A WORD FOR WHYMPER: A REPLY TO SIR ARNOLD LUNN

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A RECENT book by Sir Arnold Lunn, *Matterhorn Centenary*,[1] has afforded him the opportunity for a reiteration of his well-known adverse criticisms of Whymper. For many years Lunn has used his talents to voice his dislike or his distrust of Whymper: it would scarcely be worth while to attempt an exhaustive scrutiny of his former books, in order to see how often he has said the same things, but readers of *Matterhorn Centenary* will certainly find much of the work in the pages of *Mountain Jubilee* (1943), *Switzerland and the English* (1944), *Zermatt and the Valais* (1955), and *A Century of Mountaineering* (1957). It seems reasonable, therefore, to ask whether this repetition is due to the whole subject of Whymper, and of the first ascent of the Matterhorn in particular, being exhausted; or to Lunn's views being definitive and consequently not susceptible of change; or to those views being governed by a prejudice that prevents him from doing justice to his subject?

Mr. Ronald Clark has recently shown (*The Day the Rope Broke*) that we cannot say that nothing new is to be found about the Matterhorn catastrophe, so our first alternative will not stand; Lunn himself would appear to adopt the second alternative and to hold, as he has expressed it, that as a historian he is bound by what A. H. Clough once called 'the mere "it was"'. Undoubtedly, any historian is bound by facts, but in our view Lunn has so distorted the facts in his presentation of them[2] as to develop a 'mere it wasn't' in too many of his references to Whymper, both in relation to the Matterhorn and in a wider application. In fact, one cannot avoid an uneasy feeling that Lunn has used the prestige that he rightly enjoys, as an interpreter of Anglo-Swiss relationships, to foster and propagate error as regards Whymper.

This accusation, which clearly must be justified, comprises both specific charges of inaccuracy on particular points, and a general disposition on Lunn's part to run down Whymper by use of petty charges that, collectively, would damage his reputation. In the handling of these charges Lunn, as it seems to us, drops the historian for the journalist, and fails to distinguish between gossip and evidence.

[1] Unless otherwise stated, references here are to the pages of this book.

[2] Lunn does not seem to have taken to heart a hint made by a reviewer of one of his books, in *A.J.* 56. 193; that Lunn, in stating a case, tends to present what may be called the Lunadorned truth.

The Leap on the Ecrins

For Lunn to continue to charge Whymper with inventing this, and the deep notch on the arête that had caused the leap (p. 41), is, we submit, a gross instance of a false accusation made in the face of evidence that is overwhelmingly on the side of Whymper's statement. And Lunn is specially vulnerable in the matter, for the subject was examined carefully by the late Lord Schuster in his book, *Postscript to Adventure*, in the chapter entitled, 'One Word More', which bore a sub-title, 'An Open Letter to Mr. Arnold Lunn'. This volume was published in the New Alpine Library, of which Lunn himself was general editor. He has, therefore, a double reason for not forgetting Schuster's criticisms.

In view of Schuster's thorough examination of the matter, it is not necessary here to do more than summarise the case. In *Scrambles*, Whymper wrote an account of the descent after the first ascent of the Ecrins, illustrating it by a drawing of Christian Almer making a spectacular leap over a gap in the West ridge. After Almer's death, W. A. B. Coolidge wrote that Almer had told him no such leap took place. In further support of this, it has been pointed out that A. W. Moore in *The Alps in 1864* did not refer to the leap; and it was alleged that no one else has ever found the gap in the ridge. It is also suggested that the Alpine Club's subsequent election of Coolidge to Honorary Membership was tacit support for his statements against Whymper.

Against these propositions we set the following, which may be studied more fully in Whymper's *Letter Addressed to the Members of the Alpine Club*, and in Schuster's book, already mentioned.

(i) That Almer's denial of the story depends wholly on a statement by Coolidge, who was a violent and quarrelsome partisan, who constantly made foes of other people. Coolidge's asseverations on controversial matters always need scrutiny and checking; he fought with member after member of the Club—Whymper, Davidson, Freshfield, Farrar, Montagnier—and with various Committees of the Alpine Club, to say nothing of foreign climbers and clubs. To accept Coolidge's insinuations unverified is almost enough of itself to rule out Sir Arnold Lunn as a historian.

(ii) that Ulrich Almer, Christian's son, testified that his father had, after the Ecrins climb, told him of a remarkable jump he had had to make.

(iii) that Peter Almer, another son, also remembered his father speaking of making this jump.

(iv) that Ulrich Almer, when descending the West ridge of the Ecrins with his father and Coolidge, in 1870, was shown by Christian where the jump was made.

(v) that Monsieur Guillemin, when descending the ridge in 1886, wrote that his party were interested to see the place of Almer's famous leap (*Annuaire du C.A.F.*, 1886, p. 38).

(vi) that Whymper, on learning of Coolidge's statement, not only challenged it, but wrote to Horace Walker, who had been on the climb with him, and the latter answered that he clearly remembered the leap, which had certainly taken place, and it was 'cheek' on the part of Coolidge, who had not been present, to question it.

(vii) that Walker had spoken soon after the climb to a friend of his, mentioning the leap, and the friend had reminded him of the fact.

(viii) that Ulrich Almer, when informed of his father's 'denial' of the leap, said that *if ever the remark was made at all* (our italics) to Coolidge, it was probably only intended to mean that the leap was not quite like the drawing.

(ix) that the tacit accusation, that Whymper invented the whole matter, since the jump was not mentioned by Moore, is met by the fact that Moore on his side mentioned events on the climb not referred to by Whymper. And in any case Whymper said he had, before he ever printed *Scrambles*, visited Moore and shown him the proofs of the story, plus illustration, and Moore never raised any objection, then or later.

In the face of all this, we think that Coolidge's story is virtually disproved. Schuster discusses the whole question very judicially, and until Sir Arnold Lunn can upset Schuster's arguments, he ought to stop retailing Coolidge's fallacies. Coolidge himself did not stand to his statement; when Whymper challenged him by calling for a special general meeting of the A.C., to debate the matter, Coolidge threw in his hand by resigning from the Club. Throughout the affair, Coolidge's behaviour was contemptible, nor can one think it out of character for him to misconstrue what Almer said, as Ulrich Almer evidently realised (see italics in viii above). Yet this is the man whom Lunn chooses to follow, and he does so, we contend, simply out of his unreasonable prejudice against Whymper.

As for the action of the Committee of the Alpine Club over the Ecrins controversy, at their meeting of December 11, 1899, they recorded their view that precedent showed that 'except in matters arising out of the relation of members to one another as members of the Club, or in connexion with any of the publications of the Club', the Committee could not interfere in personal matters.

Any suggestion that the Club's later election of Coolidge to Honorary Membership was meant to indicate that they sided with Coolidge, rather

than with Whymper, is baseless. Coolidge had resigned from the editorship of Ball's *Guide* by a letter received and accepted at the Committee meeting of January 23, 1900; and at the General Meeting of the Club on February 6 following, a statement was read out explaining that on account of his difference with Whymper, Coolidge had resigned from the Club and from the editorship of Ball. 'Mr. Coolidge has twice before resigned from the editorship of the *Guide*, but has been induced to resume it. On the present occasion the Committee have felt that they could not make a third attempt to renew a connexion so liable to interruption.'

This reads as though the Committee were at last tired of Coolidge's tantrums; they were certainly taking up no stand on his side. But, nearly five years later, on December 6, 1904, the then Committee chose Coolidge to be an Honorary Member of the Club. Earlier that year they had chosen Dr. H. Dübi as an Honorary Member; seeing that Dübi was a distinguished Alpine historian, it is reasonable to suppose that the Committee thought it only fitting that Coolidge, an even more notable historian, should be similarly invited. But the Committee that chose Coolidge as Honorary Member was utterly different from that which had been confronted with the 'Ecrins leap' row; new President, new Vice-Presidents, new Honorary Secretary—indeed, of those present in Committee on January 23, 1900, only A. L. Mumm was also present on December 6, 1904. Clearly, the Almer trouble had long since faded out and could have had no weight with the new Committee.

'*A bit of a Swell.*' A favourite, and too-often repeated, tit-bit of Coolidge gossip that Lunn likes to relate is that, after the descent from the Ecrins, A. W. Moore chose to bivouac and to let Whymper go on ahead with Croz, because Moore was 'a bit of a swell', and disliked Whymper's uncouth company. Here again, it strikes us as essentially unhistorical to repeat such silly little pieces of gossip, especially when coming from such a malicious source as Coolidge, without, at the least, trying to find corroboration for the tale, and without employing a sense of proportion and a little 'nous' in estimating it.

The party split up because, darkness having fallen, Moore, who was very short-sighted, would have found it almost impossible to make a long descent without a lantern or light of any description. Moore and Almer had just had an unpleasant experience in descending the moraine of the glacier Noir ('I never was in such peril', wrote Moore), and he and Horace Walker had given up hope of reaching a roof for the night and were searching for a suitable bivouac site. (See Moore, *The Alps in 1864* (1867 edn.), pp. 74–6; Badminton *Mountaineering* (3rd edn.), p. 378).

Is there, in fact, any reason for thinking that Moore *was* a 'swell'? The implication is that Moore was a gentleman of considerable social

standing, and Whymper was not. Moore, in fact, came from a respectable but not distinguished family of Anglo-Irish origins, of the Landed Gentry type; this is hardly what the nineteenth century called a 'swell'. Nor was his position in life, in 1864, especially notable; aged twenty-three, he was a clerk in the Financial Department of the India Office. The Whympers were an armigerous Suffolk family, resident there since at least the mid-seventeenth century. They owned at one time Glevering Hall, one of those small manor houses that are so common in East Anglia. Like the Moore family, the Whympers were not especially notable, but there was certainly nothing against them. As in many another prolific family, the sons tended to follow the usual professions available to them, of Army, Navy, Church and Medicine; but Nathaniel Whymper (1787–1861), the grandfather of Edward, established a brewery at Ipswich.[3] At that time, the best-known member of the Whymper family was Sir William Whymper (1785–1850), first cousin to Nathaniel, and a notable physician in his day. After serving throughout the Peninsular War, he became surgeon-major to the Coldstream Guards and physician to the Duke of Cambridge.

Josiah Whymper, Edward's father, did not take to the brewing industry, but determined to make a career with his artistic talents. About 1829 he established in Lambeth what was to become a flourishing business as a wood-engraver. When, later, he made his home at Haslemere, he entered readily into the society of the place, which included the Tennysons and the famous surgeon, Sir Jonathan Hutchinson, to name no more.

Josiah's sons were to show themselves to be men of strong, original minds, who made their way in the world successfully. Charles, the artist, was well known and respected; Henry, who went out to India quite young, proved to be a man of enterprise as manager of the Murree Breweries. He fostered plans for extending the railway to the Murree Hills; gave generously to famine relief in 1878–79, and, though under fifty when he died, had received the C.I.E. for public services. It is, indeed, rather laughable to read the Coolidge–Lunn rigmarole of how Edward Whymper was socially unsuitable for the tastes of a youthful clerk in the India Office, while Henry Whymper was thought fit to be the host at Murree of two Viceroys of India (Mayo in 1869 and Ripon in 1883). And a letter (holograph) from Lord Dufferin in April, 1888, is extant, in which the Viceroy affably and at some length regrets that he

[3] Brewing was not regarded, then or later, as socially lowering; see, for example Dickens' remarks in *Great Expectations*, chap. 22. There are plenty of well-known instances of brewers flourishing in Society; Henry Thrale, Dr. Johnson's friend; Samuel Whitbread, politician and reformer; and was it not from a brewer, Montague, a member of the exclusive gambling club, Watiers, that Beau Brummell once won £12,000 at a sitting? 'I'll drink your beer in future, Brewer', said Brummell. 'Every blackguard in London does', was the reply.

has had to abandon a visit to Henry Whymper because of danger from cholera.

Finally, it may be noted that both Josiah and Edward Whymper won places in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; A. W. Moore did not.

What evidence is there of Moore adopting a superior attitude towards Whymper, as Coolidge implies? Perhaps the nearest to it is a reference in Whymper's diary of June 30, 1864, when Moore and Walker managed to engage the two last places in 'the courier' going to Bourg St. Maurice, leaving Whymper and Croz, who had arrived later, behind them. 'No room for Croz and myself, for which they appeared rather glad', wrote Whymper. Yet anyone who has travelled with a companion or companions will know how easily a temporary irritation against another person can arise, and as quickly disappear. To build on such occurrences is very unwise. Thus, Whymper records in his diary how Croz was in the sulks throughout the first ascent of the Aiguille de Trélatête on July 12, 1864; again, he wrote to Reilly (June 20, 1865) saying that 'Croz has become awfully bumptious, not to say fractious' (*Scrambles*, 6th edn., p. 380). But no one can read Whymper without recognising how sincerely he appreciated Croz and how deeply he felt his death on the Matterhorn. Their differences had disappeared and did not, on the lines of Coolidge–Lunn reasoning, reflect a lasting outlook on one another.

As for Moore and Whymper, their relationship was probably not particularly close—indeed, Whymper does not seem to have made any close climbing friends—and no doubt Moore was on closer terms with Horace Walker. When Adams Reilly joined Whymper in Chamonix in 1864, Moore went off on his own to team up with Morshead, just as Walker went off to join his father and sister. But Moore rejoined Whymper later on for the Moming Pass, just as he rejoined Walker later in the Oberland. The Moming Pass was, indeed, Moore's idea and he specifically asked Whymper to join him on the expedition (*The Alps in 1864*, pp. 259–60). By itself, this almost disposes of Coolidge's allegation that Moore could not stand Whymper's company.

There is nothing written about Moore that leads one to think he was a snob, as Coolidge suggests. On the contrary, his death evoked very warm tributes, Whymper, at the A.C. meeting of March 1, 1887, not only endorsing what others had said of Moore, with whom he had been friends since 1861, but himself proposing that the condolences of the Club be sent to Moore's family. The tributes elsewhere in the *A.J.* (vol. 13, pp. 186, 261) by Coolidge and Horace Walker, or by Freshfield in the *Procs. of the R.G.S.* (*N.S.*), ix, 200–1, all bear testimony to Moore's kindly nature, which made him an admirable travelling companion.

Two men who might, with more justice than in the case of Moore, be called 'swells', were Sir Edward Davidson and D. W. Freshfield.

With the first-named, particularly, the entrée, as Farrar says (*A.J.* 35. 265) was not easy. Yet Davidson corresponded for years with Whymper over the latter's guide books, and took much trouble on his behalf; there is no suggestion of his giving Whymper the 'brush-off'. And Freshfield, a somewhat Olympian figure, wrote the obituary notices of Whymper in the *Alpine Journal*, the *Geographical Journal*, and the *D.N.B.* If these two did not disdain Whymper, is it likely that Moore would do so?

Altogether, Coolidge's 'bit of a swell' story seems to us quite worthless as a serious criticism of Whymper.

Whymper and Hudson. In his constant efforts to belittle Whymper, Lunn decries his skill as a mountaineer as compared with Hudson (pp. 69, 70). He bases himself on an absurdity of Coolidge, that Whymper's fame arose from Hudson having been killed, so there was no one to share the distinction of having made the first ascent of the Matterhorn. Whymper, remarks Lunn, 'knew that he had attached himself to Hudson's expedition, and must have known that Hudson was a more experienced mountaineer'.

This statement certainly cannot pass unchallenged. It simply is not true that Whymper tacked himself on to Hudson; they chose the same route independently. And in 1865 Whymper had a much wider and more varied experience of climbing than Hudson had. The latter's fame rested (apart from his prowess as a walker) principally on his having been a pioneer of guideless climbing. His actual record of peaks, however, was a short one and very largely restricted to snow mountains, with Mont Blanc in first place. Prior to the Matterhorn, Hudson's record is as under—completed ascents are shown in italics:

1853 (January): Ascent of the *Dôle* (a viewpoint, 5,505 ft., near Geneva).
(March): Several attempts on the Aiguille du Goûter (guideless, with local chamois hunters. Hudson, solo, nearly completed the ascent of the aiguille).

1855 *Klein Matterhorn* and *Breithorn*; guideless.
Monte Rosa; first ascent (guided).
Mont Blanc; attempt via the Col du Midi (Sir J. H. Ramsay's route a week earlier). During this expedition one member of the party—perhaps Hudson—made the ascent of *Mont Blanc du Tacul* (see note 'A', p. 131)
Mont Blanc; first guideless ascent of the mountain, and the first ascent from St. Gervais.

1856 *Théodule Pass* crossed.

1858 Mont Blanc; attempt by the Bosses route. (A so-called guide and some porters accompanied the party, but for practical purposes this was guideless. See note 'B', p. 132.)
Mönchjoch; first completed passage; guided.

1859 *Monte Rosa*; guided.
Mont Blanc; first ascent via the Bosses route; guided.
1861 Col de Miage reached in an attempt on the Dôme du Goûter; guided.
1862 Visited Zermatt on his honeymoon; no climbing recorded.
1865 *Aiguille Verte;* second ascent and first by the Moine ridge; guided.
Mont Blanc from Chamonix; guided.

In the foregoing list, the Dôle (1853) might almost be ignored, but, giving Hudson the benefit of the doubt over Mont Blanc du Tacul (1855) and crediting it to him, he has barely a dozen completed expeditions in eight seasons. Farrar's remark (*A.J. 32*. 27) that Hudson had twelve or thirteen years of mountaineering experience is not correct, therefore, and the experience had been almost wholly on snow mountains, some of an easy nature, and mostly with guides.

Hudson's big year was 1855, though even here, and in fairness to earlier climbers, it must be noted that the first ascent of Monte Rosa had been virtually achieved some years before, by Ulrich's guides in 1848, by the Schlagintweits in 1851 and by the Smyth party in 1854.[4] They all climbed the Ostspitze, from which the Dufourspitze is 'an easy scramble of but a few minutes' (*A.J. 32*. 252). And until 1865 (the Verte) Hudson had not made a single reputable rock climb.

Hudson's general reliability as a climber was, in fact, based largely on his activities on two mountains, Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa. Although in 1865 these were still held in higher estimation than today, their prestige was already somewhat reduced. F. Morshead had deflated Mont Blanc by climbing it alone and in a single day in 1864, as a protest against the large *posse* of guides usually taken, whilst Tyndall had ascended Monte Rosa alone as far back as 1858.

Whymper, by comparison, and prior to the Matterhorn ascent, had in six seasons attained a list of thirty serious peaks or passes completed (in order not to weight the scales too much against Hudson, we will disregard some further fourteen minor passes crossed by Whymper); and there were a number of noteworthy attempts, not merely on the Matterhorn, but also on Monte Viso (1861), Dent d'Hérens (1863) and Ebnefluhjoch (1865). Thus, in a shorter period Whymper had nearly *three times* as long a record of ascents as Hudson, and of a much more varied nature. Except for his two guideless attempts on the Matterhorn, Whymper had travelled with guides. His list is too long to be shown fully here, but,

[4] Coolidge, *Alpine Studies*, 228, concludes that the Ulrich and Schlagintweit parties reached the Grenzgipfel, not the Ostspitze. We have preferred the later study by Farrar (*A.J. 31*. 323–3), confirmed by Montagnier (*A.J. 32*. 250–2).

to take a selection, he made ascents of such peaks as the Pelvoux, Monte Rosa, Grand Tournalin, Aiguilles de la Sausse (South peak), Barre des Ecrins, Mont Dolent, Aiguille de Trélatête, Aiguille d'Argentière, Grand Cornier, Dent Blanche, Grandes Jorasses (West peak) and Ruinette, most of them 'firsts'. In addition, he made first crossings of several passes, some of them of extreme difficulty for those days, and not reckoned easy today: Breuiljoch, Col des Aiguilles d'Arves, Brèche de la Meije, Col de la Pilatte, Col de Triolet, Moming Pass, Col Dolent,[5] Col de Talèfre; to say nothing of lesser passes not crossed for the first time.

On any estimate, Whymper's record is far more impressive than Hudson's. Not that the latter's technical ability, by the standards of those days, is in question; T. S. Kennedy, Leslie Stephen, and Whymper himself all bear testimony to it. But there is no need to exaggerate; as noted above, Hudson's climbs had been almost entirely on snow peaks, so when one finds Farrar writing (*A.J.* 32. 22) of Hudson as 'almost the sole great master and exponent' of new principles of rock climbing (!), one can only wish that he had not allowed his enthusiasm to outstrip his judgment.[6]

Although Lunn chooses to call it 'an uninformed verdict' to describe Whymper as the greatest mountaineer of his age, there must have been few, if any, in 1865 who had an equal record. But readers can judge for themselves, from the data given above, which of the two men, Hudson and Whymper, was the more experienced climber. In our view, Whymper's record and experience was easily the most extensive of the three principal amateurs on the Matterhorn, and both Hudson and Douglas should have been glad of such an accession of strength to the party.

Whymper's Drawings. Lunn's mistaken contention, that Whymper's

[5] Both the Moming Pass and the Col Dolent proved formidable, and the latter pass has been described by a more recent climber, E. G. Oliver (*A.J.* 39. 40), as the most difficult expedition in which he had taken part (despite comparisons with the Col du Tour Noir or the Col du Lion).

[6] R. L. G. Irving, *A History of British Mountaineering*, p. 91, has drawn attention to another exaggeration by Farrar, that the deaths of Hudson and Croz 'held up the tide of mountaineering for fully half a generation of man'.

Farrar's article, 'Days of Long Ago' (*A.J.* 32. 2) needs to be read with discrimination. There are many assumptions in it, and, high authority though he was, Farrar was not infallible. In the case of Hudson, as with the Parkers (see comment in *A.J.* 68. 285) he seems to have indulged too readily in superlatives. Further instances of exaggeration on his part can be found on pp. 15, 27 and 28 of the article, and in one important matter, the ropes used on the Matterhorn, he appears definitely to be at fault (see *A.J.* 32. 29; 33. 247; 61, 504, 505). Nor did Farrar make full use of some of the information in his possession; his remark about Hadow (p. 28) being one of those active young Englishmen capable of going anywhere, ignores the published testimony of T. S. Kennedy, Whymper and Yeats Brown, and the (later) very relevant remarks of Mrs. John Birkbeck Jr. in her letter to Farrar (*A.J.* 70. 18).

part in the illustrations to *Scrambles* was limited to the provision of the 'slight memoranda' referred to in the preface to the book, has been adequately dealt with in *A.J.* 57. 369 by Professor Graham Brown, who pointed out, as only one example, that the very accurate view of the summit of the Col Dolent could only have been drawn in detail by Whymper himself. There are more than one hundred illustrations in *Scrambles* and Whymper lists nine artists who drew them on wood, the leading individual James Mahoney (not 'Mahonney' as Lunn—p. 74—calls him), being responsible for about fifty. (On a quick look over the illustrations, we have only been able to identify about half this number.) But as none of these artists employed by the Whympers (Josiah and Edward Whymper did the engraving) accompanied Edward to the Alps, clearly they must have been dependent on his own drawings except in the cases (twenty-two of them) where photographs were used. No matter whether Whymper referred to them as 'slight memoranda' or 'designs', the fact remains that they were his original drawings, and the preparation of the illustrations for the book took up no small part of Whymper's time during six years. By all means let Mahoney, Cyrus Johnson and the other craftsmen be given credit for their work, but why try and belittle Whymper's basic contribution to the pictures?

But really one can scarcely any longer be surprised by anything Lunn writes in his campaign against Whymper; it is hardly an exaggeration to say that he appears ready to impugn Whymper's veracity on everything he wrote about the events of July 13 to 15, 1865. The 'fog bow' is a case in point; this Lunn says Whymper imagined. Whymper himself is quite open about it and admits that it has been suggested 'that the crosses are incorrectly figured in the illustration and that they were probably formed by the intersection of other circles or ellipses . . . . I think this suggestion is very likely correct; but I have preferred to follow my original memorandum'.

There is no reason for thinking that Whymper did not see some kind of optical phenomenon akin to those with which all of us are familiar in rainbows, fog bows and (more rarely) the Brocken Spectre. That he over-dramatised it in his drawing in *Scrambles* is no doubt the case. Lunn claims (p. 58) that it 'must' also have been seen from the Gornergrat and other viewpoints; but this would be looking at it from a totally different angle as compared with Whymper. It is essential to bear in mind that a fog bow (to employ Whymper's term) is personal to the observer, just like a reflection in a mirror. If, therefore, conditions looking from the Gornergrat away from the sun were not suitable for a fog bow, observers would not have seen one. The fog bow seen by Whymper was not a thing suspended in space over the Lyskamm for all to see. If observers on the Gornergrat *had* seen a fog bow, its axis would be a line passing well north of the Lyskamm.

In short, the fact that observers on other mountains did not see a fog bow is no proof that Whymper could not have done so.[7]

The Italian climbers on July 17 appear to have seen the Brocken Spectre whilst descending, between 6.30 and 7 p.m., at about 14,000 ft., so both they and Whymper saw a similar type of phenomenon at much the same height and same time of day. Miss Brevoort and Coolidge, in 1871, saw a fog bow from the same position as Whymper had (*Annuaire du C.A.F.*, 1882, 24); Lunn expresses no doubts about these observers, for he seems only concerned to doubt the truthfulness of Whymper.

Whymper's Knowledge of French. Lunn claims (p. 65) to have shown that Whymper's knowledge of French was almost non-existent and that Taugwalder *sohn*[8] had probably no more than a rudimentary knowledge of the French patois spoken in the Val Tournanche. In fact, Lunn has 'shown' (i.e. proved) nothing; in *A.J.* 55. 293 he sought to make out a case on these lines, and now he asserts that his case (which consists largely of assumptions) is a fact. Thus is false history made.

So far as Whymper is concerned, Lunn's opinion is based on a single entry in his diary, made three weeks after his first arrival in Switzerland (August 14, 1860), where he says that 'In the best French I could muster I asked if I had the honour of speaking to Monsieur le Curé Imseng of Saas'. Lunn omits to mention that Whymper then went on to talk to the Curé ('I told him how much I had heard of him and how glad I was to see him'; Smythe, *Edward Whymper*, p. 86), and so is able to claim that Whymper's knowledge of French was only adequate for the simplest of questions. He also asserts that there is no evidence that Whymper learnt French between 1860 and 1865.

Apart from visiting the Valais in 1860, Whymper went on to Courmayeur, to Chamonix, to the Vaudois, to Grenoble and the Dauphiné mountains, to Monte Viso—does Lunn really believe that he could get

[7] We are indebted to the Royal Meteorological Society for information and guidance on fog bows. From a perusal of Professor M. Minneart's *Light and Colour in the Open Air* (1940), it would seem that Whymper's phenomenon may not in strictness have been a fog bow. The latter appears, usually, when a beam of light behind one penetrates a mist in front of one (p. 184). Indeed, as most of us know from personal experience, ordinary street lamps frequently give rise to it against a dark background—for example, in a fog. In view of the emphasis that he laid on the 'cross' formation, what Whymper saw would seem to have been the rarer combination of parhelic circle (i.e. a circle parallel to the horizon) and sun pillar (a vertical pillar of light, more usually seen when the sun is low—as it would have been at 6.30 p.m.; pp. 200–3).

[8] We take it that it is Young Peter to whom Lunn refers, although at times it is almost impossible to be certain which of the two Taugwalders is meant, for Lunn has the habit of switching from the singular to the plural when referring to them. In *A.J.* 55. 293 he writes that the French of 'the Taugwalders' (plural) was probably very sketchy.

about in those days, in areas some of which were almost unknown to English travellers, without some acquaintance with the local languages? How many of us might not use the phrase, 'In the best French I could muster . . .', and yet be able to converse adequately, even though not an expert? As we have pointed out elsewhere (*A.J. 61*. 502), a man could not travel for several seasons with guides and not have some skill in ordinary conversation in their languages. How could Whymper and Croz, in 1864, after the descent from the Ecrins, sit up half the night 'recounting wonderful stories', if they had not a language in common? Croz, we know, spoke no English or German, but only French. To any unprejudiced person, it will be clear that Whymper even in 1860 had a working acquaintance with French, and by 1865 it must have increased.

In later life it is known that Whymper spoke French tolerably well. Walter Dollfuss (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, July 14, 1965) meeting Whymper at St. Niklaus in 1906, says he spoke good French but with a strong English accent; Emil Gos (*Les Alpes*, 1965, p. 143) says almost exactly the same—well enough, but with a strong accent. Admittedly, this was long after the accident, but since foreign languages are learned more easily in youth than in old age, there is far more to suggest that Whymper's French in 1865 was at least passable than there is to support Lunn's sweeping statement that it was almost non-existent. So far as we can tell from the printed Official Enquiry into the Matterhorn accident, Whymper was questioned in French, the language in which the report is written; the questioning of the guides is declared to be translated from German into French, but nothing is said of Whymper's questioning having been translated.

Lunn is on no better ground in his remarks about Young Peter's knowledge of French. Taugwalder had done his military service in the French-speaking Canton of Vaud, and as both Farrar (*A.J. 33*. 247) and Ronald Clark (*The Day the Rope Broke*, p. 106) observe, Young Peter must have acquired a fair knowledge of French. It is pretty obvious that it was because he and Croz had a language in common that Young Taugwalder was chosen to go along, on July 13, 1865, with Croz, after camp was pitched, to reconnoitre the route ahead. Or does Lunn think the two men, away for about three hours, could only communicate by signs?

Lunn, ever ready to accuse Whymper of something, has thrown out suggestions that Whymper invented things in order to give picturesque detail to his story in *Scrambles*. The 'sharp-eyed lad' who, Whymper says, saw and reported an avalanche fall from the Matterhorn shortly after 3 p.m. on July 14, 1865, is a case in point. Because he was not mentioned by Whymper in his letter to *The Times*, Lunn (*Zermatt and the Valais*, p. 39; *A Century of Mountaineering*, p. 56) hints that he

was a myth invented by Whymper, since he only made his first appearance in *Scrambles*. As we have pointed out before now (*A.J. 70*. 159), this boy is a fact, not a fancy; nor does he first make his appearance in *Scrambles*. Four years before Whymper's book appeared, Charles Long had written about him in *Echo des Alpes* for 1867, and Seiler told the Rev. H. Downton in July 1865 that the lad had seen 'what he described as an avalanche' (Ronald Clark, *The Day the Rope Broke*, p. 174). Does Lunn never read anything about the Matterhorn accident except what he has himself written? Charles Gos's *Le Cervin*, which reprints (vol. 1, p. 99) Long's testimony, has been out for nearly twenty years, so Lunn should know of it. The boy's identity is known, too; he was a son of old Peter Taugwalder.

On the same pages of his books referred to above, Lunn also accuses Whymper of greatly exaggerating the interest with which the natives followed the climb, and says that half the guests in the Monte Rosa Hotel refused to leave the luncheon table when Seiler announced that there were men on the Matterhorn, 'and continued placidly eating'. Well, Lunn, for all the confidence with which he writes, was not present, whereas Joseph McCormick, who *was* there, says that 'every person at the table immediately got up, and went out to see them' (*A Sad Holiday*, p. 13). Or again, if Lunn would only read Gos's *Le Cervin*, he would find (vol. 1, pp. 100–1) first-hand evidence of great excitement being shown; Charles Long entirely supports McCormick, and entirely demolishes Lunn's tale.

Lunn relies on a remark of Herr Lehner, that an old lady who was a girl in 1865 said that people who heard the news of men being seen on the top of the Matterhorn showed no interest. Who was the old lady? How long after the accident was it that she was questioned? Lunn ignores such points, but we suggest that the accounts of those who recorded their impressions at the time are likely to be much more accurate than a chance remark of an old woman years after the event. 'Old Men Forget'; so do old women; and not only forget, but even imagine things. What stuff this is, for anyone to trot out as history! Miss Brevoort, who with Coolidge visited Zermatt in September, 1865, recorded in her diary a conversation she had with the maid, who had been at the Monte Rosa Hotel on July 14. The girl 'described the excitement in Zermatt the day they reached the top. No one went anywhere. All stood abt. with glasses watching the haughty mtn. . . .' (Ronald Clark, *An Eccentric in the Alps*, p. 21). Even allowing for exaggeration, Miss Brevoort's maid is substantially in agreement with McCormick and with Long, and not at all with Herr Lehner's old lady.

As for Whymper exaggerating the interest taken, Lunn does not quote chapter and verse for this, nor can he. For Whymper in fact makes little reference in *Scrambles* to the local interest; he said that the victory

flag was seen from Zermatt and the Riffel, but this is the truth, not exaggeration at all.

The Matterhorn Accident. We have dealt with this already (*A.J. 61.* 494; *70.* 26 and 159) and see no reason to alter our views in any substantial degree. Fundamentally, we think that Whymper's narrative holds good; he said much the same, though at different lengths, in his letter to von Fellenberg (*A.J. 70.* 23), in his letter to *The Times* (August 8, 1865), and in *Scrambles*. And in all essentials, what he says agrees with McCormick's letter to *The Times* of July 22, and with *A Sad Holiday*. Naturally, at different times Whymper emphasised some aspects a little more than on other occasions; naturally, too, by the time he wrote *Scrambles* he was able to amplify earlier statements. Naturally, again, in his old age he became forgetful, as in the remark he recorded as having been made by Croz, about preferring to go up (or, it may be, down) with Whymper alone rather than with the others in the party (see *A.J. 55.* 294). Lunn can hardly hold it against Whymper that his memory at times misled him. In which of us does this not occur? Lunn himself records[9] a piece of forgetfulness on his own part (dealing with the 'Whymper-cut-the-rope-himself' story), so Whymper's error (an 'up' for a 'down', or vice versa) is not especially culpable.

It is quite understandable that there was some confusion over the remarks made by the Taugwalders (Young Peter principally, it would seem) on the way down after the accident. All three men had had a harrowing experience and were likely to say more than they meant, and in the stress of the moment to misunderstand what the other said. On the matter of the accusations against Old Peter, of either cutting the rope, or of deliberately using a weak one, Whymper disposed of the first so thoroughly that it only needs now to be ridiculed, if mentioned at all. We have pointed out how these remarks originated among the inhabitants of Zermatt, and how it suggests that Old Peter was not highly thought of there. Lunn tries categorically to deny that any of the locals ever said anything of the sort (p. 67), but as he quotes (p. 142) the late Bernard Biner to the effect that Taugwalder aroused jealousy among the other guides, some of whom were very unpleasant about him, Lunn's case is authoritatively denied, whilst our contention is supported. Lunn will hardly convince people of the camaraderie of Zermatt residents to the extent of believing that in 1865 no back-biting could have taken place; much more recent events than the Matterhorn catastrophe could be adduced to show the contrary. Moreover, if Whymper's charges had really roused such resentment in Zermatt, it is remarkable that it took about three-quarters of a century before anyone got up to defend the Taugwalders.

On the second count, Whymper's use of the phrase 'ugly look' in

[9] *Zermatt and the Valais*, p. 40.

connexion with the use of the weak rope (when there was ample good rope available) may be regretted, since it has occasioned so much heart burning. Yet in fact the term was not inaccurate; there is a sense in which it did have an ugly look, but this is not to say that Whymper was saying in effect that there had been dirty work done. He was stating how the matter *looked*.

Lunn notes more than once how Otto Furrer on one occasion said that he (Lunn) was the first person to defend Taugwalder, and how Lunn deprecated the praise, since Leslie Stephen had done so first. Yet, as we have before now pointed out (*A.J. 70.* 160), Stephen's defence was a very lame one; to defend a guide's misdeed on the plea that it was not deliberate but merely habitual carelessness, is a very qualified extenuation.

We think we have shown (*A.J. 70.* 31–2) that Old Peter's reputation was *not* wrecked by Whymper; on the contrary, 1866 was one of Taugwalder's better years of climbing and had he only shown more enterprise he could undoubtedly have 'cashed in' on the Matterhorn ascent. Since *Scrambles* only appeared in 1871, it could not have damaged Taugwalder before that date. For the rest, the world had to be content with the letter to *The Times* (except for the few people who had read the *Bollettino del C.A.I.* for 1865) and Whymper said nothing there seriously to damage Taugwalder's reputation. If he refers to the guides' broken morale immediately following the accident, he also says that 'the guides did their duty manfully' and exonerates them from all blame.

The Victorians, *vis-à-vis* guides, were in rather the same position as mountaineers today in relation to Himalayan or Karakoram porters. They tended to be more outspoken than at a later date, when guides had become more sober and more educated; no doubt, in years hence mountaineers will speak less freely of Himalayan porters. There were from early days guides like old Melchior Anderegg or Christian Almer or Auguste Balmat, who were welcome in any gathering. Equally, there were rougher diamonds like Peter Bohren. As the latter type died out, so did the heavy Victorian criticism of faults. Still, even fifty years ago, as G. D. Abraham's books show, there were rough specimens about, and Geoffrey Young writes of actually having to pay off on the mountain-side a shouting, unnerved guide. That Whymper found the Taugwalders unnerved and upset emotionally by the catastrophe they had all witnessed, is not only convincing about the two men themselves (and Young Peter in his own narrative admits to it), but likely from what we know of other contemporary guides (see Mummery, *My Climbs*, ed. 1936, p. 51), and such instances as we mention in *A.J. 70.* 31, note 8). Nor must it be forgotten that in 1862 on the Dent Blanche Old Peter had lost his nerve to such an extent that what would have been the first ascent had to be abandoned. He was unable to proceed.

A story that Lunn seems to wish to accept as true is the yarn that Whymper had himself cut the rope, at the time when he and Croz were preparing to race to the summit of the Matterhorn. This tale was referred to in our foreword to Young Peter Taugwalder's narrative of the first ascent of the mountain (*A.J. 61*. 485), and was introduced as an illustration of the strange tales that have got about, and we observed that 'probably few people today believe these stories'. Lunn, because the tale would tell against Whymper, appears to be one of the few. Hearsay stuff of this sort cannot be accepted; it came to one of us from G. E. Howard, who had had it from A. E. W. Mason, who said he heard it said by Whymper after a very good dinner, where the wine had flowed freely. Almost *anything* might be said or thought to be said in such circumstances; we would need to know, before taking it seriously, how sober the diners were, Mason as much as Whymper. Did Mason hear Whymper aright? Did he recount what he heard aright?

Considering the utter needlessness of cutting the rope on this occasion —it would be much simpler to loosen the knot than to have to grope for a knife and then cut the rope—and considering the improbability of Hudson standing by silently, and not objecting to the cutting taking place, we submit that, unless it can be well authenticated, to accept this story is simply absurd.

Turning to more general aspects of Whymper's character, it is necessary to see him in relation to his times, especially in the 1840s and '50s, when he was growing up.

Whymper had to leave school at the age of fourteen, as the family finances were heavily burdened. He was duly apprenticed to his father. But if anyone thinks that this means that he was uneducated, the notion is absurd. Lunn (p. 38) insinuates this, but anyone who has looked at Whymper's early, boyish diaries (Smythe prints many extracts from them in his biography[10]) or his school essays, let alone his later writings, will recognise, unless hopeless bias prevents him, that Whymper had a very acute, meticulous intelligence, and could write as good English as anyone. No one indeed can look at the well-known pictures, either of the young Whymper of 1865, or in 1910, and not recognise a decidedly intelligent

[10] Smythe (*op. cit.*, p.69) tries to make out that Whymper's early diary is a sad document, and might have been written by a prisoner in a cell. As Schuster (*A.J. 52*. 148) observes, it is nothing of the sort. It is matter-of-fact, but the principal impression on the reader is that the writer was hard at work on his job, yet managed to take an intelligent interest in public affairs. Smythe himself was a man who would not stick at routine work and in consequence was at loggerheads with some members of his family for not 'settling down'. He is, obviously, attributing to Whymper the frustrations he himself felt, or thought he felt, at the restrictions of modern life, especially anything like office life.

A more probable cause of frustrations in young Whymper would be the heavy, parental authority exercised by his father.

face; Schuster in *A.J. 52*. p. 150 (for it is undoubtedly he who wrote that unsigned review of Smythe's biography) extols the sensitive, spiritual face of the young man. Lunn would appear (p. 74) to think poorly of Whymper's literary ability; certainly one can find banal passages, but in this Whymper would seem to have been following a practice that was all too common among Victorian writers, of apostrophising or soliloquising in a style quite out of fashion today. One has only to turn to the writings of men such as Trollope, or Dickens (the latter a particularly irksome example), to see it; and Gilbert takes it off in *The Mikado*, when Ko-Ko starts, 'Oh matrimony! . . .' and is interrupted, and exclaims, 'can't you see I'm soliloquising?'

Whymper must be viewed against the background of the age he belonged to; opinions will naturally vary somewhat about his writing; to us, it seems that he wrote with great clarity and precision. The description of the view from the Matterhorn may be, as Lunn has claimed, largely a catalogue of names, yet it has a certain dignity about it, and Lunn at any rate should be glad that there was a general absence in Whymper's writings of the sort of 'purple passages' that so often spoiled the writings of Whymper's biographer.

Finally, in estimating Whymper's intelligence, Lunn might well reflect on the fact that although Whymper was not a trained scientist, he was so much one by instinct that he had the unusual compliment paid him after his death of having, as a supplement to the more formal obituary in the *Alpine Journal*, a special note by Professor Bonney on 'The Scientific Work of Edward Whymper', in which he receives high praise.

A further suggestion that Whymper was ill-educated lies in the statement in Smythe's biography (p. 315) that towards the end of his life Whymper tended to drop his H's. Lunn, needless to say, seizes on this. Smythe says that Whymper sought to correct the fault by getting his nephew, Robert Whymper, to attend his lectures and snap his fingers when an H was dropped. Somehow, the notion of being able to get a relative to follow one round, attending lectures for so fanciful a purpose, strains one's credulity, and we have been told by one of Whymper's great-nephews that members of the family regard the tale as simply an instance of a habit, well known in the family's circles, of making whimsical criticisms of one another. But, assuming it is true, surely Lunn should ask himself how it was that an experienced lecturer of many years standing, like Whymper, who had addressed numerous fashionable audiences, had never, so far as we know, been found out in the fault of dropping his H's? Smythe's allegation only refers to the later years, and he tells us earlier (pp. 310, 313) that Whymper had been troubled with failing sight, and with attacks of faintness. Surely, it will occur to anyone that, if the habit of dropping H's had suddenly arisen, it may well

have had some specific cause, such as a slight stroke or something of that nature, that could cause a slurring of speech. Lunn's case against Whymper is weak indeed, if he has to bolster it up with stuff like this. Whymper was understood to have died of a cerebral haemorrhage, so there is no improbability that some earlier and milder attack may not have occurred.

Another of Lunn's gambits is to relate how he was introduced to Whymper at an Alpine Club lecture in 1908; how Whymper, instead of being surrounded by a crowd, was standing alone; and how Whymper only made a few remarks to him about ski-ing. Whilst we are all of us naturally affected by first impressions of people, Lunn's experience of life must have taught him that first impressions often need correction. Some men are good mixers, some are not. Whymper clearly was of the latter type; a reserved, taciturn man, an introvert. Members of the Club who remember C. G. Bruce will agree that he was the very opposite, an extrovert if ever there was one, a tremendous mixer, always in the centre of things, jovial in manner and speech, and with a penchant for Rabelaisian stories (*A.J.* 45. 334; 52. 105). Other A.C. members have represented every gradation between a Bruce and a Whymper; Collie, a notably impressive personality, was seemingly less reserved than Whymper; Farrar was less boisterous than Bruce. If Lunn is trying to imply that Whymper was 'out of things' in the A.C. for reasons of social status, he must do better than this. Whymper was a formidable figure, with, as Lunn has to admit, the aura of greatness about him; there would be nothing incongruous in his being aloof[11] and part of the reason at least was likely to be a shyness on the part of other Club members at accosting him. This is no unusual thing where powerful personalities are concerned; Gladstone records how as a young man he steeled himself to speak to Wellington, only to be nonplussed by a brief 'Ha!' The youthful Lunn seems to have fared better at Whymper's hands, and indeed on his own showing there was little time for any talk before the lecture began.

A rather trivial dig at Whymper is Lunn's statement that Josef Knubel said once that he was not liked in the Zermatt valley. In view of Lunn's remarks, often made, that Swiss peasants do not easily reveal their minds and tend very readily to say what their interrogator wants to hear (a characteristic not at all confined to the Swiss), one would like to know whether Knubel had sensed Lunn's dislike of Whymper and was saying what would please him to hear. In any case, did Whymper ever go out of his way to seek popularity? His descendants will tell you that old Uncle Edward was always regarded as a rather awesome figure. Yet, as Smythe

[11] Freshfield, it might be remarked, says of Whymper that, 'vivacious and caustic in conversation, he was for long a welcome presence among his friends'. (*G.J.* 38 (1911), p. 441).

notes (*op. cit.* p. 311), his diary records many examples of kindness and generosity, not least to children, and Frau Otto Furrer could tell Lunn today how she looks back to the occasion when her father took her, as a small girl, to be introduced to Whymper, and how he delighted her by the gift of a coral necklace, which she regularly wore to church every Sunday when in her best clothes.[12] No doubt, Whymper was a severe and autocratic employer of guides, and not popular accordingly; but the other side of the medal must be shown also: there is no need to list acts of kindliness, but equally there is no point in going on repeating chance remarks by Knubel or anyone else, as though these were a definitive verdict on Whymper's character.

A regular entry in Lunn's gibes at Whymper is the latter's supposed remark, 'What would Zermatt be without me?', and the rejoinder of Seiler's daughter, 'And what would Whymper be but for the Matterhorn?'. It was really rather a feeble sort of reply, for Whymper's reputation as a mountaineer was firmly established by a number of noteworthy ascents outside of the Zermatt valley, and his later reputation depended more on his work in Greenland and the Andes than on his subsequent few Alpine climbs.[13] But his notoriety on account of the Matterhorn was inescapable and there can be little doubt that the tremendous drama of the first ascent contributed not a little to making Zermatt the outstanding climbing centre it was to become, eclipsing even Chamonix and Grindelwald. Add to this that Whymper's guide book to the valley, *Zermatt and the Matterhorn*, went through many editions (as did his Chamonix book), and we can see that Whymper *did* bring fame to Zermatt.

In any case, how can we be sure whether the remark was made by Whymper seriously or jokingly? The very fact that the Seiler hotels boarded Whymper free, though certainly generous and creditable to them (but is Whymper the only person who has been treated liberally by Swiss hotels?), is in itself a recognition that he had contributed much to Zermatt's distinction.

Whymper's marriage was known to be unhappy, and broke up, and this alone would have driven him in on himself. A similar withdrawal into himself had happened years before, after the Matterhorn accident. That event undoubtedly hit him hard at the time; he was, after all, only twenty-five and although remarkably mature in some respects, still it must have been a great shock. Contrary to some of Lunn's insinuations,

[12] Walter Dollfuss, in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, July 14, 1965, records how, as a boy, he braved Whymper's presence in St. Niklaus, and was charmingly received.

[13] Freshfield, in his obituary notice in the *Geographical Journal* just mentioned, observes that Whymper's enduring reputation was due to a great extent to other causes than the Matterhorn.

Whymper behaved creditably at the time, though this is not to say that he did not make mistakes, as anyone else might. But, upset and harassed as he was, he immediately, on his return to Zermatt, busied himself in every possible way to get the bodies recovered, the two other survivors, the Taugwalders, not lifting a finger in the matter. He was involved in much publicity; in an official enquiry (and he found time to put down certain questions with a view to clearing up rumours about old Taugwalder and the weak rope); he had to pay the two surviving guides (though not, strictly, employed by him); he had to see to the fund for Croz's widow, and he took, later on, much care over a suitable memorial to the man who had been, despite occasional differences, undoubtedly his favourite guide. In the midst of all this, he went off to search for the body of W. K. Wilson, killed on the Riffelhorn.

Little wonder if, after it was all over, he decided, as he expressed it in later years (*The Graphic*, October 6, 1894), in future to travel alone. No doubt it would have been better for him *not* to have retired into himself; could he have married happily soon afterwards it might have made a world of difference to him. As it was, he tended to become solitary and crusty, when what he needed was the humanising influence of a happy home life.

In brief, Lunn's attempt to decry Whymper on the score of various selected oddities, even unpleasantnesses of character, is invalid, as invalid as it would be to choose only kindly actions and build up from that. Most men and women have one or two characteristics more fully pronounced than others, but all human history shows how dangerous it is to say of any individual that this or that is 'out of character', or impossible to believe. Generous men can suddenly do a mean action; truthful ones fall for some pointless lie; honest men be found shoplifting; cruel men perform a kindness.

In Whymper's case, his reserve probably arose from a natural disposition that way, and from his early life. His alpine diaries of 1863–65 show that he had some sense of the ridiculous, but the Matterhorn accident certainly dealt him a blow, and whereas he might otherwise have come out of his shell, he was driven back into it. 'Ever afterwards I have travelled alone.' And, characteristically, he died alone. When one compares the advantages given to young explorers today, it really is astonishing that Whymper, starting as a relatively poor boy, managed, quite apart from his meteoric Alpine career, to run his two Greenland journeys and his Andean expedition, and to become a well-known lecturer and writer. If he had his faults and failings, this is no more than one would expect: nobody wants to make him out to be a saintly character. But Sir Arnold Lunn's habit of petty denigration seems to us quite unworthy, and is generally baseless, and it is time that his attacks were brought to an end.

Note 'A' (see p. 117). The question of the first ascent of Mont Blanc du Tacul is complicated by the varying remarks made from time to time. It has been claimed for Sir J. H. Ramsay's party and for the Hudson–Kennedy–Smyth party, both in 1855.

(i) Longman, *Modern Mountaineering* (*A.J. 8.* 14), quotes from a recent letter from Ramsay, saying his party 'ascended the Tacul' and also reached the top of Mont Maudit (*en route* to Mont Blanc from the Col du Midi: July 31, 1855). Longman's fragment was written in the 1870s—see *Mumm*, vol. 1, p. 192.

(ii) Ramsay, in his further account (*A.J. 28.* 266–7, 269, but written many years before, vide *A.J. 37.* 176), says they reached the summits, both coming and going, of Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Maudit—he particularly refers to the fine view they had from the former.

(iii) Seymour Hoare and W. E. Davidson (*A.J. 9.* 105), on reaching the summit of Mont Maudit, September 12, 1878, claimed that it had not been ascended fully till then, and this was agreed by Ramsay (*A.J. 9.* 170), who says that he had reached the crest of the ridge of Mont Maudit, but not the top. He makes no correction, however, as regards Mont Blanc du Tacul.

(iv) C. D. Cunningham (*A.J. 11.* 362) climbed Mont Blanc du Tacul in 1883, and says it was apparently first climbed by Ramsay, though this could mean that the latter gained the ridge and not the summit. Cunningham had in mind Ramsay's admission, just noted; but this, as we see, refers not to the Tacul, but to the Maudit.

(v) Durier, *Le Mont Blanc* (1877), p. 346, says Ramsay climbed both peaks, but he wrote before Ramsay's admission had been published. Farrar (*A.J. 37.* 176) interprets Ramsay's climbs as meaning that they crossed the shoulders of both Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Maudit; so far as the latter peak is concerned, this is certain, but otherwise one would have been justified in saying that Ramsay had climbed the Tacul to the top, were it not for the claims of the Hudson–Kennedy party.

(vi) The primary authority on the Hudson–Kennedy–Smyth expedition (a week later than Ramsay's) is *Where There's a Will There's a Way*, p. 16 (undoubtedly written by Kennedy), where it is simply said that 'our leading man' gained the top of Mont Blanc du Tacul in bad weather, but does not say who the leading man was. Farrar (*A.J. 32.* 13, note) thought that Christopher Smyth and Hudson were the principal leaders.

(vii) C. E. Mathews, *Annals*, p. 202, referring to the Hudson–Kennedy party, merely says that one of the party reached the top of the Tacul. But (p. 207) he accepts Ramsay's prior ascent. Louis Kurz, in both the Conway–Coolidge guide, *The Chain of Mont*

Blanc (1892), p. 113, and in the fuller *Guide de la Chaine du Mont Blanc* (1935), p. 386, says the first ascent of the Tacul was by a member of the Hudson party, and Farrar (*A.J.* *32*. 12) more vaguely credits the ascent to the party as a whole.

(viii) Finally, Graham Brown and de Beer, *The First Ascent of Mont Blanc*. p. 442, say expressly that it was Hudson who climbed the Tacul solo for the first time. As to this, Hudson is certainly a probable claimant, but one cannot quite rule out Smyth or Kennedy as 'possibles'.

Note 'B' (see p. 117). The year of the attempt on the Bosses route, by Hudson's party, is in dispute. Farrar (*A.J.* *32*. 14, 15) claims that it must have been 1857, since Coleman's *Scenes from the Snow-Fields*, published in 1859, must have been written in 1858. Hence, when Coleman refers to 'last year' (p. 23) as the year of the climb, he must refer to 1857. This would seem to be incorrect; Coleman (pp. 34–5) gives lists of climbs on Mont Blanc from 1855–57 inclusive, and does not include any by himself or Hudson in the latter year. F. Vaughan Hawkins, also, 'The West Side of Mont Blanc' (*P.P.G.* 1st ser., p. 59) says that Coleman's book 'gives an account of several expeditions in 1858'; after parting from Hudson, Coleman made the first crossing by a traveller of the Col de Miage, and there seems to be no doubt that this was in 1858.

Mumm (vol. 1) gives this latter year in his note on Coleman, but in those on Hudson and Hubert Smith, he had evidently been influenced by Farrar's remarks, and says 1857 or 1858.[14]

[14]Sir Arnold Lunn's reply to this paper will appear in the next number of the *A.J.*—EDITOR.