

THE SCHALLIGRAT.

By SIDNEY YOUNG.

(Read before the Alpine Club, June 7, 1921.)

I HOPE that the title of my paper this evening will not have led you to expect too much, but I am here to fill a breach ; if it falls below your expectations you must blame our Honorary Secretary.

In June last I went out to Switzerland, and after spending a fortnight at Grindelwald and a fortnight at Saas Fee, at both of which places I did a little climbing, I made my way over to the Weisshorn Hotel at Randa.

I had never been to the summit of the Weisshorn, although I had tried it on two previous occasions, the last time in 1912 by the ordinary route, when, after eight hours' hard work, the weather compelled us to turn back not far from the top.

The Weisshorn has, I think, always appealed to me more than any other peak in the Alps, and each of my attempts had made me only more keen on trying again, although my ambition did not soar above an ascent and descent by the ordinary route. I had quite made up my mind if I had not accomplished it last year to go straight out to Randa in 1921, and wait there until I did succeed.

Shortly after my arrival at Randa in July, I found that the first ascent for the season had just been made, and as the weather was fine on the afternoon of July 16, I went up to the hut with my guides, Alois Pollinger and Franz Imboden of St. Niklaus. On the way up the weather got better and better, and by the time we arrived at the hut I heard Alois muttering something about the Schalligrat to Gabriel Lochmatter and another guide who had come up with a Japanese climber likewise with the idea of ascending the mountain by the usual S.E. arête. Whispers soon developed into conversations, and, to cut a long story short, during supper we were discussing the possibilities of ascending by the Schalligrat, and after supper, as the weather still looked good, we all decided to have a try at it by that way. Consequently we went to bed early, and arranged to get up about one o'clock, which we did, had some coffee, and made a start between 1.30 and 1.45.

The line of approach to the Schalligrat crosses the great southern buttress, which intersects the Schalliberg glacier. We reached the Schalligrat, slightly above the Schallijoch, just as it was getting light—I should think about 4.30—when we had some difficulty in getting off the glacier on to the rocks. I believe this frequently happens, as I understand that some years ago, when *descending* the Schalligrat, our Honorary Member, Signor Cav. Guido Rey, and Daniel Maquignaz were held up by a huge crevasse, and spent the night out.

I shall not attempt to rival the graphic description of the climb given by a very regular attendant and speaker at our meetings—I mean our sometime Vice-President, the late Mr. Broome. He enumerates quite a little regiment of towers that have to be turned or climbed. The simplest way is to turn the first few, which are not very pronounced, by traversing on the rather inviting and not really difficult E. or Schalliberg flank. In this way the main arête is gained in about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours at a little window in the arête. From this point the rock-climbing is of sustained interest. One formidable gendarme has a great upward-slanting semi-spiral gash in its Zinal side. Up this gash the leader crawled almost under cover, until he disappeared to emerge on the ridge above. Another great square-cut pillar of a gendarme, some 12 ft. high, was climbed with considerable difficulty by a crack in its face.

After about $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours going (I did not keep any detailed notes or times, as I was climbing gaily, never dreaming in my innocence of being required to give an account of myself before this technical and critical audience) we arrived below the great yellow gendarme, or rather 'tête,' which is so marked a feature. This 'tête' is not on the direct arête. It is just where the arête makes a bend to the W., and is not necessarily climbed. A traverse of about half an hour on the Schalliberg face brings one back to the arête. The next tooth can also be turned on the same face, by a difficult slab, and the arête regained above it in a quarter of an hour. A further traverse on the same face, close below the crest, can be made which brings one back in about three-quarters of an hour on to the arête, at a well-marked little gap.

From this point the line is along the actual crest, decidedly hard, steep slabs, and up a chimney, in the centre of the arête. This last $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours is much the most difficult part of the climb.

Our pace had been fairly steady, getting, however, a good deal slower as we neared the summit, and the halts becoming more frequent—sometimes for a drink and at other times to

admire the view. We reached the top about 12.30, or about 11 hours after leaving the hut. I should think altogether our halts totalled $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, so it left $9\frac{1}{2}$ hours for the actual climbing.

I am afraid that those of you who have made this ascent will think the pace was slow, but it was entirely my fault. My Japanese friend was like a young chamois, and Alois and the other guides would, I think, have liked to go rather quicker, but they were all much too polite to say so. As a matter of fact, I had slightly strained myself in doing the traverse of the Portjengrat a few days before. I was a bit tired, but after a rest of half an hour and something to eat and a little brandy to drink, I was soon myself again.

We came down by the usual S.E. ridge at a very easy pace, and reached the hut about 5.30, where we had a meal, and got down to Randa about 8.30, after about nineteen hours of very hard work, which included some of the best climbing I have ever had.

I cannot find anything in the JOURNAL about this ridge of the Weisshorn except Mr. Hartley's paper in 'A.J.' viii., on the expedition in 1877, when Sir Edward Davidson, Mr. Seymour Hoare, and he made the first ascent of the upper and more difficult part of the arête; and Mr. Broome's paper on the first complete ascent by this ridge in 1895. Mr. Broome told you then that he only kept shirt-cuff notes, and I kept no notes at all, as I did not happen to be wearing a shirt with cuffs, so that I am really worse off than he was—but I have very vividly in mind the number of 'gendarmes' we had to go over, and a few that we turned as he did on the E. side, with, I think, a single exception. There is also an account in the *Zeitschrift* of the D. and Æ.A.V. for 1907, of a traverse of the Rothorn and of the Weisshorn, ascending by our ridge, on two consecutive days in 1901, by Herren Pfann and Christa. They had arranged for two of their friends to meet them on the Schallijoch with blankets and provisions. These friends, however, bivouacked 2000 ft. below the Col, leaving the two climbers to sit out all night. Nothing daunted, they completed their task next day.

On our ascent, speaking generally, the rocks were in excellent condition. There was only one contretemps, and that was in going up a very steep bit. A stone weighing about a hundred-weight came loose directly I put my weight on it. I managed to keep it in place till Alois came to my help, although I got my fingers crushed a bit.

As I have already said, the traverse of the Weisshorn by this route is an undoubtedly fine climb, and is one that I strongly

recommend, especially to the younger members of the Club ; but don't do as I did, and attempt it in your first season for seven years, when you are the wrong side of fifty.

The view was magnificent, especially of the stupendous western or Zinal face of the mountain, and of the striking great gendarme on the northern arête.

I should like to remind you that the guide who accompanied me, Alois Pollinger, is a son of the Pollinger who accompanied Messrs. Hartley, Davidson, and Hoare on their famous climb in 1877. Alois was also, as most of you know, Mr. Broome's guide for a number of years, and I am sure I have to thank him for the success of my venture. In fact, it was much more his climb than mine.

Before I close I should like to acknowledge my grateful thanks to Captain Farrar for his very willing and material help in the preparation of this paper. I expect that some of you who know him well will recognise quite a lot of his phraseology ; in fact, it is practically Pollinger's climb and Farrar's paper.

THE BRENVA FACE OF MONT BLANC.

By J. P. FARRAR.

THE 1911-12 Anglo-Saxon onslaught on this face is fresh in our memories.

It produced a literary outburst, viz. :

1. My summary of the known ascents ('A.J.' xxvi. p. 171 *seq.*).
2. Narratives of ascents (*ibid.* p. 203 *seq.*).
3. Dr. Wilson's paper, 'The Col de la Brenva' (*ibid.* p. 264 *seq.*)—a narrative of an expedition in 1904 by Wicks, Bradby, and himself, which, like Mummery, Collie, and Hastings' ascent of 1894, is a glorious page of English mountaineering attainments.
4. A record of Mr. Coolidge's ascent in 1870, with some topographical notes by Dr. Wilson and myself (*ibid.* p. 428 *seq.*).
5. Mr. R. W. Lloyd's paper (*ibid.* p. 431 *seq.*) describing his momentous *descent* of the face.
6. My paper in 'A.J.' xxviii. p. 306 *seq.* on some topographical points.

Until 1919 the face was immune from onslaughts by axe and pen. Early this year M. Claudius Joublot, the able *réducteur en chef* of the *Revue Alpine*, was good enough to send