

And here my task must cease. I should wish, indeed, if so humble a performance were still regarded as worth description, to recount our subsequent ascent of Mont Blanc—to utter withering sarcasms against that Chamouni porter who calmly collapsed about half-an-hour beyond the Grands Mulets, and left Melchior to take care of two gentlemen alone—of the grand race which took place between a party which ascended by the Bosse and the rival party which followed the old route—of the cutting wind which threatened frost-bites, and made a stay on the summit impossible—and of many other exciting incidents which will never, I fear, find their way into print. They will be cherished not less affectionately by those who enjoyed them; for after all it is a great fact, and one which has of late years been too much forgotten, that there are few more charming expeditions in the Alps than the ascent of Mont Blanc in fine weather; and few, it may be added, more dangerous when the weather is bad. But on these matters I do not presume to speak at length. It is enough to say that, having once lapsed from the paths of virtue, I found the flowery track of vice so agreeable, that I never withdrew more sadly from the glorious Alps, or watched more fondly the last glimpses of cliff and glacier, as we entered the gorge below Sallenches, on our return to London fog. If I have had no thrilling incidents to recount, I feel a kind of senile affection for that child of my old age, if I may so call him, the Mont Mallet, and hope that he may not be found altogether unworthy of the attention of more industrious members of the Alpine Club.

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THE WEISSHORN FROM THE NORTH. By J. H. KITSON.

AS I only date my existence as a mountaineer from the time when the last great peaks had succumbed to my more fortunate predecessors, I have had nothing left to achieve but the addition of new faces to old mountains.

I had long looked with eyes of eager admiration upon the Weisshorn, in my opinion the most beautiful of all Alpine peaks; but it was not until August 1871 that I had an opportunity of seriously trying the mountain, although in 1866 Almer and I had looked up its southern arête from the Schallen Joch to find a way to the summit. That arête is so steep and broken, that, if possible at all, it would be necessary to sleep among the rocks close to the Schallen Joch, and have a long summer day for the expedition. Melchior had decided against the

northern arête before, and from close inspection I quite agreed with him; there remained, therefore, only the three faces of the mountain giving any possible new route. Mr. C. E. Mathews gives an account of the south-eastern face which is not likely to induce others to follow in his footsteps, and besides one would only reach the eastern arête, and the new route would not be complete.

Accordingly, having added a new face to the Riffelhorn, in order to get a day's training, I started on August 6th with Christian and Ulrich Almer to camp out on a hill under the Bies Joch, to inspect the Weisshorn thoroughly on that side. Christian had, when crossing that pass for the first time with Messrs. Moore and Morshead, traced what he considered a probable route to the summit, for which he had once camped out on the Gruben side of the pass, but without success, owing to bad weather. We took with us a porter to carry a tent, which Mr. Coolidge had kindly lent to Almer for our excursions—a kindness which we repaid by robbing him of the honour of making the new route, which Miss Brevoort and he had been very anxious to do, and followed us in shortly afterwards.

Our object was to have sufficient time to examine the mountain and reach Zinal in one day. The next day we ascended by the rocks, which are very smooth but firm; they were rendered difficult by snow and thin ice in the cracks, and would have been very unpleasant to descend after a long and tiring day. The last bit was up the narrowest chimney I ever passed through, so narrow that Ulrich stuck fast with his knapsack, and had to go down again to take it off and send it up before him. Arrived on the top of the rocks, we went to the icefall to find a way through it ready for our serious attack upon the mountain, and by this reconnaissance gained at least an hour on our next attempt. We then turned our attention to the peak, and at once gave up the route Almer had thought of before, as it was raked by masses of ice falling from an ominous-looking bulge in the glacier above. In its place, however, we found a way so safe and obvious that Almer wished to go up at once, saying we should reach the top by two, and might get safely down to our camp before dark. But as it was my first day of real work, I had far too much respect for the mountain and my own legs to attempt it, so I declined, much to Almer's disappointment, and we went up the Brunegghorn for a better inspection of the whole route. In descending, we made an important deviation from the original route of the Bies Joch, which lay over the lowest part of the ridge, and entailed cutting steps down a steep ice-slope. By ascending the

ridge of the Brunegghorn a few hundred feet this obstacle is turned, and easy snow-slopes lead down to the upper basin of the Turtman Glacier. Instead of descending to Gruben, we crossed the glacier to a spur coming down from the Weisshorn, and, rounding this close to its base, ascended to the Col des Diablons. From here we examined the ridge running down from the Weisshorn to the col, but could not find a good way to gain the arête; so we went down to Zinal, and returned to Zermatt the next day by the Col Durand.

On the 10th we started from Zermatt early, intending to sleep on the summit of the Bies Joch, where we had found a good bank of shale and a little pool of water that would be very useful for any one wishing to follow in our footsteps. When we arrived at our former camping-place a heavy storm of rain, snow, and hail was coming on, so we pitched our tent to wait till it blew over. But the blowing over principally applied to the tent, which kept coming about my ears every half hour; and after waiting patiently till evening, we determined to stay where we were all night, expecting to be obliged to return in the morning. I had before always considered the dwellers in tents shocking sybarites, and thought that a climber who could not be satisfied with all the delights and comforts of an open-air bivouac, was not fit for his business; but this experience perfectly satisfied me that a tent has some advantages, as without it we should have been driven back.

Next morning the weather had improved considerably, and at three we started for the icefall of the Bies Glacier, arriving at the first difficulties as the light became sufficient for us to see them. The Bies Glacier has two large upper basins, each held up by a ridge of rock, and the opening into the valley is very narrow, so that the ice is broken up into most confused masses, and the greater part of the icefall is swept by blocks falling from the séracs at the top. These, however, take two wide channels, and leave a way up between which proves not as difficult as it seems from a distance, and, thanks to our reconnaissance, we mounted quickly, gaining the second basin in two hours, and the rocks that hold up the upper snow-field by half-past five. This field we crossed directly towards the angle of the mountain formed by the junction of the eastern and northern ridges, where some rocks showed through the ice-slope, forming a ridge, which had turned the avalanches, and left a safe path upwards, although on each side the slopes were swept bare. Almer said that two hundred steps cut would take us up the slope, and seemed very sanguine of success, but presently remarked that the rocks were longer than he had thought, so that

we should soon be up. But gradually the rocks ended and his work began, and to his astonishment he found he had completely misjudged, and he had cut nearly his eight hundredth step before we reached the top of this slope, the main difficulty of the mountain. As we had expected to sleep at least three hours higher, he had told my wife, who was to be on the Gornergrat, to look for us on the summit at nine, and during this step-cutting, when he was apparently working as hard as a man could work, he turned and asked, 'Could you go any faster if I cut steps faster, as I want to keep my word and be up at nine?' I, however, found quite enough employment in going his pace, and declined to hurry. The slope was fortunately in good order, consisting of snow until nearly the top, when it turned to ice, and became very steep. We here turned off our ridge, which a little higher became rocky again, and crossed over to the left, reaching the more gently inclined snow-fields by half-past eight. Our easiest and quickest route would have been to cross these on to the eastern arête, and reach the summit by that; but wishing to complete our route, and finding the snow very soft, we turned up on to the northern ridge. This we found to consist of a mixture of hard ice and steep rock pinnacles, arranged so as to give the maximum of work with the minimum of progress, and it would have cost us five hours to reach the summit, while a cutting north wind made matters still more unpleasant; so after losing nearly an hour in our attempt, we turned back and took to the slopes below again.

We traversed about half the length of these, and then returned up to the arête, which was now steeper but easier, as it was almost all ice, without the unpleasant rocks. The ridge is one of the sharpest I ever traversed, and the cliffs on the Zinal side are wonderfully steep; but it was in good condition. Our progress was rapid, and we reached the summit about noon. The views as we traversed the arête had been magnificent; but when we reached the peak, clouds obscured the Zermatt side and limited our view. I have never been on a mountain-top which seems so isolated from the rest of the world. The top is so small, and the slopes on all sides so steep, that beyond one's feet nothing is visible except by bending over to look down.

The Rothhorn and the ridge connecting it with the Weisshorn looked most painfully insignificant to me, as I had always had a great respect for their difficulties and a lively remembrance of them. But our old enemy the north wind made the summit unpleasantly cool, and it was impossible to go down and sit on

the shady side, so we turned and dropped quickly down through the deep snow to the head of the long slope. This required very great care, and seemed longer to descend than ascend, and my arms and shoulders ached violently when we reached the bottom, with anchoring fast with my axe all the way down. This difficulty passed, we trudged on up to our knees in snow to the head of the ice-fall. This we passed by taking to one of the avalanche channels where the crevasses were all smoothed over, and, choosing our opportunity, going down at a run, and jumping round a corner at the bottom into safety. We thus arrived at our camp by four o'clock, and after making tea and resting an hour, we carefully packed our remnants of firewood and hay under shelter, ready for Almer's use the next month, when he expected to try that route again. We then walked on to Zermatt, where we arrived at 7.40, thus proving that our route is good for a descent, if not so eligible for an ascent.

I believe that this route will be found decidedly preferable to the old one. A tent may be easily taken to the top of the Bies Joch, and thus plenty of time given, as the commencement of the route, being over snow, may be traversed before it is light; and if the long slope were ice instead of snow, there would probably be more rock bare. It possesses one very material advantage, a perfect immunity from falling stones.

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VARIATIONS ON THE HIGH LEVEL ROUTE. BY A. W. MOORE. Read before the Alpine Club on the 30th January, 1872.

THE discoverers of the original high level route from Zermatt to the St. Bernard road have certainly no reason to complain of lack of appreciation on the part of the mountaineering public. On the contrary, they have had a crowd of followers, and their footsteps over the Cols de Valpelline, de la Reuse d'Arolla, and du Sonadon, have been adhered to with almost slavish exactness. Nevertheless there is no district in the Alps which offers a more inexhaustible variety of routes, suited to every degree of mountaineering capacity, or which is more crowded with gems of scenery accessible to the quietest, as to the most enterprising, pedestrian. Not that this mine of wealth has been left entirely unworked; had it been so, I trust that even in these days of equality and so-called fraternity I should have a keener sense of my duty towards myself than, under such circumstances, to break silence, or act as a finger-post to others when I should certainly desire to be the first passer my-