from the small round hole above me which marked where I had come from sunlight. If so the beach might perhaps be made a romantic summer resort.

In reply to Couttet, I told him not to approach the edge, but to fix my cord firmly, and as soon as he had done so a few pulls hand over hand brought me back to the plateau impressed with the importance of always keeping the rope tight in such places.

We passed the night at Zermatt ; the following night at Breil ; and the next three days on the Matterhorn, as described below.

Our ascent was made by the Galerie (' Grove's route '), and the descent by Maquignaz's face route.

The placing of the rope on the final face where, I am told, the *Échelle Jordan*³ now hangs deserves some comment, as it was a predetermined plan of Joseph and Pierre Maquignaz, and was effected with a coolness and courage which it was a treat to watch. Having firmly fixed a short stick in the rock, Joseph slowly lowered his brother to the ' ledge ' below. Pierre, however, found that he could not get a footing on the ledge, because directly he trusted to his feet his body swung outwards from the mountain. After several attempts he quietly told his brother that the route was impossible and that he was done for, ' as it was not possible to pull him back such a height.' With the training that most English schoolboys get, I could in a twinkling have returned hand over hand from Pierre's position, though it was perhaps double the height I had to climb to get out of the Adler crevasse. Proficiency is best gained by beginning attempts in boyhood ; whether in the use of the sling, as by the Serbians in olden days ; the use of the bow and arrow in more recent times ; or, I venture to add, in the handling of the rifle to-day. We must not, however, leave Pierre in suspense at the end of his rope whilst we discuss those matters. I did not think it a moment for telling him that he

³ This ladder, although named after me, was not placed on my ascent. We only fixed a rope.

ought to have been taught hand over hand at school ; but I suggested to Joseph that if he would lower me, by another rope, half-way down, I could get hold of the rock in the concave part of the fall and pull Pierre's rope to it, so as to keep him from falling outwards. Joseph instantly told his brother to rest tranquil for a moment ; then fixed a second stick a short distance to the right of the first, and, as quick as writing, I was holding Pierre's rope against the rock in the concave. He had shouted a protest vigorously as he saw me coming over the edge of the precipice, but the only answer was the practical one just described, which he soon understood and joyously traversed the ledge to a secure spot. I followed, having his rope as a balustrade ; then Victor ; then Joseph, and the rope was left all in order for our next morning's intended ascent. I must say that in some photographs the perspective makes the final precipice a sham, not a reality ; but those who have looked down it from above know better.

I have found a copy of my note in the Breil inn book, written at the time, and subjoin it.

WM. LEIGHTON JORDAN.

Copy of the entry made in the travellers' book at the Hôtel Mont Cervin at Breuil on October 3, 1867.

October 3rd [1867].—Wm. Leighton Jordan, London. Having just descended from the Matterhorn, I offer a few remarks which may be useful to mountaineers intending to attempt the ascent.

I left this hotel on 1st inst. at 5.15 A.M., and climbing leisurely reached the Cabane on the cravate at 3.45 P.M., having stopped *en route* from 11.15 to 12.15 at the 'tent,' besides other lesser stoppages.

On the 2nd inst. left the Cabane at 5.40 A.M., reached the Pic Tyndall at 6.10 A.M. ; the end of the arête Tyndall at 7.15 ; the col Félicité (the point at which the new route diverges from that followed by Mr. Grove) at 7.45 A.M. and the summit of the mountain (the W. peak) at 9.50 A.M. The flagstaff which had been planted on this point by the guides who were with me (on their previous ascent) we removed to the eastern peak and bound it to the stump of Mr. Whymper's flagstaff, which appeared to me to be fixed on the highest point of the mountain, the eastern. The remnant of Mr. Whymper's flagstaff and flag (a checked shirt) we discovered after removing a considerable quantity of snow and ice from the summit of the mountain. Digging was such hard, cold work that we did not attempt any

search for the bottle left by his party. We left a short flagstaff (the stump of that which we removed to the eastern peak) on the western peak. It was, like the stump on the eastern peak, firmly fixed in solid ice.

We commenced to descend the Zermatt arête (which terminates in the Hörnli) at 11.15 A.M. and descended as far as a point at which I turned back in a snowstorm on 10th ult. in company with Pierre Knubel and Joseph-Marie Lochmatter of Zermatt. After spending some time in examining that part of the mountain, and deciding on the route to be taken in a descent to Zermatt, which we intended to have made to-day if the weather had been fine, we returned to the summit, which we regained at 2.15 P.M., and reached the Cabane, on this side, at 5.40 P.M. On this side we spent nearly an hour during the ascent and a full hour during the descent in changing the position of the ropes left on the new route. This morning, the wind being strong, the clouds heavy, and the weather cold and threatening, we (Jean-Joseph Maquignaz, Jean-Pierre Maquignaz, and I) reluctantly abandoned our contemplated trip over the summit of the mountain to Zermatt, and, leaving the Cabane at 6.35 A.M., passed the 'tent' at 8.15 A.M., and returned here at 11 A.M.

The reminiscences of the glorious yesterday spent on and about the summit of the mountain are, at present, somewhat dulled by the disappointment experienced this morning on finding our intended trip over the summit of the mountain to Zermatt frustrated by the weather. A desire to see more of the summit of the mountain, combined with some confidence in an expectation of fine weather for to-day (also the upsetting of previous arrangements), prevented our continuing the descent yesterday to Zermatt, which I knew I could have reached, without pushing hard, from the point at which we commenced to reascend, before nine in the evening. As I am the only person who has traversed both sides of the mountain (that is, from the summit to Zermatt and also from the summit to Breuil), it may be of interest to many if I here state, without fear of future contradiction, that the Zermatt side is naturally easier of ascent than the Breuil side; though the enterprise of the Valtornenche guides in fixing ropes and building a dormitory has made this side the most convenient at the present inclement season of the year. Next season, in fine weather, first-rate mountaineers may with confidence make the trip from this to Zermatt over the summit of the mountain, if they have with them either Jean-Joseph Maquignaz, Jean-

Pierre Maquignaz, or Victor Maquignaz ; and also either Pierre Knubel or Joseph-Marie Lochmatter : the three former being guides for this side and the upper part of the mountain, the two latter for the remainder of the descent on the Zermatt side. No other men have traversed the new routes on either side of the mountain, and the longer route on the Zermatt side made by Mr. Whympster in 1865, as also the longer route on this side made by the Italian party in 1865 and by Mr. Grove this year, are not likely to be taken again by anyone simply desirous of reaching the summit of the mountain. Of course it is not impossible for first-rate mountaineers to cross the summit from this to Zermatt with new men, but all who are not confident of self-possession, skill, and endurance should consider well the warning given by Mr. Grove some pages farther back in this book.

Our party, on leaving this on 1st inst., besides myself, consisted of Jean-Joseph Maquignaz and Jean-Pierre Maquignaz, guides ; and Victor Maquignaz, Emmanuel Maquignaz, César Carrel, and François Ansermin to act as porters as far as the Cabane. On starting yesterday morning Victor Maquignaz asked permission to accompany us as a volunteer, and was consequently one of the party who reached the summit. I can confidently recommend to others the guides and porters who have been with me on this excursion, more especially Jean-Joseph, who has accompanied me on many other excursions. My companions on this trip have, in a great measure, acted as volunteers ; but those intending to make the ascent cannot as a rule, I think, expect to obtain guides and porters at less than 40 frs. a day for the former and 25 frs. a day for the latter ; paying half price for any idle days which may be spent on the mountain.

Nearly all the summit yesterday was a narrow, treacherous ridge of snow. The rocks which compose the western peak are not precisely similar to those of the eastern peak. Rocks similar to both are abundant lower down on the mountain. The hollow between the two peaks is formed in the rock of which the greater part of the mountain is composed. There is granite on both sides of the mountain : but I found none on this side exactly similar to that which is abundant on the Zermatt side about half-way up. The latter is, I think, more like a mass of granite about half-way up Monte Rosa, overlooking the glacier du Lys : but I have not compared specimens side by side.