

4. My camp in Zanskar, just north of the Shingo-la. A denotes Snowstorm Col; B is Snowstorm Peak. (July 29, '14.)

5. The long ridge from Buttress Aiguille to Great Kakti Peak (?). A is the Lower Gendarme Aiguille; B is the higher Gendarme Aiguille. Gap between them not visible, but sun shining through on to patch of snow. Route of ascent marked: same for descent as far as arrow, which marks direction of our descent to glacier. (July 31, '14.)

6. Looking S. from the 'Silver Cone.' A denotes the Pyramid peak. B denotes Golind peak (July 25) with route of descent marked. C denotes the Pyramid shoulder, which we reached at +. (Aug. 1, '14.)

7. On the way to the Pyramid shoulder. A gendarme, round which Ajabsing, seen below +, has just led. (Aug. 11, '14)

8. The 'Aiguille Blanche' from the Pyramid shoulder. Gathering storm-clouds. From summit, reached from S., we descended snow ridge to E. (left). From A to B was the difficult traverse across snow-covered and iced slabs to the last gendarme (B), whence snow arête was followed to C (depression), whence steep snow slope rose to the Pyramid shoulder. (Aug. 11, '14)

SUCCESS AND FAILURE ON MONT BLANC.

BY WM. CECIL SLINGSBY.

I.

A DAY'S WALK FROM COURMAYEUR TO CHAMONIX OVER MONT BLANC.

'Where undissolving, from the first of time,
Snows swell on snows amazing to the sky;
And icy mountains, high on mountains pil'd,
Seem to the shivering sailor from afar
Shapeless and white, an atmosphere of clouds.

Alps frown on Alps, or rushing hideous down,
As if old Chaos was again returned,
Wide rend the deep, and shake the solid pole.'

THOMSON'S *Winter*.

UP to now, no description has ever appeared in any mountaineering Journal of the crossing of Mont Blanc in one day which a friend and I, accompanied by two guides, made in the year 1879.

I had enjoyed five mountaineering campaigns in Norway before I saw the Alps. On my first visit to Switzerland in 1878 my companion was the Rev. A. G. Girdlestone, whom I had met in Norway, when, with two others, we made a fine glacier pass across the heart of the Horungtinder, probably the first ever made over this grand range of mountains.¹

I went to the Alps with a feeling of some awe, expecting to find the mountains and glaciers much more formidable than those in Norway and that I should feel a want of experience. This was not the case, and I was as happy and as easy in my mind as in Scandinavia. I made a good many ascents and passes in the Pennines and the Oberland with Girdlestone, and others without him, in company with guides. One of our best guideless expeditions was an attempt on the then unclimbed N. arête of the Grand Cornier, when M. Javelle joined us. We failed when within an ace of success, solely on account of the then dangerous condition of the steep, snow-covered, ice-sheathed face, only a few feet below the flat, narrow summit ridge.

As the vicar had taken me out to the Alps, it was clearly my duty to take out, or be taken out by, the curate, the Rev. C. J. Ord, an excellent mountaineer and an ideal travelling companion. This was arranged for the following year, 1879, and was duly carried out.

A notable experience was on the Weissmies, which we climbed without guides. On the top we got into an awful N.E. wind and a snow blizzard. Though we turned and fled at once, we got frost-bitten in our hands, feet, and our left ears. The good folk at Saas im Grund treated us scientifically with iced water. Most of us know what that means. The traces were visible for many a long day, and our ears were swollen to nearly three times their usual size. For a dozen years after this, a cold east wind always reminded me of the Weissmies.

At Saas we were joined by appointment by Franz Andermatten and his son Adolph, with the intention of carrying out an ambitious programme.

As is by no means unusual, the Adler was protected by an icy coat of mail, and it was delightful to see dear old Franz at work which he loved so much and executed so well.

Though the Riffelhaus was full, we were squeezed in somehow. The bad weather which ensued only allowed us to make our few ascents by stealth, but we had a most jolly time.

¹ *Norway, The Northern Playground*, p. 61.

Here I met for the first time Horace and Miss Walker, whose friendship was to mean so much to me and mine, during many happy years. Full of knowledge and of true love for the mountains, they were full of encouragement as well for those of us who were comparative novices. Mr. James Eccles was also there, and others whose friendship I have valued highly. What a jolly party we were on the Riffelhorn one day, and as we were guided by Melchior and Jakob Anderegg, the two Payots, and the two Andermattens, we thought we were justified in making a supposed new route !

That evening there was promise of better weather, so all the storm-bound Riffelites determined to sally forth at midnight. The Walkers went up the Nord-End of Monte Rosa, Eccles and the Payots crossed the Zwillinge Joch into Italy. Ord and I with our guides went up the Felix Joch, ascended Castor and Pollux, and descended to the Schwarzthor, the descent being then very difficult. Never have I felt before or since such fierce heat as we had near the bottom of the Schwärze glacier. The air seemed to be stagnant ; there was not a breath of wind, nor yet a cloud to shield us from the direct rays of the burning sun, nor from the rays reflected from the millions of crystal facets until we reached the Gorner glacier.

Meanwhile, the many mountaineers at Zermatt had looked out, either personally or by deputy, at a very early hour, but seeing *above* them the heavy clouds which we more-favoured Riffelites had looked *down* upon, thought that 'a little more sleep and a little more slumber' was suitable for the day. Later, when they heard of our successes, they were wild with jealousy.

Possibly the young lady who sauntered up to the Riffel the following day, an ice-axe in one daintily gloved hand, a fan in the other and wearing high-heeled boots, did not share their jealousy ?

At the vine-trellised inn in Val Tournanche we found the great Mr. John Ball, who was botanising in that lovely valley. The few hours which we spent with him were most enjoyable, and the information which we gleaned was of great value. A fortnight in the Graians was spent very pleasantly in spite of bad weather. We rescued an English lady at the top of the Grivola from the charge of one of the most incompetent guides I have ever seen on a mountain. He said he had 'mal de tête.' This we did not dispute, but instead we took him on to our rope and lent Franz to the Englishwoman. Another day we surprised a l  mmergeier on the brink of a cliff in a dense

forest. I shall never forget the way in which the noble bird slowly turned its head round, looked at us disdainfully at eight or ten yards' distance, and then plunged into space with outspread wings. It was a grand sight.

On an attempted ascent of the Grand Paradis from the Glacier della Tribolazione by the north face, when we had gone some distance on the glacier, a heavy but not a long-enduring thunderstorm forced us to retreat. On the way down we came in sight of a herd of chamois. We hid behind a rock while Franz, the old hunter, whistled repeatedly, just two notes. Within a quarter of an hour almost the whole herd came within easy range. I was reminded of the grouse poachers who call the birds to them on the Yorkshire moors, but of course with a different call.

Soon after this we were all comfortably housed in the Hôtel Royal at Courmayeur. Our month's mountaineering had put us all into good hard condition, and probably we were as fit as we ever could be to enable old Franz to realise an ambition which he had cherished for some years.

At this period, 1879, there was a great rivalry, by no means of an amiable character, between Swiss and Chamonix guides. In a smaller degree this was shared by those of Italy.

Like the rest of our party, Franz had never seen the Italian side of Mont Blanc, but, though he knew that it was the highest in the Alps, his effervescing patriotism would not permit him to consider it possible that this Franco-Italian mountain possessed any superiority, save that of height, over his own beloved Saas and Zermatt giants. He had climbed most of these, including the Weisshorn, and the Dom, direct from the valleys without sleeping out. He considered the Dent Blanche as an exception, as its base was too far away from Zermatt.

'Mont Blanc is only a mountain like the rest. There is no need to sleep out for it. We ought to cross it in one day.'

It was of little use to point out to Franz that, as Mont Blanc was 15,782 ft. above sea level, Courmayeur only 4016 ft., and Chamonix 3416 ft., it meant an ascent of 11,766 ft. and a descent of 12,366 ft., or having to deal with 24,132 ft. on the ascent and the descent combined. These large figures only made Franz chuckle and put the first finger of his right hand against, and parallel with, his nose, as was his wont when pleased.

Franz was irrepressible and in very high spirits, though the

mountain just then seemed in bad order. The Aig. Noire de Peuteret was speckled with snow, but the bright sunshine cheered us and we agreed to wait a few days. Ord and I however suggested that we should take a couple of good Courmayeur guides. Franz had no objection to take one, and at the 'Bureau des Guides' he found several men who were willing to go, provided that we spent a night in a hut. This would not, however, fit in with Franz's pet project of crossing the mountain in one day, and the old man had such implicit and well-founded faith in himself that we felt bound to support him. Séraphin, then an excellent guide, began also to believe in the hero from Saas, and would, I think, have come with us but for adverse local opinion.

The four of us spent a long and an easy day on the Crammont and were pleased to see how quickly the Italian sun stole the snow from places where it had then no business to lie. Franz at last realised that Mont Blanc was the great giant of the Alps, and the acquisition of this knowledge made the old warrior all the keener to be at grips with the towers of fantastic tracery and the glittering snowfields on the grandest face of the noblest mountain in the Alps. Still, he held persistently to his pet theory that it was undesirable and unnecessary to sleep out for a mountain ascent.

In a paper entitled 'Minor Climbs from Courmayeur,' Dr. Claude Wilson advocates Franz Andermatten's principles clearly, and generally speaking convincingly, and I strongly recommend this paper to the consideration of young mountaineers. As for myself, I hate a mountain hut as a rule, but love a bivouac and a sleeping-bag in fine warm weather, or a tent when it is cold or rainy.

The route which we wished to take was then termed 'The Miage route,' and is now called 'Rochers du Mont Blanc route.' As none of us had seen the Glacier du Mont Blanc, by which our route partly lay, Franz and Adolph went to prospect, after obtaining some general directions in Courmayeur. Ord and I meanwhile went up Mont de la Saxe, and as the day was perfect we thoroughly enjoyed the view.

Franz returned in high spirits, telling us that they had found the way and thought we should succeed.

The hotel was full of fashionable Italians taking the baths and inhaling pure mountain air, a welcome change from the heat, the dust, the flies, and the noise of the cities of the plain. Somehow they had heard of our projected adventure and plied us with questions not always easy to answer.

We dined early and so were able to get three hours in bed. Roused at eleven o'clock, we soon realised that there was no need to creep softly and stealthily downstairs, boots in our hands, like burglars, for the whole household had apparently stayed up to see the last of the mad Englishmen and their two Swiss guides, who were going to perish on the mountains.

After much kindly hand-shaking, and a hearty and a sincere 'Bon voyage,' we stepped out into starlit night at two minutes past midnight.

It was Friday morning, July 25, 1879. Friday is my lucky mountaineering day. I had proved it in Norway, I had proved it in the Alps, and I had great hopes of proving it again.

It was a glorious night; the stars scintillated with the true Italian Alpine brilliancy, but the frowning crags of Mont Chétif made it necessary for us to use a borrowed lantern. At first there was not a sound but that of our own footsteps until we reached the bridge over the river Dora. The savage grandeur of the Aig. Noire de Peuteret was partly softened by the unusual amount of snow which rested on its ledges and in that most extraordinary hollow, now called Le Fauteuil des Allemands. When through the forest, we found the turf of the meadows in the lovely Val Vény crisp with frost. The wondrous beauty and grandeur of this valley are so well known to most of my readers that I need not dilate upon them.

Franz had arranged for a porter to meet us near the Lac de Combal to carry our knapsacks to the hut. We waited forty-one precious minutes until he turned up, having overslept himself after a pretty hard day's work. This delay might have ruined our enterprise. At 3.20 we left the path and at 4 set foot on the ice. For an hour we had the most delightful walking on that best of all pavements, an icy weather-beaten floor, nearly level, and rough enough to prevent slipping. As dawn appeared, each of the peaks of the Trelatête range glowed in order of their height with a rich rose colour in the light of the rising sun. The stars faded away imperceptibly, first the less brilliant ones, and soon after Sirius and Arcturus themselves, until a dark blue sky overhung the Miage glacier valley.

Our porter pointed out to us the ancient gold mines below the Col Infranchissable, which seemed to us to be on the face of an apparently most vicious mountain-wall. I have seen them in recent years, but never discovered how they were reached. Possibly quite easily?

At half-past five we reached rocks which gave us some

pleasant though cold climbing. This brought us to the old hut 'Cap^{aa} del Rocher,' at 6.47. It was pretty well snowed up, but still we had our well-earned breakfast inside. At that time cold tea was much drunk on the mountains. To our disappointment we found coffee in place of the tea. The guides of course had wine, and Ord joined them. I was then a teetotaller in practice, but never was in theory, much to the chagrin of total abstaining lecturers and theorists. As coffee, to my thinking, would create thirst rather than quench it, I determined to wait until we reached water. As it turned out, we found none until we reached the Grands Mulets at 7.20 p.m., as, on the line of our ascent, we were always in the shade. Though nineteen hours was a good schooling for total abstinence, and the walk from Courmayeur to the Grands Mulets was long and certainly tiring, I did not suffer from thirst in the slightest degree.

After a halt of 35 minutes we dismissed our porter and shouldered our knapsacks. We reached the Glacier du Mont Blanc at 8 o'clock, and for the first time that day saw the actual summit

'High in the stainless imminence of air.'

An hour later twelve black dots appeared on the snowy crest, moving slowly, very slowly, towards the top; their apparent Lilliputian size and snail-like motion made us realise the colossal proportions of our surroundings. In spite of this the heroic Franz said we should be on the top in three hours.

For some hours it was easy going. We steered to the base of a long, a very long, snow slope or couloir which was to serve as our route for many a long hour. But whether this was the orthodox route or not I do not even now know for certain, in spite of much help from Captain Farrar and several books in various languages, each containing excellent diagrams, which he sent me. I do know, however, that when we were on the Glacier du Mont Blanc it appeared to be *the* obvious highway for us to follow. I also know well that this route brought us up to a little gap on the high side of the higher Bosse du Dromadaire, and that on another ascent of Mont Blanc in which I took part I looked down from this same gap on to the Glacier du Mont Blanc.

In this year of much snow it was, however, quite possible that in some places where we encountered steep, hard snow, or solid ice, we might at other times have had to climb relatively

bare rock. We also realised that, under less icy conditions, a route on our right hand might probably have been followed.

At the head of the glacier we found fine powdery snow quite up to our shoulders. This had either to be beaten down or we had to crawl over it as best we could. To my mind this is the greatest difficulty for an amateur to overcome, of the many which he may meet on the mountains. I have never yet succeeded in floating or swimming half-submerged over the snow in the manner which some guides seem to do with consummate ease. True, some professionals are no better in this respect than amateurs. Adolph, tall and heavy as he was, was leading and made light of it. Franz laughed and chuckled inordinately at our endeavours resembling those of a barn-door fowl which has fallen into deep water ; but the old warrior, who was carrying a fair load, did not altogether escape immersion, whereupon he laughed the more merrily.

As we had reached hard ice, I took Adolph's load and strapped it to my own. I was also carrying a Scotch plaid.

In 1879 rucksacks were almost unknown in the Western Alps. Those who have never carried an old-fashioned knapsack can hardly realise the discomforts, especially under the arms, which we endured in spite of various ease contrivances.

It was 10.15 when we stepped on hard-frozen snow or ice, and for six long hours we were climbing, when possible on rocks snow-covered or sheathed in ice, or on deep, hard-frozen snow. Very often only one of us could move at a time, and until we reached the ridge just above the Bosse there was no single place where the four of us could have sat down without holding on with an axe, or to a splinter of rock. Practically, every step during these six hours had to be won with the axe. Adolph, a strong and a lusty fellow, cut endless steps, some needing forty good strokes, and never once acknowledged that he was tired. On the other hand, my two knapsacks almost bent me double, and Ord felt his burden as much as I did mine.

Hour after hour sped away. We were late and could not afford to rest. Now and then we got on a little granite crest, but it could never be followed far, as it was sure to shoot upwards to a point in orthodox *aiguille* form, so we returned to our icy highway.

At 4.15 we stood in the little gap above the Bosses du Dromadaire, and, for the first time, felt the cold, as a keen wind swept over the ridge. A tent was made out of my plaid and we dissected a fowl on strictly practical anatomical principles, and then greedily gobbled it up.

We did not stop long, and though now we had the old tracks, the stimulus of excitement and probably also of doubt was lacking. It was only a heavy trudge on soft snow up a steep hill, but it was real hard work for us to drag our weary limbs up to the top even without the knapsacks.

At last the goal was reached. All our waned enthusiasm was rekindled. Normal respiration had returned, our fatigue had wholly vanished, and a fresh breeze, tempered by sunshine, made our short stay at the top really enjoyable.

I found, as I have since found, that I could walk about on the top of Mont Blanc as easily as at home. Possibly we were more or less acclimatised to rarefied air, as in the past month we had several times been above 13,000 ft., but I must say no more on this subject as I have had no experience on any mountain higher than Mont Blanc.

We had reached the summit at 5.15, or in seventeen hours and thirteen minutes after leaving Courmayeur, and were determined, if possible, to get to Chamonix that evening, and especially as we had reason to believe that the guides at Courmayeur had telegraphed to the Bureau des Guides at Chamonix that we were attempting to cross the mountain. We knew also that Chamonix would at least not be disappointed if we did not succeed in carrying out our project in full with our Swiss guides.

We only remained five minutes on the summit and left at 5.20, regretting the precious forty-one lost at the Lac de Combal.

The problem how to descend 12,366 ft. after 5.20 P.M. was not a very easy one to solve.

Owing to a day's bright sunshine the snow was very heavy, often knee or waist deep, and we frequently rolled over and did not feel too sweet-tempered. It really was a great toil. At 7.30 we reached the Grands Mulets and had some delicious soup, the first drink I had had since leaving Courmayeur. We only remained 20 minutes there, and raced off over the only greatly crevassed glacier which we had been on that day. Fortunately there was much snow in the gully near Pierre Pointue and in perfect condition, and in few minutes we had really a very long, wild, and jolly glissade down, down, down many hundreds of feet into the forest land. Equally fortunate too was the fact that the Aiguille du Midi was then benevolently disposed and never attempted to cannonade us. The forest was dark, and in those days we had no pocket lanterns, but fortune favoured us and where we could do so safely we ran.

We did not wish to be benighted in the forest, though we knew that others had undergone that experience. At last, at 10.10, after having been out 22 hours and 8 minutes, we reached Couttet's Hotel and were heartily welcomed by Mr. Thomas Woodbine Hinchliff, the Marquis Alfred de Pallavicini, M. Couttet, and others, who had been watching us on our descent as long as they could.

Mr. Hinchliff was much interested in our experience, and pleased that our guides, however unintentionally, had in some measure beaten those of Chamonix on what the latter considered to be their own mountain. Equally interested too was Pallavicini, who had seen us on the Glacier du Mont Blanc from near the summit. He invited me to join him in the Dolomites the following summer, but I had other plans in view. His Tyrolean guides had apparently been treated with scant courtesy by the men of Chamonix.

This too was the experience of old Franz and Adolph the following morning. Indeed, as soon as Franz met us he proposed a walk up to the Flégère so as to get out of the way. I suppose we had slept well. At any rate we fell in with the proposal, and either walked off any stiffness which we had acquired, or perhaps prevented it from appearing.

Fortunately we did not claim originality for our expedition. It is, however, a strange fact that, until I had written the foregoing, I was not aware that Mont Blanc had been crossed in one day from Courmayeur to Chamonix by Messrs. G. E. Foster and A. W. Moore, though I had several times heard Horace Walker speak of Moore's traversing the mountain. Somehow, I always imagined that it referred to the ascent from the Col de Voza and descent to Chamonix. This was in spite of the notices in 'A.J.' xiii. 259 and the earlier one of 'A.J.' vi. 293, where, in the latter, it will be seen that the party left Courmayeur at 12.20 A.M., reached the summit of Mont Blanc at 4 P.M., and Chamonix at 10.40 P.M.

The last volume of the 'A.J.' revealed to me the fact that Mr. Passingham also crossed Mont Blanc in a day. I met him at Zermatt a few days after our expedition, in which he was much interested and asked me many questions. Passingham and I had much talk, as we were both then interested in the Zinal face of the Weisshorn. The details of his great mountaineering achievements, and of the Brothers Parker, contained in the volume referred to, as well as the portraits of men whom many of us have known intimately, and of whom we have none but pleasant recollections, are most interesting.

A few words of appreciation of Franz Andermatten are at least due from me, though Mr. F. J. Church paid a most fitting tribute to the memory of the old guide in 'A.J.' xi. 345, and Sir Martin Conway did likewise in 'Pioneers of the Alps.' Franz was certainly, in his day, as excellent a mountaineer as he was delightful as a companion on the mountains which he loved so intensely. He was invariably cheerful, whether in foul weather or bright sunshine, in defeat or when success crowned the efforts of his party. Full of quaint humour and racy anecdotes, he was the favourite of all who knew him. When the occasion demanded some little strengthening of language he was quite ready to fire off choice examples of suitable Swiss patois. Notably was this the case when a clumsy German woman bombarded us with a 2 ft. cube of rock when we were descending the Matterhorn and crossing the slabs below the final little chimney. But this was the only time when he had to draw upon classical literature when I was with him. Though possessed of a craving for adventure and excitement, he would run no unjustifiable risk, but had the real moral courage to order a retreat when, from the dictates of his wide experience, he knew that to advance would be to court danger.

He was, perhaps, the most unselfish man I ever met, and invariably studied the interests of his employers rather than his own. He revealed a notable example of this trait in his character at Prarayé.

My last expedition in 1879 was with Mr. F. J. Church and Dr. G. Scriven, guided by Franz and Adolph Andermatten, when we crossed the Tiefenmatten Joch, climbed the Dent d'Hérens, and descended to Prarayé. At that period the owner had an unenviable reputation for churlishness. Franz, who had been a sufferer, was determined to pay off old scores if possible. His plan was deep and led to much anticipatory chuckling. We were to act under his orders, and he insisted that when the time came he was to pay the reckoning. Subtle diplomacy was needed. Church was deputed to be the suppliant for the luxury of sleeping on the hay in the barn and the favour of bread and milk. Above all things he was to adopt the principle of *suaviter in modo* however much he might feel inclined to the *fortiter in re*.

It was most amusing to see and hear our envoy, hat in hand, in a manner almost befitting a suppliant before a Roman emperor at Aosta in ancient days. Church began by expatiating on the good grazing in the valley, the general excellence

of the farm and its buildings. Then he referred to favours received by former visitors at Prarayé, and by degrees caused the old man to glow with generous pride, and not only were bread and milk forthcoming but also cheese. As fresh hay was spread for us to lie on, we slept as well as naturally-tired men ought to.

In the morning we had more bread and milk. Then Church, suave as before, asked what we should pay for the great privileges we had enjoyed. 'Ah, sir, I leave that entirely to you.' 'Quite right,' said Church; 'my servant shall pay you.' Franz waited until we had got out of earshot, and was quite equal to the occasion. Suffice it to say that the amount was not large:

Few men with whom I have travelled have understood the weather signs so well as Franz, and not many could read a mountain face or ridge and find a route, good and sound, in a district new to him so well as he.

He was undoubtedly very proud of his achievement on Mont Blanc, especially as there had been so unusual an amount of snow and ice to contend with, as well as the loss of valuable time at the Lac de Combal. This latter caused him more anxiety than he cared to acknowledge.

There is no wonder that he repeated the expedition a little later with Church and Scriven, though they slept at the hut. Probably also he accompanied Passingham?

All who have climbed with Franz Andermatten have a very rich store of happy memories of his delightful personality, his winsome smile, his great skill, and his indomitable perseverance.

II.

A TRAVERSE OF MONT BLANC WITHOUT GUIDES.

' . . . your native soil forego,
And climb the frozen Alps, and tread th' eternal snow.'
(DRYDEN'S *Virgil*, 10th *Pastoral*.)

So overwhelming are the attractions of Mont Blanc that I feel that the temptation to linger in fond memory over happy days, spent with congenial friends on the great mountain, is too strong to be resisted during these horrible days of war. Hence, I hark back once again to Courmayeur and Chamonix.

Towards the end of June 1896 a large party arrived by
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various routes and on different days at the cosy Hotel Klönthal at Vorauen, in Canton Glarus, one of the loveliest limestone valleys I have ever seen. Horace Walker, Ellis Carr, and I were told to climb the Glärnisch. A reference to 'A.J.' xviii. 824 will prove that we obeyed orders.

After a few most enjoyable weeks, and the due celebration in Bouvier form of various birthdays of youngsters connected with the party, which fortunately usually coincided with mountain ascents, we turned towards Mont Blanc. The ladies made for Chamonix, the rest for Courmayeur.

Above Bourg St. Pierre we men divided. C. Pilkington, G. A. Solly, and Ellis Carr crossed the Grand St. Bernard, whilst Walker and I, who knew Napoleon's great road pretty well, went by the Col des Planards and the Col Ferret. When we reached the top of the latter, new to both of us, we were simply astounded at the grandeur of the view, which suddenly burst upon us. The precipices of the Grandes Jorasses seen from there are overwhelmingly grand. Walker was especially interested, as he had made the first ascent of the highest peak.

Our party rejoined at the Hôtel Royal, and here we met an old A.C. friend in the person of the Hon. Gerald FitzGerald.

Our object was to cross Mont Blanc by the Aiguille Grise or Dôme route—call it which you like—to Chamonix. This was to be done without guides, and we were 'to share the common danger and divide the care.' Porters were to accompany us to the Dôme hut.

Arrangements were soon made, and five lightly laden A.C.s accompanied by three fairly heavily-laden porters, whose loads were considerably increased later by firewood, went forth to seek adventure.

Carr found so many crystals on the Miage moraine that we felt that he would have succeeded, almost beyond the bounds of avarice, if he had taken up the profession of a diamond prospector. It was well for us that our friend had kept to a more normal career, otherwise we should have missed his genial company and excellent songs during the two nights which we spent in the Dôme hut.

As we turned up the rocks on the right bank of the Dôme Glacier, I noticed, with much interest, the great increase of the icefall of the Glacier du Mont Blanc, which was much more broken and wilder than in the year 1879.

The Dôme hut seemed almost palatial, but in due course we found that there were certain disadvantages in being accom-

panied by porters. There grows in the fair valleys of Italy a vegetable which the lusty sons of Piedmont rightly consider to be wholesome. Its Italian name is *aglio*, 'a genus of strongly-scented bulbous plants, all of them edible, and some of them of the greatest antiquity as potherbs.' I hardly like to assert that, during the two nights which we spent in the Dôme hut, we slept quite 'in the odour of sanctity.'

Up betimes, a hasty breakfast and a farewell to our porters, two of whom were to carry our baggage by the grass passes round to Chamonix, and we stepped out into crisp air and on to frost-hardened snow.

The weather was lovely, and we fully expected to be welcomed in the afternoon by some of the ladies of our party at the Grands Mulets. We got along merrily for a few hours when one of those sudden, violent, and wholly unexpected thunderstorms, which we all know so well, broke upon us and awakened the echoes from crag to crag with Nature's full orchestral power. It was grand and impressive, but it drove us down to the hut.

Fortunately, the porters had not left, so we sent them down to the chalet below the Lac de Combal for more wood and provisions and enjoyed ourselves immensely. Indeed, how could it be otherwise, as with congenial companions we spent a lazy day surrounded by wild precipices, chaotic glaciers, frost-riven peaks, and under a deep blue sky-canopy which had succeeded the storm?

Next day, July 25th, we were still earlier on our way and had the benefit of the steps we had previously cut. All went well, and we avoided, though quite unintentionally, the narrow snow arête by climbing a rock face by which we reached a higher portion of the ridge and in due course gained the broad snowfield above the Dôme du Goûter, and the tracks of the Chamonix mountaineers.

When above the Bosses du Dromadaire we turned on Horace Walker to act as guide, and it was really delightful for us to be led, step by step, to the very summit of Mont Blanc by such a veteran.

As there was a little wind we were not sorry to be able to find shelter under one side of that hideous iron building which, until it sank out of recognition below the eternal snows, always suggested a Chicago beef tin.

At the Grands Mulets we learned that Mrs. Pilkington and Mrs. Slingsby, accompanied by Melchior Anderegg, had spent a few hours there and had only just left. The bottle of cham-

pagne which they had brought for us was certainly appreciated. As the ladies had at least as interesting a day as we, I quote the following from my wife's journal :

' July 25th.—Mrs. P. and I started at 4.45 a.m. with Melchior, having shaken off, with much scolding, all but three men who said they were necessary for the mules. We, however, declined a guide for "the old gentleman"—Melchior—which was pressed upon us with a persistency worthy of a stronger case. At Pierre Pointue we dismissed our retinue, by no means an easy matter, and ascended the glacier with Melchior. The glacier was in splendid condition, and though the crevasses were very numerous we found no difficulty, and felt as fresh as paint when we reached the Grands Mulets at 10.30 and sat outside looking at the marvellous world of ice and snow.

' After lunching, we saw to our joy five little specks far above us appearing on the snowfield. We left for them a bottle of champagne, and then, with Melchior, returned to Pierre Pointue, where we awaited our climbers.'

Whilst at the Grands Mulets the ladies saw a lad of about seventeen come alone up the glacier. Wholly inexperienced, it was his intention to reach his mythical hotel on the summit of Mont Blanc the following day. In vain the ladies pointed out the dangers and the folly of such an enterprise, and did their best to frighten and to dissuade him. He did make the attempt, and my wife and I heard him tell his father on the diligence the following day that he had been 'within 500 ft. of the summit, but had been stopped by an alley' that he would have had to cross. This 'alley' I recognised as a narrow and rather a steep snow bridge between the Petit and the Grand Plateau.

The father apparently was displeased, not because the lad had made the attempt, but because he had failed.

No wonder that Mont Blanc takes so heavy a toll of human lives !

We were duly interviewed by the editor of the local paper, who inserted a few flattering paragraphs in his next issue, because the then President of the A.C. as well as Horace Walker had honoured Chamonix with their company, so Melchior had told him.

Our whole party, including Melchior, saw my wife and myself off on the diligence the following morning. They were much amused when, at the last moment, two of the three porters who had so successfully odorised the Dôme hut mounted the diligence bound for St. Gervais. Melchior, who

had been told about the 'odour of garlic,' was so tickled by the fact that one of the five mountaineers was not yet clear of these really excellent fellows that he chuckled and danced round and round most gaily, holding his nostrils all the time, much to the amusement of us all.

III.

FAILURE ON MONT BLANC.

'A man lately came from Killarney and said that he had seen nothing. But you know, sorr, that it takes an artist to enjoy scenery the best. Sending some men to Killarney is like putting a pig in a frilled shirt.'

Railway porter at Cork Station to Prof. J. N. Collie, F.R.S.

Circumstances over which I had no control prevented me, almost at the eleventh hour, from joining Collie and other friends in what proved to be a most successful campaign in the Canadian Rockies. Fortunately, I was invited, soon after my disappointment, to join the doughty Yorkshire trio, Eric Greenwood, J. J. and W. A. Brigg, on their annual tour in the Alps. This I accepted with pleasure.

True, I was rather staggered when I was told that we were to begin with Mont Blanc, which they hoped to cross from Chamonix by way of Mont Maudit and Mont Blanc du Tacul and so return to Chamonix. It was to be a true Yorkshire company, as Messrs. Alfred Holmes and G. Hastings, who were then at the Montanvert, were to take part in it. Even if I wished to do so, I could not well shuffle out of it on the ground of any ineligibility of birth, as I am certainly a Yorkshireman. Still, I did think it rather a severe training walk, but I neither blanched nor flinched, well knowing that the tour had been most carefully planned some months before by friends with whom I had often climbed in the British Isles, and in whom I had the fullest confidence. Surely I, to some extent an interloper, was not going to shirk hard work and some adventure?

'All right,' I said, 'but I'll take for once three bites at a cherry.'

'Three bites! What in the world do you mean?'

'The first bite will be up to Pierre Pointue, where I will sleep.

'The second will be to the Grands Mulets, when, after a night's rest, I shall be ready.

'The third bite should be Mont Blanc.'

‘I plodded in the cool of the evening up the steep mountain-side and had my ‘first bite’ at Pierre Pointue. My friends, with the exception of Holmes, who was not well, joined me the next morning and we spent a delightful day, and an easy one too, on the Glacier des Bossons and idling on the rocks of the Grands Mulets. In place of Holmes, Mr. A. C. Roberts came. We left at 8.45 the next morning, July 23rd, and I gather from Mr. W. A. Brigg’s diary, and from my own few notes, that though the view was one of almost perfect loveliness there were signs of wind on the summit. We were on two ropes, Greenwood, J. J. Brigg, and Roberts leading, and Hastings, W. A. Brigg, and I on the other rope.

All went well until we reached the ridge a little below the Vallot hut. Here a terrible wind assailed us, coming up out of sunny Italy. Three other parties arrived almost at the same time, having come from the Dôme hut. To advance would have been suicidal, and as none of us were tired of life we beat a retreat at once, but five minutes later were sitting on the snow in grilling sunshine.

Our party of three remained a considerable time on the Grand Plateau to enable Hastings to take some photographs. One thing I realised for the first time, viz. that to appreciate fully the solemn grandeur of this Grand Plateau and its surroundings one should ascend Mont Blanc from Chamonix, as in descending it when the snow is soft one cannot take in the majesty of the whole. We certainly enjoyed the scenery intensely.

The photography being accomplished, we started to follow the others. To our great amazement we saw advancing towards us, just below the Grand Plateau, a solitary figure walking on the tracks of the day as calmly as if he were on a garden footpath. He proved to be a young Parisian, dressed in velveteens and knickers, with bicycle shoes, a close-fitting cap, no gloves, no goggles, but carrying a light cane.

When we reached him, after the usual greetings he asked us how far it was to the Vallot hut, apparently thinking that most successful of icehouses was an inn.

‘Monsieur wishes to ascend Mont Blanc?’

‘I hope to do so.’

‘You cannot do this to-day.’

‘Why not? Here is the road. It is easy to follow.’

‘We have failed. So too have the other parties, because there is a gale of wind on the top.’

‘But there is no wind here.’

‘Monsieur has slept at Pierre Pointue?’

'Ah, no. At Chamonix. I left at 4 A.M.'

'You walk well. Monsieur is doubtless a strong climber?'

'Not at all, but I love the mountains.'

'Monsieur knows them well, no doubt?'

'Alas, no. I have never set foot on a mountain. I live in Paris.'

'But doubtless monsieur is a *Clubiste* and knows well the dangers of the mountains?'

'Yes, I am a *Clubiste*.'

'Of the C.A.F., of course?'

'No, of a bicycling club.'

There was an open crevasse near us. We took him carefully to the edge and told him that it was probably 300 mètres deep. He stepped back hurriedly. I told him that there were others, equally deep, hidden by the snow, and with a little wholesome argument we got him to return with us. He was certainly an exceedingly plucky fellow.

As for us, we had failed, but surely not ignominiously? Still it is probable that if we had taken the Corridor route we should have been sheltered from the wind and might have been successful.

This 'training walk' was the prelude to many grand mountain expeditions, for which I cannot too warmly express my thanks to my three Yorkshire friends, so staunch and true, Eric Greenwood, J. J. and W. A. Brigg, who, during a period of many years, have acquired a comprehensive knowledge of the Alps, from the Maritimes to the Eastern Dolomites, such as few of us possess. Practically, the whole of this has been done without guides. That I may have yet another climb with them is, I trust, not too vain a desire.

EARLY ASCENTS OF THE MATTERHORN.

THE 'Travellers' Book'¹ of the Hôtel du Mont-Rose contains no record whatever of the various unsuccessful attacks on the Matterhorn made between the years 1858 and 1865, and the account of the first ascent written by

¹ [The thanks of the Club are offered to Dr. Alexander Seiler for permission to make these extracts for reproduction here, and to Mr. Henry F. Montagnier for the trouble which he has taken to make them.]