

curling up with cramp, and I felt I had not sufficient strength to face the supreme effort required to rise a short distance in this fashion and then transfer myself to a flaky but sound foothold on the left wall. So I descended, using the threaded line, and Pigott had a try. But he too was tired, so he accepted a rope as hand hold from a party on top, which had kindly stood by to be ready to render assistance if required. If the state of the weather had encouraged more protracted trials, a shoulder from a trusty second in the 'cave' (tied to the chockstone), would probably have been effective. Our axe stems were not of suitable thickness to inspire confidence when performing aerial gymnastics in such an ultra-exposed situation: Pigott, who should know, likened the place to the Flake Crack on Scafell. We wasted no time on the summit, but 'abseiled' down the same way, a method used by Knubel which cuts out one abseil and one ascent, and sped down to the Nantillons Col, reaching it at 3 P.M.

The glacier was by now an old friend, our piolettes were quite big enough to scrape new snow from old steps, and, as we descended, the weather improved continuously.

Feeling exceedingly happy we reached the Montanvert at 6.15 P.M.

Pigott and Wood left for England next day; I went to Zinal, but I had had my last climb of the season.

At the request of the Editor a list of names and clubs is appended.

*Dramatis Personæ.*

A. S. Pigott, Rucksack Club; E. H. Pryor, C.A.F., Fell and Rock C.C., Rucksack Club, S.A.C.; Morley Wood, Rucksack Club; G. S. Bower, A.C., Fell and Rock C.C., Rucksack Club, S.A.C.

CLASSIC COLS.

- (1) THE EBNEFLUHJOCH; (2) THE LAUTHOR;  
(3) THE SCHMADRIJOCH.

By J. P. FARRAR.

**I** IMAGINE I apply no misnomer to these Cols when I term them classic, since they are fine expeditions, first done by good men long ago. There is no survivor of the only previous passage of the first, and the second and last have been long

neglected; indeed, the serious mountaineering done in the Rottal, excluding the routine Jungfrau, the last few years is a comparatively negligible quantity.<sup>1</sup> Only the names of Williamson, Irving, Fynn, Reade, Hasler, Macdonald, and Davidson occur to me. Yet it is the wildest valley in the Oberland, and offers as steep and forbidding walls of ice and rock as one can desire—men's jobs all of them.

Six years out of a veteran's mountain life are not to be caught up. Two years ago I had a fair season after walking myself fit on paths. Last year Gask and I wandered, with young Camille, Daniel Maquignaz's son, way down east to the Terglou in Jugo-Slavia. Gask must one day tell the tale of our Terglou doings. But after the Terglou my insides struck, in a most unheard-of manner, at the unwonted food, while the bad weather dogged effectively the steps of my companions.

So this year I dawdled about in England and got out to Grindelwald only on August 4—weather brilliant, no agenda, no Climbers' Guides, just a map—imagining, as I had not long landed from a journey through South Africa, East Africa, Uganda, and down the Nile in awful heat, I should be no good. My friends, the Haslers, spend the whole summer from May to September at the Bear—no bad place—and gave me a warm welcome.

The doings for the morrow were speedily arranged. It was to be the Faulhorn—my first ascent of that eminence, Hasler's 115th, at all seasons of the year. The pace he set me, carrying nothing, and he a sack, was so exquisite that I never even blew. We had a great lunch, with a bottle of Mauler, in the host's private parlour, over which Hasler indulged in a long argument as to whether it was his 114th or 115th visit. He was overruled by the charming hostess. By that time I was so built up that, had he proposed to ascend the Wetterhorn then and there, I should have felt quite equal to it. As it was he chose the Simelihorn and Röthihorn for our home journey. The down course was a bit more arduous than the ascent. I tumbled into a bath on my return. Next day was very fine, so was I. In an instant old agenda came back with a rush. I sent for my friend Peter Almer. Next day we went to Gleckstein; the following day walked up

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<sup>1</sup> I do not forget the brilliant ascents of MM. Liniger and Lauper in 1921 (*A.J.* xxxiv. 168), and MM. Lauper and Hug's in 1922 in this number.

Wetterhorn—8.20 to 7.55, not bad. I should hate to say how many times I have been up Wetterhorn since 1882. I cannot say it is very attractive, but it is a very old friend, so each year I call. But now I was out for serious business. I was deaf to the suggestions of my friend Hasler—great mountaineer as he is, with more first-rate summer and winter ascents behind him than any of us, and, downhill or uphill, able to walk away from the best—that we should do another ‘walk.’

(1) *The Ebnefluhjoch.*

Two years ago I had spent happy days in the Rottal with the Wills family, and had thoroughly spied out the land. Weather had driven us away. Now was my time. Friday the 10th saw us train for Lauterbrunnen, drive to Stechelberg, and walk up to Obersteinberg in blazing heat. Our goal was Schmadrijoeh; but hardly had we come in sight of the magnificent southern boundary wall of the Rottal than Schmadri was jettisoned: it could wait. There was the Ebnefluhjoch right ahead of us—great classic climb of Hornby and Philpott and Morshead, led by Christian Almer, Christian Lauener, and Jakob Anderegg, fifty-seven years ago. So completely had the Col gone out of mind that I do not think any guide knew where it was, and only my correspondence with the late Mr. Philpott over his delightful ‘Memories of an Alpine Partnership,’ recorded in *A.J.* xxx., had taught me.<sup>2</sup> Having even to co-edit a journal for the most technically informed and critical set of readers makes one learn! I had only to mention to my friend Peter and his well-knit, tireless twenty-nine-year-old son, our chief staff officer—quite often our leader—all the month, that old Christian had made the first ascent and that I proposed to make the second, to make their eyes sparkle with anticipation. They had been with us at Steinberg two years ago, and I had showed them the exact position of the Col.

We were welcomed warmly at the upper inn by our friend of two years ago, Frau v. Allmen, whose brother Karl was killed a few days later with Sir H. Hayden. Then all was crowded; Wills and I lay on straw, which interfered with his slumbers, but not, he said, with mine. Food was moderate.

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<sup>2</sup> I seem, to judge from what I wrote in the *A.J.* at the time, to have been quite an authority on the Rottal and its climbs. I do know something now!

This year the inn, notwithstanding the brilliant weather, was half-empty; the food, possibly for the half-emptiness, better. We did ourselves well and turned in.

The Obersteinberg (5800 ft.) is, of course, an absurd place to start from for the Ebnefluhjoch (12,300 ft.). I used to reckon that difference a biggish day; and now, in addition, was the huge round to the actual foot of the wall of the Col. Still, we were out for a classic climb. The conditions were good; the rocks were dry. We should know how to deal with the obviously difficult ice part; and I knew of old that I could always draw on a still existent fund of endurance, built up these forty years—I could say fifty—by a will to get there, and a consequent patient submission to hardships and difficulties. We were light, and I modestly forewent any claim to carry.

Hornby and Philpott had started from Trachsellauenen (c. 4200 ft.), lower down than Steinberg, but in straight line for the Col.<sup>3</sup> But nowadays the proper starting-place is the Rottal hut, over 9000 ft., whence an easy traverse across the Rottal glacier, over the Roteflüh ridge, and then close along the foot of the Ebneflüh wall, safe enough early, would bring one, in 2 hours at most, to the actual foot of our col. I carefully studied this route from both sides. It will go. I mention a good bivouac place later.

We were off at 3.37 next morning—fine, dark. Follow the Mutthorn path, over a narrow log bridge, for 45 m. till under the big tree-capped rise; then bear away left by bad cow-path, winding about, and reach the Oberhorn chalet, 5 A.M. Seen right ahead, over the back of a big moraine, is Schmadrijoch. We will call on you another day! Now up a grass-grown wall and, finally, up a hard-frozen, very steep moraine, and over a bit of glacier to a big grass plot close to the top of the moraines shown on Siegfried at foot of the N. by N.W. arête of the Grosshorn and running nearly to point 2115. Admirable place for a little hut—good water. I would commend it to the notice of the Swiss authorities, as I see did, years ago, Herr F. Beck, in *Jahrbuch S.A.C.* vol. xlv. It would serve Mittagjoch—hardest of the cols—Schmadrijoch, Grosshorn, etc.,

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<sup>3</sup> We 'went as nearly as possible in a straight line for the Col. . . . We all stood together at the top of the mighty wall up which we had been climbing as hard as we could for nearly 10 hrs. . . . The slope from first to last was extremely steep and the ice- and rock-work in the upper part uncommonly difficult' (*A.J.* iii. 85 seq.).

and is immune from avalanches. Anyway, we breakfasted 6.5 to 6.30. Right ahead, across the Schmadrigletscher, was the long rocky Schmadrirück. We soon had our first taste of ice conditions on the much crevassed glacier. As we approached the rüch one big old chamois, perched on the ridge, observed us narrowly, and then bounded off up the rocks—went groggy—probably an old bullet wound. We climbed easily to the crest of the rüch and descended immediately on the other side, down very steep snow, to the unnamed glacier lying to the N.E.

Along the N.E. foot of the rüch there had seemed, through the glass, to be a good terrace of snow. The glass lied! We aimed for the crest of the sharp rock arête further N.E. All the ground can be well seen on the photograph taken from Obersteinberg.

Soon we got into difficulties—big schrunds that made us worm about—and it was 9.30 before we reached the crest. The sun now appeared above our col. Proceeding at 10.5, we followed the rock ridge to where it dives under the ice, which was again much broken, needing time for treatment.

We bore away to the left, along the enormous Bergschrund which defends the final slope, the upper lip towering many feet above us, passing above a sort of Heisse Platte, until we found a place at the extreme left bottom edge of the final wall where the schrund looked possible. But its lower lip was covered with small stones, and I did not like it, as the sun was out, and we did not know very much about the shelter we could get on the steep slopes above. I was for turning back, bivouacking on the grass plot, and attacking earlier next day. We had, a little earlier, on my orders, put on young Peter to lead, as Peter the pastmaster has nothing to learn, whereas the young man has his name to make, and will make it. I am a believer in breed, and a better man than old Christian never handled an axe; and his blood has come down. Peter gave me no support beyond 'Sie müssen entscheiden'; and, while I deliberated, the young man was half-way up the upper lip. When he could see over the top he turned a smiling face to our anxious inquiries as to the lie of the ground. We soon followed. The young man wore his crampons. We were too idle to put ours on, as we were too old to fall out of steps. It was 10.30. First came a stretch of ice as steep as you like; then a long staircase band of rocks; then another long ice slope, very steep, which, however, formed a slightly emerging ridge; then more rocks, all

very broken ; then the skyline. It looked no distance. Always optimistic, I put 2 hours. But the ice was very hard ; good steps ; the rocks all loose, slabby, covered with loose stuff, as is the manner of Oberland rocks—steep. I never had a decent hold, or any hold in my hands all day. It was footwork right through, and that never good. No one had ever passed for years to clean up.

The young fellow cut us a good enough staircase up the first ice—hard ice. It is delightful to watch other people do the work better than you ever could, when often you have also swotted and sweated and carried ! And what a place for a well-balanced mind—a real steep slope ! The steps were not as undercut as his old grandfather's and father's, in which you can run ; but he soon improved on our admonition, and thereafter was nearly as good as they. The rocks only wanted care—much care. Stones were coming fairly freely down a slabby couloir away on our left ; away to our right stretched great wide, steep slopes of shining ice. Once, as we were tucked away on some staircase, the young fellow put out his head, to see for water ; he soon put it in ! But, as a matter of fact, after the few steps above the rimaie we had a reasonably safe line—perhaps not so wide as a new by-pass road, but we could steer. We left the rocks for the slight ice ridge before mentioned. Cutting in hard ice, relieved by two rocky islands lying just a bit off the ridge, brought us, bearing always rather to the left, to the next and final rocks. The goal was won ! The rocks were as bad as before, but nothing could hit us, and nothing else counted. They were much longer than they looked ; 2.10 saw us on the col, with only a short bank of hard snow to ascend to the skyline. We were in gorgeous spirits—great day. We had opened old Christian's Col again. We were hungry for more. I had only wandered up, doing no work, carrying nothing, felt nothing.

What whole men these Hornby, Philpott, Morshead, and their like were ! Prodigious walkers, firm as rocks on ice—cool as ice on rocks, faith in their leader profound ; asking little, doing much—inspirers of great deeds. Bad, nearly all of them, in describing topography.

And what men their guides : Almer, incomparable, greatest of guides ; J. J. Maquignaz, his equal in all save pure icework—as a pure rock-climber, perhaps better ; J. A. Carrel, the indomitable ; Melchior, in whom his friends—judges, I admit—could see no fault and no want ; Croz, magnificent in his

strength, but imprudent—in the end victim to his failure to grasp the place of real control; Hans Baumann, von Bergen, Jaun, slightly younger, great craftsmen; Emile Rey, a strange mixture—indomitable courage, great enterprise, much worldly wisdom, good executive ability; Burgener, boldest of all, a great master, knowing when to delegate, always retaining command, yet in the end hurled to death—the need to earn compelling the risk; and many another who played the man in his generation.

They are all gone—the Helvetians mostly dying in their beds; the Savoyards on the field; the Englishmen anywhere in the world where an Englishman dies, forgotten by many—never by us who have realised their joys, suffered their sufferings, and wait.

But what a Valhalla! Upon my word, we shall have some tales to tell them all, and we shall go over our climbs even as we do at our incomparable Club.

What advantages we have! Well equipped; axes, not alpenstocks; exact maps, not vague topographical guesswork; and, above all, the knowledge that the job *has been done*.

Has not Conway, the philosopher of mountaineering, in one of his inimitable papers, pointed out the root difference between attempting a *new* climb and repeating a difficult, only once done, ascent. Perhaps he failed to take into account the accumulated knowledge gleaned from the doings and narratives of our forbears, and tested and added to in our own, which enables one to lay out a line of very probable success. Geoffrey Young, in his marvellous classic, too abstruse for many of us, but which in years to come will justify a claim for mountaineering to be considered one of the fine arts, in which the price of a fault is often death, brings out the point well and does not forget the share Eckenstein<sup>4</sup> played in this style of investigation, bringing to it, besides great experience, a kind of uncanny intuition.

We ate again and drank. The weather was a bit overcast, and wind on the heights. Our plan to follow the arête over

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<sup>4</sup> I went to see him, as he lay dying, one summer day two years ago, at the little hill-town of Oving. His lungs had gone, he could only gasp; but his eye was as clear as ever, as dauntless as it had ever been in disadvantages of race, often of poverty: facing now, at last, the unknown, dying a brave man—wrapped up to the very end in his beloved mountains.

Ebnefluh to Rottalsattel was turned down *nem. con.* So we set a course for the Joch by a lower route. I insisted on bearing always to the left, to waste no height, and would not listen to Peter's accounts of how Mr. Gardiner and he and his brother had been balked by huge crevasses. I was soon balked. They were huge. So we steered down the Ebnefluhfirn—weather thickening—till all at once there came into view close on our right the Steiger hut of happy memories two years ago. We steered promptly for the front door, and crossed the threshold at 4.30. Somehow my caravan always has food of sorts for an extra day. The very civil gardien found us coffee. We did ourselves all right, and slept a well-earned sleep, not half frozen as two years before.

We left the hut next morning at 4.30 and, at a steady pace over lovely snow—a huge difference from two years ago and other times—were at the Jungfraujoeh at 9. On the way we observed the line of the Meyers' ascent of the Jungfrau in 1811 by the Kranzbergfirn, then close under Rottalhorn and over to the 'false' Kranzberg of the ordinary route. I observed it closer, from above, when we crossed the Lauithor. There is, in my opinion, no reason to doubt it. It ought—for form's sake—to be repeated.<sup>5</sup>

We came down by train on my S.A.C. card and the Guides' cards at a pleasing reduction in price. What a marvellous view from Eigergletscher! When they asked you in Grindelwald where you had been, and you told them, you might as well have said Kamchatka for all they knew. The Haslers, of course, were different. Didn't he and Jossi do that terrible slope of Ebnefluh itself, as did that old man with Claude Macdonald? And does not she know even more of the history of mountaineering save of that which he has helped to make? But there are no Boss now—only a very comfortable hotel. A bath put me all to rights and keen on further plans.

(*To be continued.*)

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<sup>5</sup> See Mr. Coolidge's able monograph, *A.J.* xvii. 392 *seq.*