

## NEW EXPEDITIONS.

*Pennines.*

JUMEAUX DE VALTOURNANCHE: *Punta Giordano*, 3875 m. = 12,715 ft. By the E. face. August 1, 1931. Signor E. Benedetti with Louis Carrel and Maurice Bich.

We left the Jumeaux hut at 03.30. For a time we quickly followed the ordinary route helped by a very brilliant moonlight, for about 1300 ft. We then went along the névés at the foot of the Jumeaux and started up the big couloir between the Jumeaux and the Punta Lioy a little above the snow-patch at the foot of Punta Giordano.

We followed the said couloir for 500 ft. or a little more, then we pulled out on to the face to our left in the direction of a big and very prominent gendarme. Climbing several slabs and then a rather steep and icy little couloir, we reached at 09.00 the little notch above the gendarme at a height of about 3600 m.

After a short halt we went up, by bad rocks, a sort of big edge in the middle of the buttress. Some 160 ft. up we had to climb a very difficult slab. Further up we found a second slab inclined in the direction of Punta Lioy. We were obliged to use two pitons, while Carrel had to achieve some very delicate balance work.

We then went straight up for about two rope-lengths, and later bore first towards the left for a little while, then again straight up towards the summit, which we reached at 12.30, exactly 9 hrs. after leaving the hut.

We wanted to have a good rest, but the weather became suddenly bad, and thick snow began falling. We found a very difficult traverse between the two Jumeaux, during which we lost one axe. After having gone over the Becca di Guin by its W. face we finally reached the hut, and were quite wet through when in the evening we arrived at Valtournanche.

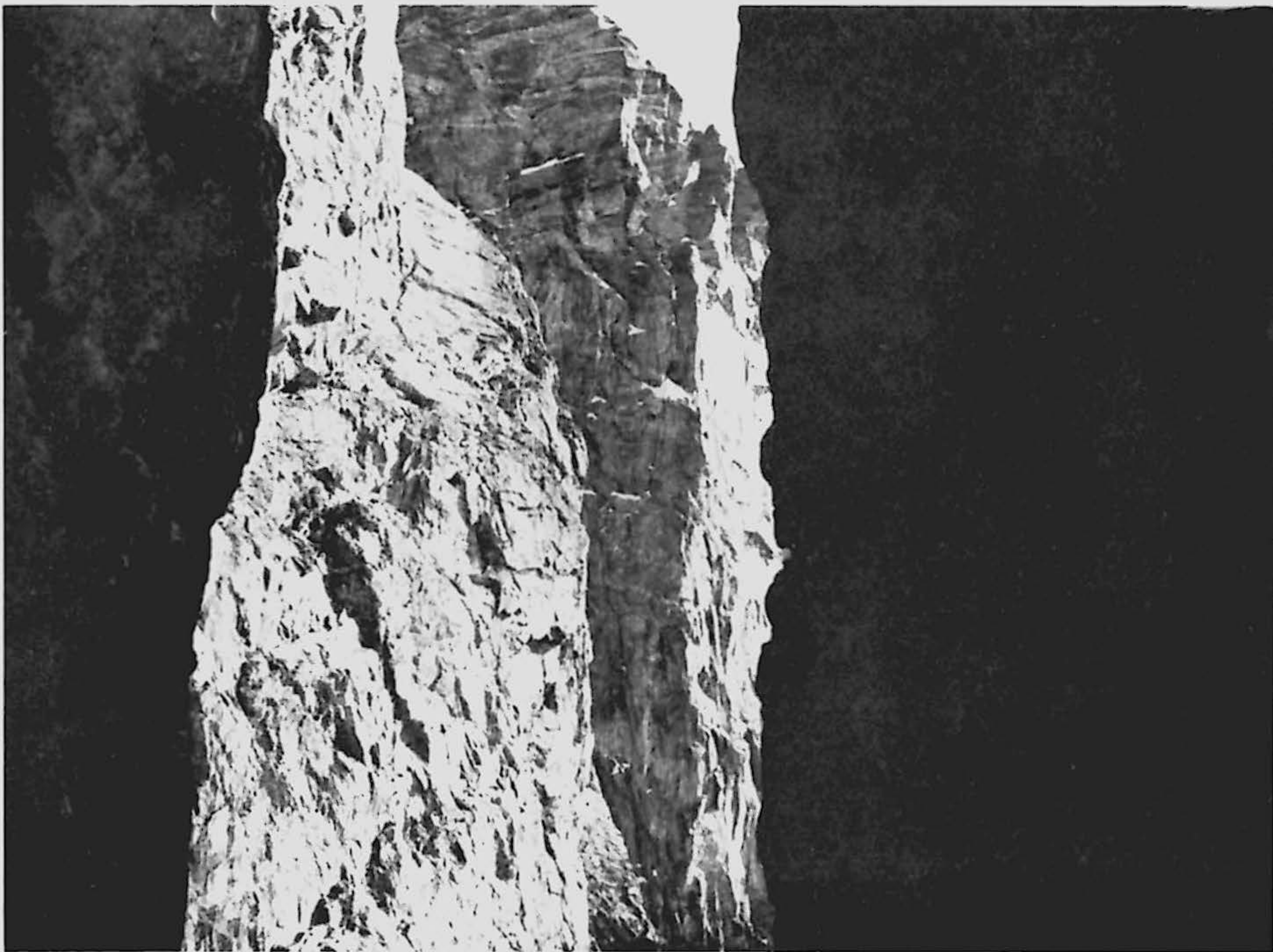
E. BENEDETTI.

## VARIOUS EXPEDITIONS.

*Mont Blanc Group.*

AIGUILLE DU PEIGNE, 3192 m. = 10,474 ft., *B.I.K.* (From the Col du Peigne, 3121 m., *Vallot*, i.e. the gap separating the Aiguille du Peigne from the higher Aiguille des Pèlerins. By the S.E. 'facet.') August 4, 1931. Messrs. J. L. Longland, W. S. Dyson and Peter Bicknell.





*Photo, E. Benedetti.]*

ON THE PUNTA GIORDANO.

Part of the face towards the Punta Liroy, from the gendarme.





*Photo, E. Benedetti.]*

THE JUMEAUX DE VALTOURNANCHE.  
(× gendarme ; + first slab ; ● second slab.)

*[To face p. 120.]*



This line, which only branches off the usual route up the couloir leading to the W. side of the Col du Peigne, at the col itself, is that discovered by M. J. de Lépiney, and described in the *Vallot* guide.<sup>1</sup> From the col the S.E. face, which is very narrow, and some 200 ft. high, is attacked almost at once—whereas the ordinary route traverses round on to the S.W. face, and up the long chimney. The 'Lépiney' variation gives very interesting steep slab climbing, rather more difficult than anything on the Grépon traverse, at a mean angle 'of nearly 80°'—or so the guide-book says! The leader wore rubber shoes, but I doubt if they are really necessary. It may be worth remarking that a big detached block, nearly three-quarters of the way up (at the top of the third step), recommended as a belay in the *Vallot* guide, is now distinctly loose. The descent was made by the ordinary way, most of which had to be reascended to free the spare rope, which had jammed at the top of the chimney. It would in any case be quicker probably, as is usually the case, to *climb* down.

DENT DU REQUIN, 3419 m. = 11,218 ft., *B.I.K.* By the S.E. face and S. arête. August 5, 1931. Messrs. J. L. Longland, Peter Bicknell and W. S. Dyson.

I believe that the route we followed is substantially that of Messrs. Wilson and Wicks<sup>2</sup> on the first ascent of the Requin by this line, although naturally there may be some minor divergences. We thought it a very fine climb indeed, quite well comparable to other long routes on the Mer de Glace side of the Aiguilles.

We started from the Montenvers, not having had time, perhaps mercifully, to reach the Requin hut on the previous day, and arrived at that hut shortly after 07.00. We left for our peak at 08.10, not realizing what a long climb we had before us. To our surprise we saw steps leading off from the ordinary Requin track, up the little S.E. branch of the Glacier du Plan. Finding that the steps required little improvement, we discarded our crampons and one of the ice axes. We reached the rocks of the S.E. face with some difficulty, by a longish jump from the snow edge, at a point just E. of the deep couloir that runs down to the E. of the long S. ridge. Difficult climbing, with some smooth slabs, took us out into the centre of the S.E. face, from which, after perhaps 500 ft., we were able to work back to the left (W.) to the upper part of the previously mentioned couloir, then up its W. bank by pleasant scrambling until, in about another 300 ft., a way was made across on to the S. ridge itself. The ridge was followed with some difficulty, one extremely awkward step—a swing up round an overhang, a steep slab, and a hand traverse—causing some trouble, until we were about 250 ft. below the prominent gendarme on the ridge known

<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.* i, pp. 156–8.

<sup>2</sup> *A.J.* 39, 109 *et seq.*, with illustration.



as the *Chapeau à Cornes*. From this point we made a *descent* of about 100 ft. (which perhaps could be avoided by breaking out from the S. ridge earlier, although the general angle is very steep), and a horizontal traverse to the right (E.) of another 150 ft. led us to the foot of some very steep chimneys near the centre of the S.E. face. By these chimneys, which were smooth and fairly strenuous, and the slabs above them, the ordinary route was joined just below the shoulder. A short hailstorm broke on us while climbing these upper rocks, but luckily did not last. The summit was reached by the *Colonnes*, and the ordinary route descended to reach the Requin hut, after some unorthodox glissading through the icefall, just before dark.

*Times :*

Left Montenvers . . . . .	03.30
Arrived Requin hut . . . . .	07.15
Left hut . . . . .	08.10
Summit of Dent du Requin . . . . .	17.30-17.50
Requin hut . . . . .	20.25

AIGUILLE DE GRÉPON, 3489 m. = 11,447 ft., *B.I.K.* By the E. face. August 8, 1931. Messrs. J. L. Longland, Peter Bicknell and W. S. Dyson.

The day was the only one of absolutely perfect weather conditions during our season, and, even so, we were in cloud for a great deal of the descent.

From the Montenvers we decided to start for the Aiguille de Grépon's Mer de Glace face at 03.00, and were told that Camille Tournier, with an Oxford climber, had already set off for it, about 2 hrs. ahead of us. This year we struck what I believe is the best route over Trélaporte (the last time I did the climb, in 1929, we had stumbled over big screes for hours)—that is, to get on to the Mer de Glace early—and stick to it until quite level with the Tête de Trélaporte, and then leave the glacier, bearing S.E., for grass slopes leading to the couloir running down on the N.W. side of the Fenêtre de Trélaporte. This couloir was in bad condition this year, full of big loose rocks, where in 1929 we had found good snow slopes. The bergschrund on the little Trélaporte Glacier was impossible, so we made our way with considerable difficulty up between the rocks and the ice at the Trélaporte end of the bergschrund, where Tournier had already cut some good steps. As we were doing this we saw his party on the rocks just above the new little hut, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hrs. above us. The hut, though very picturesque, did not strike one as being very useful, except possibly for an ascent rushed in doubtful weather.<sup>3</sup> It is situated about 1 hr. above the bergschrund. The climb was fairly

<sup>3</sup> This hut, so we are assured, has been built solely to permit of mediocre Chamonix professionals accomplishing the Grépon E. face in one day!—*Editor*.



uneventful, as we already knew the route. Any 'luggage' of any sort is a weariness to the flesh on this climb ; we carried only one small rucksack, which we passed about between the three of us, but even that was a burden. There was a certain amount of new snow, but not enough to be troublesome ; the *Niche des Amis* being converted into a snow slope was a little less delightful than usual as a lunch place. The ledge leading past the base of the 'Knubel' and 'Lochmatter' chimneys was a snow ledge, but the little snowy saddle below held good firm snow. A boot was badly jammed in the crack behind the nasty little pyramid just under the *Brèche Balfour-Grépon*, but we finally reached the Brèche at 14.00, 7 hrs. 40 mins. since setting foot on the rocks.

We rested a short time, and then moved across to try conclusions with the 'Knubel' crack, about which we had formed several theories. Last time, in 1929, Wyn Harris and I had failed to climb it, and this year we wanted revenge. As it seems to me that it can be ascended in perfect safety, perhaps it is worth describing the method :

The leader, wearing rubbers and tied on to both the double spare cord *and* the climbing rope (secured to the latter a few feet from the end), advances to the chockstones, threads a spare loop round them, passes the end of the rope through the loop and round under his legs so as to form a cradle to sit in. So safeguarded, the second man comes up to the chockstones, passes *his* rope through the fixed loop and makes another cradle for himself to sit in, being additionally safeguarded by a good belay which we found 2 ft. under the chockstones. The leader's rope is held by the second man, and the doubled cord, to which the leader is also attached, passes through the fixed loop down to the third man as additional security. So the leader is perfectly safe while tackling the last short difficult section of the crack. If he fell off, the only difficulty would be to extricate him and the second from the cat's cradle in which they would be dangling !

The last few feet I found extremely difficult. The second man, although a complete safeguard, is too far in under the overhang to give a shoulder. I had an ice axe, but the lower chockstones seem to have altered since the first ascent by Knubel, and it is impossible to jam the axe safely enough to pull up on. However, eventually I found I could lodge it, very precariously, between the *uppermost* chockstones, but only so that the axe was pointing rather downwards, and in such a way that any outward pull would have dislodged it at once. But it could be used to steady the right hand while the very awkward move up on to the left outside wall of the crack, on to a small foothold at shoulder level, was made. When once you can stand on this foothold and are clear of the inside of the crack, there is not much difficulty. Unfortunately, as my right hand released the ice axe the latter leapt from its position between the top chockstones, and I saw it break in two several hundred feet down the face. As it was the only axe we were carrying, and we had the



Nantillons Glacier to descend, its loss was moderately serious. If the leader could tackle the 'Knubel' crack at the beginning of the day when he was fresh, I do not think he would find it quite so serious, and I am sure it could be done without the ice axe. But coming as it does at the end of about 8 hrs.' steep climbing, it is a serious difficulty.

I got up it at the sixth attempt, so we did not reach the top of the Grépon<sup>4</sup> until 15.10. I believe this is the first time the Knubel crack has been climbed by an English guideless party at the finish of the Mer de Glace face.

The Nantillons Glacier was in a fairly precarious state with ice and rock falls across a larger proportion of the route than in normal years; also there were two huge crevasses under the Col des Nantillons that I had not seen before. We went cautiously in our axe-less condition, and did not reach the Montenvers much before evening.

*Times :*

Left Montenvers	. . . . .	03.00
Fenêtre de Trélaporte	. . . . .	05.10
Foot of rocks	. . . . .	06.20
Hut	. . . . .	07.00
Niche des Amis	. . . . .	09.40
Little snow saddle	. . . . .	12.20-12.40
Brèche Balfour-Grépon	. . . . .	14.00-14.25
Grépon summit	. . . . .	15.10
Montenvers.	. . . . .	18.45

*Pennines.*

ZINAL ROTHORN, 4223 m. = 13,856 ft. By the S.W. arête (*Rothhorngrat*). July 29, 1931. Messrs. W. S. Dyson and J. L. Longland, with Xavier Lochmatter.

This ridge gives the most continuously good rock climbing that I have yet found in the Zermatt district. Our times were slow, through the presence of a good deal of new snow, especially about the 'Gabel,' and lack of training. Xavier tackled the difficulties quite brilliantly. Messrs. Claud Bicknell and J. D. Best followed our party independently, on another rope.

*Times :*

Left Trift Inn	. . . . .	01.20
Summit of Trifhorn	. . . . .	05.25-06.00
'Gabel'	. . . . .	12.20-12.45
Rothhorn summit	. . . . .	13.30
Gabel	. . . . .	14.15
Trift Inn	. . . . .	17.50

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *A.J.* 39, 335.



LYSKAMM, W. summit, 4478 m. = 14,688 ft. By the N.W. face. July 21, 1931. Mr. J. L. Longland, with Xavier Lochmatter.

The route we took coincides almost exactly (allowances being made for changes in the ice-cliffs below the final bergschrund) with the original 'Klucker' route, which indeed we had intended to follow.<sup>5</sup>

July 20, after an abortive attempt at an early start, was spent in bad weather working out a route through the lower icefall of the Zwillings Glacier, which was fairly complicated this year. On July 21 we left the Bétemps hut at 03.15, and were forced to make a very wide détour to the W. and back again to circumvent enormous crevasses on the glacier plateau above the first Zwillings icefall. We reached the ill-defined snow ridge which ends in abrupt ice-cliffs overhanging the Grenz Glacier at 04.50 and left it at 05.10, after putting on crampons. The route through the upper icefall was fairly awkward, but had been surveyed through field-glasses from Rothen Boden. This is the only *potentially* dangerous section on an otherwise completely sound and attractive climb, and we passed it early enough in the day for the danger to be negligible. We saw nothing fall. The last bergschrund below the triangular patch of rocks ending in point 4084 m., which is so conspicuous on the N.W. face, proved easy (the second schrund had been awkward). The slope above was all névé-ice, and about 600 ft. of step-cutting was necessary before we reached the rocks. Crampons, which were invaluable during the day, lightened the labour, making it possible to cut small nicks for one foot and toe-steps for the other. The rocks up to point 4084 m. were plastered with much new snow, but not particularly difficult. The snowy, knife-edged arête above was awkward owing to deep loose snow, but this was more laborious than dangerous.

It was typical of the curious snow conditions found this year that the slope above the bergschrund, where one would normally expect snow, was ice, and the sharp ridge above, where previous parties had met ice, was loaded with incoherent summer snow. This year snow conditions seemed as topsy-turvy as the weather, which continually falsified all the normal good and bad weather signs. On the upper snow slopes we met cloud and snowstorm. The whole day had been very cold and sunless, but not unjustifiably bad. After reaching the W. summit at 10.30 (5 hrs. from the foot of the face), we missed the S.W. ridge leading down to the Felikjoch in the cloud, and descended the short W.N.W. ridge by mistake, until a sudden break showed us our own ascending tracks some way to the E. We toiled most of the way up to the summit again, and struck across to the true S.W. ridge, picking up three guideless Swiss and a solitary Italian on the way. The descent from the Felikjoch in cloud was difficult, as none of us knew the route down the upper

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<sup>5</sup> *A.J.* 21, 266-7; 25, 85-6; 28, 405-7; 33, illustration facing 422.



Zwillings Glacier at all well. But after one false start and return we got the united parties strung out in a line with a compass at the back, and successfully forced an unorthodox route down the glacier, which involved roping down one bergschrund and fielding the leader's long jump, to strike our morning's tracks on the glacier plateau. Thence to Bétemps, reached at 17.50.

This was the first, and I believe only, ascent of the Lyskamm's N.W. face this season.

BREITHORN, 4171 m. = 13,685 ft. By the N. face (so-called *Triftjegrat*). July 27, 1931. Mr. J. L. Longland, with Xavier Lochmatter.

A.—After another field-glass reconnaissance, on July 26, which proved invaluable both for the N. face climb and for our subsequent ascent of the *Klein Triftje* rib, we left the Gandegg inn at 02.45. We resolved to let the weather decide as to whether our climb should be the *Triftje* or the *Klein Triftje* rib. As often this year, to have an alternative programme proved invaluable. The ascent of the S.E. arm of the Kleinmatterhorn Glacier to the depression just S. of point 3253 m. on the *Triftjegrat* involved some step-cutting in the dark. At the gap (04.50–05.10) we were greeted by one of the most luridly crimson dawns I have seen, and decided to make it the N. face or *Triftje* climb, which would be considerably shorter than the *Klein Triftje*. Actually the weather held until about 11.00. From the gap behind point 3253 m. we went directly up a good rock ridge until about 3330 m., then straight up steep snow to the well-marked upper glacier shelf (about 3400 m.) above the first big ice-cliff running across this part of the N. face. We worked a long way to the left (E.) on this shelf, and then up to the uppermost glacier plateau by the only feasible way—a very steep ice-funnel directly below the first point lying to the E. of the main Breithorn summit. The ice-funnel, where some handholds had to be cut, took about 20 minutes, and, as it is menaced by a series of ice-cliffs, appears the only dangerous section of an otherwise safe climb. We did not actually see anything fall—the day was cold, and we were out of the sun. On this last glacier plateau (about 3700 m.) we found deep powder snow and, as this condition seemed to persist all the way to the ridge at the point where it is usually reached, *i.e.* the well-marked depression E. of the main summit, we turned sharp right (W.) on the plateau, and traversed horizontally until directly below the main summit. This was then reached by cutting up good névé-ice in a direct line—a possibly unusual finish—to reach the summit at 08.50. At 09.30, descent by the usual way, to reach the Gandegg in cloud and a little rain at 11.40. This was the first and (Xavier writes), so far as is known, the only ascent of the season. It is a pleasant route (except for the one dangerous passage), but, curiously enough, this year I do not believe it was as difficult as the ordinary E. ridge of the Weisshorn, up which Claud Bicknell had



led me three days before, when Xavier was incapacitated by an attack of snow-blindness, developed on the Lyskamm day. On the Weisshorn we found difficult double corniches, where normally lies rock, and the last 500 ft. very tricky with occasionally loose snow on ice.

B.—By the *Klein Triftje* rib ('Younggrat'). August 14, 1931. Messrs. J. L. Longland and Peter Bicknell.

We left the Gandegg at 02.10 and found a slightly quicker route down on to the Kleinmatterhorn Glacier, by keeping closer under the Breithorn, and above the uppermost of the two rock islands (of which the lower is marked 2912 m., *S. map*). We put on crampons for the descent on to the Kleinmatterhorn Glacier, and did not remove them until more than 10 hrs. later. They saved us an incalculable amount of labour during the day.

The little gap on the main *Triftje* ridge (behind point 3253 m.) was reached at 04.15, this time without any step-cutting. Crampons made the descent in the dark of the shaly couloir on to the Breithorn Glacier almost a pleasure, instead of the purgatory it would certainly have been without them. The route across to the *Klein Triftje* rib, among the very big crevasses of the Breithorn Glacier, was quite easy. We reached the rib just below (N. of) point 3355 m. at 05.00.

The first little piece of snow ridge above this point is very steep, but the snow was good. We soon reached the first of the many corniches we were to meet on the rib during the climb. Hermann Perren, who had climbed it about a fortnight before, told me he had met practically not a single corniche the whole way—the snow-falls in the intervening weeks account for the change. The bigger corniches gave some trouble, but the small incipient ones, which continued along almost the whole ridge, made progress probably easier, as it was simple to kick through the top and form a step, while a step was kicked or chipped further down the slope for the other foot, on the opposite slope to the overhang. The corniches had not formed entirely on one side, though perhaps the majority were on the E. slope of the ridge. And I found, after crossing from side to side several times, that the slope away from the corniche was frequently of looser snow, though only once or twice dangerously so. But the point is perhaps interesting because of what Professor Graham Brown says in 'A.J.' 43, 10, of the formation of *double* corniches on the *Viereselgrat*. The reason he gives for some of these, 'due . . . to snow-fields having avalanched from under the crest on the un-corniched side,' corresponds to our observations on the *Klein Triftje*. The looseness of the snow on the uncorniched side made it sometimes necessary to break through one of the larger corniches and work along the hard snow beneath it—but in general the snow and the occasional ice patches were good. Perhaps the most difficult step on the climb was to obtain lodgment on the rocks just below the first of the three main rocky gendarmes. Here a short overhanging rock wall, plastered with ice, with the



slab above it holding masses of new snow, gave considerable trouble, until I carved out a huge step in the ice below the wall, and from this Peter Bicknell heroically gave me a shoulder, though I was



Photo, T. Graham Brown.]

BREITHORN FROM RIFFELHORN, 1929.

(Left-hand route is that of 1906; middle is that of 1897; right is that of 1931.)

wearing crampons! (Incidentally we here discovered an unsuspected virtue of the 'Bergan' steel-framed rucksack: I found it was possible to stand on the frame of Bicknell's rucksack, thereby preserving his person from puncture.) It was an awkward movement, without much anchorage, and the snowy slabs above also required much care. The three gendarmes gave pleasant scrambling, new snow being the only difficulty. The final very steep ridge, which abuts against the face about 200 ft. below the central summit,



needed some 600 ft. of step-cutting or step-scraping, and, profiting by the experience of Graham Brown's party, we went right to the top of the ridge before attempting to traverse to the right across the ice couloir. Hermann Perren had traversed well below the base of the couloir proper, where it is splayed out and was very much wider. Bernhard Biner, leading another ascent of the climb, also this year, had done the same. Most of the Zermatt guides with whom I talked seemed to think that the French party (in 1928) had fallen from a point between this lower line of traverse (which is about 200 ft. below the top of the snow ridge) and the upper line taken by Graham Brown's party and our own. We found quite effective anchorage for this upper traverse: not only could Bicknell stand behind the big block whence Knubel had belayed Graven<sup>6</sup> (and which had to be cleared this year of masses of ice), but we discovered another flake belay further along towards the couloir, behind which the rope would run. The first piece of step-cutting, along to the right under the rock wall and slightly downwards, in extremely steep ice, I found rather awkward. The couloir itself is abrupt, and the ice very hard. But a 100-ft. rope reached easily, as Graham Brown says, to good anchorage on the far side of the couloir. During the cutting of these steps, the storm against which we had been racing for the previous 2 hours finally broke over us, and we reached the main ridge smothered in wind-blown snow. We had been able to time the storm fairly accurately, by watching its progress on the peaks on the other side of the Zermatt valley, but we were for a time slightly shaken by a continuous rattling of thunder, at half-second intervals, which seemed to be nearing us from the west. Later we discovered that the Italian artillery were utilizing a bad day to let off their quick-firing guns, apparently at the south face of the Matterhorn, to judge from the sound!

The little rib on the far side of the ice couloir was heavily plastered with snow, and rather difficult, but from the ridge the central summit, point 4148 m., was easily reached at 10.55, and we dropped thankfully out of the wind on to the S. face. We worked our way in cloud down steep snow slopes to the eastwards, and finally hit tracks quite close to the Schwarztor. These tracks we foolishly followed down the middle of the Schwärze Glacier, although I knew perfectly well that the normal route worked over to the right and down by the *Schalbetterfluh*. We thought the tracks might be a new short cut to the Gorner Glacier, and I had seen them quite low down the icefall from the *Klein Triftje* rib. These tracks proved not to be a short cut, and we were thankful in the end to get on to the *Schwärze* rib low down, after some agitated hopping among decaying séracs. We lost the tracks soon after entering the dry glacier fall, eventually reaching the Riffelberg at 15.30 in cloud and light rain.

J. L. L.

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<sup>6</sup> See *A.J.* 43, illustration facing 39.