A NARROW ARETE.

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The Ascent of Mont Blanc from the Glacier de la Brenva. By A. W. Moore. Read before the Alpine Club on March 6, 1866.

THE attempts which have of late years been made to find routes to the summit of Mont Blanc, which should rival in popular favour the established ones from Chamouni and St. Gervais, have not been attended with very great success. It is true that the route from the Col du Géant, over the Mont Blanc du Tacul, first tried by Mr. Ramsay in 1854, has been found practicable, and has been once or twice taken; but notwithstanding the erection of a hut in a convenient position behind the Aiguille du Midi, it has not, and does not seem likely to, become popular. Expeditions made from the side of the Col du Miage have had even less result. The Dôme du Goûté has certainly been gained from the Col, and a party has descended to the southern glacier of Miage directly from the Dôme du Goûté; but the summit of Mont Blanc is three hours distant from the Dôme, and no one has yet reached it starting from the Col du Miage, or is ever likely to do so, as I think Messrs. Buxton, Macdonald, & Co. will agree, from the level of the southern Miage Glacier. Probably most mountaineers have, at some time or another, dreamed of finding a practicable route from the south side of the mountain, but, as seen from the valley, the Brenva Glacier, which would naturally suggest itself as the line of march, does not look promising, and has besides a general reputation of inaccessibility, which has deterred explorers from seriously examining it.

Nevertheless, in 1863, a large party, of which I had the honour to be a humble member, went to Courmayeur for the particular purpose of seeing what could be done from that quarter. We were attended by Almer, Perren, and Melchior, and, with them, held a grand council of war, on a little hill behind the village, which commanded a view of the entire face of the mountain above the Brenva Glacier. But Perren and Melchior were dead against an attempt being made at all, the latter going so far as to call the plan 'eine miserable Dummheit,' 'a wretched piece of folly,' while Almer, although less despondent than his companions, declined to say that he thought success probable. As the balance of opinion was altogether unfavourable, and there were circumstances which rendered the majority of the party unwilling to risk a failure, the idea was abandoned, and we had the mortification of seeing the Italian flag, which had been prepared by the natives for our expedition, rolled up and put away, and of ourselves sinking considerably in the estimation of the men of Courmayeur.

Personally, I must confess to having entirely concurred in Melchior's opinion, and the ascent of Mont Blanc from the Brenva Glacier was summarily erased from my list of 'possibilities' for future years. Indeed, I thought no more of it, and my apathy on the subject would probably never have been dissipated, had it not been for something I saw while descending from the summit with Almer in 1864. To all but the most nervous travellers the Mur de la Côte has long since ceased to be a bugbear. But, even in these enlightened days, there are probably few who have not been taught to believe that, however the steepness of the slope of the Mur above the Corridor may have been exaggerated by early writers, its face above the Brenva Glacier is absolutely precipitous. Now, upon the occasion in question, we were compelled by the state of the snow to descend right along the edge overhanging the Italian side, and great was my surprise, on looking down on that side, to see, instead of a precipice of great height, an ordinary slope of by no means excessive steepness, stretching down to a gently inclined field of névé, lying at a depth of apparently not more than 150 feet below. It did not appear to me that there would be much difficulty in descending on to it from almost any point of the Mur, or indeed that even a *roll* down would be attended with very serious consequences. I at once concluded that the névé upon which I was looking could be nothing but the head of the Brenva Glacier, and succeeded in persuading myself that there must be ome way of reaching it from below which had escaped our observation

in 1863, when the upper region of the glacier had appeared to be separated from the Mur by some five thousand feet of steep rocks interspersed with hanging glaciers of an 'avalanchy' character. To avoid topographical detail further on, I may as well at once explain what the real nature of the ground is. The upper part of Mont Blanc is popularly supposed to be entirely cut off from the southern valleys by a more or less vertical wall of rock, and in every map yet published, with the exception of the new French Survey, this wall is depicted as sweeping round the head of the Brenva Glacier to and beyond the Mont Maudit. The popular notion is not so very far wrong, but it so happens that at one point, and one point only, there is a break in the continuity of the wall. From the actual summit of the mountain, a considerable glacier flows straight down into the Brenva without interruption, and it was the upper part of this which had attracted my attention, the head of the main glacier lying at least 3000 feet below. The Corridor and Mur de la Côte are on the left bank of this lateral glacier, whose right bank is formed by a great rocky spur, which projects at right angles to the main mass of Mont Blanc, far into the Brenva Glacier proper. This spur was our base of operations in the expedition which I am about to describe, and entirely masks the lower part of the tributary glacier, the existence of which would not be suspected from below. What I had seen impressed me so strongly with a conviction of the practicability of reaching the Corridor from Courmayeur, that I determined to make the attempt at the first opportunity. In drawing up, therefore, with Mr. Horace Walker, the plan for our campaign of 1865, it was agreed that an expedition should be made to the head of the Brenva Glacier, and Mont Blanc either ascended from it, or the reason why it could not be done definitely ascertained.

Accordingly, on the afternoon of July 12th, after an abortive expedition up the Val Grisanche, Walker and I, with Jakob Anderegg, drove from Ivrogne to Courmayeur. We were joined there, on the 13th, by appointment, by Mr. George Mathews; and also received a fresh recruit in the person of Mr. Walker, sen., who brought with him a tower of strength in the shape of Melchior Anderegg. In the course of the afternoon we walked a little way outside the village, until we opened out a view of the side of the mountain above the glacier, and then sat ourselves down to reconnoitre. In 1863 the great difficulty had seemed to be to discover any route which should not be fatally exposed to avalanches. The same difficulty, of course, still existed, but, whereas we had then signally failed in finding

any solution of it, five minutes' inspection now sufficed to reveal to us what we wanted. The rocky buttress, which has been spoken of as projecting from the side of the mountain towards the centre of the glacier, appeared to offer a route free from all risk of avalanches, and in other respects presenting a fair chance of being followed with success. There were three doubtful points in connection with it. First, whether it would be possible to get across the glacier to its base. Second, whether the rocks by which we must climb to its crest would be found practicable. And, third, whether, having followed the crest, and ascended the steep slopes of broken névé in which it merged, as far as possible, we should be able to bear away to the right so as to reach the Corridor. As regarded the first two points, the balance of opinion was decidedly favourable; and as to the third, no judgment could be formed at all, as, from our position, nothing could be seen of what lay between the highest practicable point visible and the Corridor. Altogether, we returned to our hotel well satisfied with what we had seen, and, having given orders for the engagement of two porters and the preparation of unlimited provisions and general necessaries, proceeded to pass the rest of the day in such mild dissipation as the Café dell' Angelo gave facilities for. Indeed, Horace Walker, Jakob, and I, animated by the uninterrupted series of successes by which our efforts during the previous month had been rewarded, considered the thing as good as done, and rejoiced accordingly. Mr. Walker was also fairly sanguine, and Mathews was willing enough to concur in the roseate view we took of things. Melchior alone declined to share our confidence. The fact is, he had not in the least changed the opinion which he had formed in 1863; but, seeing that upon this occasion he would stand alone, and that no remonstrance would make us abandon our purpose, he confined himself to indulging in observations of a Cassandra-like character, such as he thought calculated to check our premature exultation. His gloomy vaticinations had little effect upon us, and still less upon Jakob, who, notwithstanding his almost idolatrous respect and admiration for his cousin, ventured to deride his fears and chaff him generally in a free, not to say irreverent manner.

At 10.10 on the morning of July 14th we quitted the hospitable portals of Bertolini's Hotel, a rather imposing party of eight—our four selves, Melchior, Jakob, and two porters, named respectively Jean Michel Lasnier and Julien Grange. Of both these men, especially of the latter, we can speak in terms of unqualified commendation. Although compelled to

carry loads of much above the average weight, over very rough ground, their cheerfulness and good humour never varied, while they lost no opportunity of making themselves useful. Both too seemed to us to be very fair mountaineers. Following first the path to the Col de la Seigne, and then a track over the collection of débris and old moraine overgrown with brushwood below the end of the Brenva Glacier, we passed the chalets of La Brenva at 11.30, and striking into the scanty forest immediately behind them, wound round the hill-side above the glacier, pausing, as we went, to collect wood for our night's bivouac. Two or three awkward corners were turned by steps regularly cut in the rock, and there was always some sort of track, until after a slight descent which was necessary to cross a swollen torrent, when it finally disappeared. On the rocks beyond this torrent we halted for half-an-hour, and then fairly turning our backs upon the valley, commenced the ascent of a series of stony slopes, occupying a sort of neutral ground between the ice and the base of the bounding ridge to the east. Nothing could be pleasanter than this part of our way, the ascent, though steady, being easy, and the surrounding scenery very fine. The rugged range on the other side of the glacier, comprising the Mont Peteret, and other points scarcely less striking, assumed grander proportions at every upward step we took, while the great lower ice-fall of the glacier, which was immediately on our left, was a constant source of enjoyment, the avalanches tumbling over the Heisse Platte, or patch of rocks in the middle of the fall, with a regularity which at last became almost monotonous. The stone slopes after a time gave place to a mixture of snow, moraine, and at last ice, where a few steps had now and then to be cut, and care generally taken to avoid stones sent down by the moraine higher up, which was in rather an excited state. But there was no difficulty of any sort, and at 3.20, or in about four hours actual walking from Courmayeur, we came upon a little grassy plain, lying at the base of the ridge we had been skirting, and on the south side of a sort of bay which the glacier here forms. The appearance of the place was so irresistibly tempting, that by tacit consent we took off our respective loads, and were soon stretched at our ease on the soft grass. So far, we had been on ground familiar to our two porters, who had more than once penetrated to this spot. The excursion may be recommended to all fairly active walkers, and the return to Courmayeur may be varied by climbing over the ridge behind, and descending by the slopes on its further side.

As we lay basking in the sun, the question was discussed whether we should take up our quarters for the night where we were, or seek a resting-place further on. Our next forward movement must evidently be across the bay just mentioned to the base of a wall of rocks, which supports the upper glacier, and divides it into two branches, the western one being very much the most extensive. If these rocks were likely to afford a fairly eligible site for a gîte, it would clearly be advantageous to go on at once, in order to save time in the morning, but their appearance was not very promising, so, while we luxuriated, Melchior started off alone to examine their capabilities. At 4.10 a shout was heard, which was interpreted as a signal to advance, so the traps were gathered up, we crossed a perfectly level bit of glacier to the foot of the rocks, and, having with some difficulty effected a lodgement on them, had a severe scramble to their summit, which was gained at 5.15. Here we found a small platform with a huge boulder perched in the middle of it, under the lee of which were divers articles belonging to Melchior, indicating that there we were to pitch our camp. As the night promised to be fine, a more eligible spot could scarcely have been desired, for, although the big boulder afforded no shelter overhead, it completely protected us from the rather keen north wind which was blowing. But even had its intrinsic merits been less considerable, the view which our position commanded would have reconciled us to it. As we sat, looking south, the great upper ice-fall of the main branch of the glacier was on our right, at a depth of about a thousand feet below, backed by the cliffs and buttresses of Mont Blanc itself, the Mont Blanc de Courmayeur, and the Mont Peteret, not to mention other pinnacles of even more fantastic form. The ridge shutting in the glacier basin on the left is scarcely less imposing, but the grand view was in front, where, beyond the Val d'Aosta and over the top of the Cramont, was seen the entire range of the Graian Alps from the Grivola and Grand Paradis to, and beyond, the Aiguille de la Sassière, the great snowfield of the Ruitor being specially conspicuous. In point of elevation, we seemed to be rather higher than the Cramont, or about 9,400 feet. Melchior, after summoning us from our first halting-place, had gone off on a reconnaissance, and did not make his appearance until some time after our arrival, but was at last seen bounding down the snow-slope above us in a state of unusual animation. Our eager enquiries as to the result of his expedition were met by a series of sentences, which he was far too excited to make coherent, whose burden was, 'ein schöner Eisfall!' 'einen solchen Eis-

fall habe ich niemals gesehen!!' When he had a little calmed down we elicited that the ice-fall, which lay between us and the base of the buttress by which we hoped to climb to the upper regions, was of unusual magnificence and extent, and that he very much doubted whether we should be able to cross it. He even suggested that, instead of trying to do so, it might be better, in the morning, to descend the rocks again, and endeavour to find a passage below, instead of above, them. But this proposition did not meet with much favour, as, not to mention that the appearance of the ice-fall lower down was not by any means such as to encourage the belief that its passage there would be found at all easy, its adoption would involve a descent, one way and another, of more than a thousand feet, and a long and difficult scramble under the cliffs on the other side of the fall, exposed to a raking fire of avalanches from the hanging glaciers above. Nothing definite was settled on the subject, but it was understood that an attempt at least should be made to cross up above. Meanwhile, our efforts were directed to the improvement of our night quarters. A level floor was constructed with very little trouble, and a wall was, with more labour, built along one side of the platform, where the wind was rather inclined to make itself felt. When we took up the positions we intended severally to occupy, the general result of our labours was unanimously agreed to be a decided success, and we supped and contemplated the sunset, in our respective berths, with serene satisfaction. To Alpine readers there is no need to rehearse the glories of an Alpine sunset, and I shall say but little of the night which followed. With such an arrangement as the Heisse Platte below, of course 'the solemn silence' was broken by avalanches innumerable, and, equally of course, we heard the inevitable dog barking down in the valley. Otherwise, the night passed without incident. We were by no means cold, and altogether fairly comfortable, until the moon got round into our faces, and murdered sleep most effectually.

At 1.15 the guides began to move, and at 2.45, after swallowing some hot wine and coffee mixed (to me a nauseous mixture, but approved of by the majority of the party), we started. Julien Grange volunteered to go with us to learn the way, but his companion not seeming to see how, unaided, he was to carry all the *impedimenta* down to the valley, our friend had to curb his desires, which, Melchior afterwards cruelly suggested, would not have been so ardently expressed had he not foreseen the obstacle which would arise to their gratification. The rocks on which we had slept are connected

with others higher up by a series of snow slopes, up which we went in Melchior's steps of the previous day, keeping rather to the left. At 3.15 the rope was put on, and then, bearing still more to the left, we made our way, by 3.35, to the edge of the ice-fall which had so excited Melchior. Had our purpose been different, we might, by keeping a more straightforward course, have gained the upper névé of the glacier above the fall without any difficulty at all, but when there we should have been above the buttress we had to steer for, and quite out of our proper direction. From the head of the glacier, a pass worth attention might be easily made over the low ridge west of La Tour Ronde to the Glacier du Géant. It had been still dark when we started, but now, as our difficulties were commencing, there were signs of dawn. Gorgeous as had been the sunset, the sunrise was more gorgeous still, the gradations of colour over the eastern horizon before the appearance of the luminary being indescribably beautiful, while, as the sun rose, the great wall of precipices before us glowed again as its beams crept down them. The ice-fall certainly was worthy of Melchior's respect and admiration, for a grander and more broken one I have rarely seen, but when we fairly attacked it we got on with less difficulty than had been feared. Of course there was the usual up and down sort of work, but, in spite of one or two checks, we progressed steadily, and, finding ourselves more than half way across, were about to indulge in a crow of exultation, when we came to what looked like a full stop. We had worked ourselves into a position from which there appeared, after several trials, to be no way of extrication except by returning in our footsteps, always a disheartening proceeding. We pottered about for some time without result, and then Melchior cast off the rope, and went off alone to seek out a way, leaving us in rather a blank state of mind. We shivered miserably, but were finally rejoiced by a distant cry which evidently meant 'come on.' The ground in front did not look promising, but, following in Melchior's steps, we gradually left the worst bit behind, and struck a broad causeway between two huge chasms, which led us out of the labyrinth to where he was waiting for us.

One of the doubtful points in connection with our expedition was thus happily solved. The glacier was crossed, and all was plain sailing in front as far as the base of our buttress, which was not far above us. A smooth slope of snow between the foot of the cliffs on our left and the ice-fall offered an easy line of march, but, as we went, we had ocular evidence of the propriety of keeping out of the way of the hanging glaciers

already spoken of, as a large mass of ice from one in front fell before our eyes, its débris rolling right across our path. At 5.30 we were at the base of the buttress. The rocks were approached by a steep slope of hard snow, intersected by the usual bergschrund. The latter gave us little trouble, and we were soon hard at work with the rocks. For nearly two hours we were engaged in a scramble which, though not difficult, was sufficiently severe to be interesting, some care being required in places where snow was lying. At first we kept straight up, but later, bore away to the left, ascending diagonally, until at 7.20, when not far from the crest of the buttress, we halted for breakfast. We had risen very rapidly, and must have been at an elevation of more than 12,000 feet. Our position therefore commanded an extensive view in all directions, but details would be uninteresting.

The guides were in a hurry, so, cutting our halt shorter than would have been agreeable, we resumed our way at 7.55, and after a few steps up a slope at an angle of 50°, found ourselves on the crest of the buttress, and looking down upon, and across, the lower part of a glacier tributary to the Brenva, beyond which towered the grand wall of the Mont Maudit. We turned sharp to the left along the ridge, Jakob leading, followed by Mr. Walker, Horace, Mathews, Melchior, and myself last. We had anticipated that, assuming the possibility of gaining the ridge on which we were, there would be no serious difficulty in traversing it, and so much as we could see ahead led us to hope that our anticipations would turn out correct. Before us lay a narrow but not steep arête of rock and snow combined, which appeared to terminate some distance in front in a sharp peak. We advanced cautiously, keeping rather below the top of the ridge, speculating with some curiosity on what lay beyond this peak. On reaching it, the apparent peak proved not to be a peak at all, but the extremity of the narrowest and most formidable ice arête I ever saw, which extended almost on a level for an uncomfortably long distance. Looking back by the light of our subsequent success, I have always considered it a providential circumstance that, at this moment, Jakob, and not Melchior, was leading the party. In saying this, I shall not for an instant be suspected of any imputation upon Melchior's courage. But in him that virtue is combined to perfection with the equally necessary one of prudence, while he shares the objection which nearly all guides have to taking upon themselves, without discussion, responsibility in positions of doubt. Had he been in front, I believe that, on seeing the nature of the work before us, we

should have halted and discussed the propriety of proceeding; and I believe further that, as the result of that discussion, our expedition would have then and there come to an end. Now in Jakob, with courage as faultless as Melchior's, and physical powers even superior, the virtue of prudence is conspicuous chiefly from its absence; and, on coming to this ugly place, it never for an instant occurred to him that we might object to go on, or consider the object in view not worth the risk which must be inevitably run. He therefore went calmly on without so much as turning to see what we thought of it, while I do not suppose that it entered into the head of any one of us spontaneously to suggest a retreat.

On most arêtes, however narrow the actual crest may be, it is generally possible to get a certain amount of support by driving the pole into the slope below on either side. But this was not the case here. We were on the top of a wall, the ice on the right falling vertically (I use the word advisedly), and on the left nearly so. On neither side was it possible to obtain the slightest hold with the alpenstock. I believe also that an arête of pure ice is more often encountered in description than in reality, that term being generally applied to hard snow. But here, for once, we had the genuine article, blue ice without a speck of snow on it. The space for walking was, at first, about the breadth of the top of an ordinary wall, in which Jakob cut holes for the feet. Being last in the line I could see little of what was coming until I was close upon it, and was therefore considerably startled on seeing the men in front suddenly abandon the upright position, which, in spite of the insecurity of the steps and difficulty of preserving the balance, had been hitherto maintained, and sit down *à cheval*. The ridge had narrowed to a knife edge, and for a few yards it was utterly impossible to advance in any other way. The foremost men soon stood up again, but when I was about to follow their example Melchior insisted emphatically on my not doing so, but remaining seated. Regular steps could no longer be cut, but Jakob, as he went along, simply sliced off the top of the ridge, making thus a slippery pathway, along which those behind crept, moving one foot carefully after the other. As for me, I worked myself along with my hands in an attitude safer, perhaps, but considerably more uncomfortable, and, as I went, could not help occasionally speculating, with an odd feeling of amusement, as to what would be the result if any of the party should chance to slip over on either side,—what the rest would do,—whether throw themselves over on the other side or not,—and if so, what would happen then. Fortunately the occasion for the

solution of this curious problem did not arise, and at 9.30 we reached the end of the arête, where it merged in the long slopes of broken névé, over which our way was next to lie. As we looked back along our perilous path, it was hard to repress a shudder, and I think the dominant feeling of every man was one of wonder how the passage had been effected without accident. One good result, however, was to banish from Melchior's mind the last traces of doubt as to our ultimate success, his reply to our anxious enquiry whether he thought we should get up, being, 'We must, for we cannot go back.' In thus speaking he probably said rather more than he meant, but the fact will serve to show that I have not exaggerated the difficulty we had overcome.

At 9.40 we started up the slopes of névé, which rose with ominous steepness in front of us, and for the next two hours and a half the work was rather monotonous. There was no particular difficulty beyond what arose from the extreme steepness of the slope, necessitating almost continuous step-cutting, the labour of which fell upon the two guides, who, naturally enough, did not consider the way easy. Sometimes there was snow enough to help us, but as often as not it was too thin and powdery to give secure footing, and I suppose that altogether about every other step had to be cut in ice. The Corridor all the time was hidden, but we knew it to lie far away to our right, and therefore worked generally in that direction. Two ridges of rock, running parallel to each other, but separated by a broad expanse of ice, crop out from the face of the slope. We passed underneath the first, and cut our way across to the second, and on reaching it, first ascertained our exact position. On our right below was the upper part of the lateral glacier so often mentioned, beyond which was the wall of the Mont Maudit, the depression marking the head of the Corridor being apparently at about the same level as we were. There was our goal in full view, but between us and it was a great gulf, which there was no obvious way of crossing. Beneath the Corridor the glacier falls away very rapidly. At the foot of the Mur de la Côte the difference of level is but a few feet, but under the Mont Maudit a precipice of some two thousand feet intervenes. It is therefore only practicable to pass from one to the other at the former point. Unfortunately, *we* were nearly opposite the Mont Maudit, and the glacier lay at a corresponding depth below us. From where we were standing it was not possible to descend on to it, nor, if it had been possible, would it have been profitable, as, just above the point we must have struck, was a great wall of ice running right across, and com-

pletely barring the way upwards. Our position was, in fact, rather critical. Immediately over our heads the slope on which we were terminated in a great mass of broken séracs, which might come down with a run at any moment. It seemed improbable that any way out of our difficulties would be found in that quarter. But, where else to look? There was no use in going to the left,—to the right we *could* not go,—and back we *would* not go.

After careful scrutiny, Melchior thought it just possible that we might find a passage through these séracs on to the higher and more level portion of the glacier to the right of them, and there being obviously no chance of success in any other direction, we turned towards them. The ice here was steeper and harder than it had yet been. In spite of all Melchior's care, the steps were painfully insecure, and we were glad to get a grip with one hand of the rocks alongside which we passed. The risk, too, of an avalanche was considerable, and it was a relief when we were so close under the séracs that a fall from above could not well hurt us. We passed close to a curious formation,—a pinnacle of ice in shape exactly like a man's head and neck. The neck, in length and thinness, was sadly out of proportion to the head, and was momentarily growing thinner, so that it was a question of time how soon the two would part company. Melchior had steered with his usual discrimination, and was now attacking the séracs at the only point where they appeared at all practicable. Standing over the mouth of a crevasse choked with débris, he endeavoured to lift himself on to its upper edge, which was about fifteen feet above. But to accomplish this seemed at first a task too great even for his agility, aided as it was by vigorous pushes *a tergo*. At last, by a marvellous exercise of skill and activity, he succeeded, pulled up Mr. Walker and Horace, and then cast off the rope to reconnoitre, leaving them to assist Mathews, Jakob, and myself in the performance of a similar manœuvre. We were all three still below, when a yell from Melchior sent a thrill through our veins. 'What is it?' said we to Mr. Walker. A shouting communication took place between him and Melchior, and then came the answer, 'He says it is all right.' That moment was worth living for.

Our difficulties were indeed over. Before us was a narrow shelf of névé, stretching from the base of a perpendicular wall of ice, fifty feet high or more, to the edge of a huge crevasse, or rather dislocation in the glacier. Over our heads was an immense projecting fringe of icicles, but we paid no heed to them, and hurrying along as fast as was consis-

tent with not slipping into the gulf below, emerged in a few minutes upon gently-sloping snow-fields,—the same upon which in 1864 I had looked so longingly from the Mur de la Côte. From here we might have struck the top of the Mur, or, as I believe, the actual summit of Mont Blanc. But the adoption of either course would have involved an amount of step-cutting to which, after their already arduous labours, we should have been scarcely justified in exposing our two men. Moreover, we were all heavily laden, and the idea of depositing our burdens at the foot of the Mur was too alluring to be resisted. The intervening distance was traversed at a trot, and at 1.20 we stepped on to the head of the Corridor. The height of the Corridor, according to the French Survey, is 4,301 mètres, or 14,112 feet. We had therefore made the highest, as it is certainly the grandest, pass across the chain of Mont Blanc. No one's satisfaction at our success was more profound than that of dear old Melchior, notwithstanding that his predictions had been falsified, and the expedition shown *not* to be 'eine miserable Dummheit' after all. Of the behaviour of both him and Jakob it is impossible to speak too highly. But to sing Melchior's praises is needless, while of Jakob Anderegg it is enough to say that, upon this as upon many previous occasions, he proved himself worthy of his name.

I have not much to add. We reached the summit at 3.10, and found ourselves safe at Chamouni at 10.30, after encountering the usual troubles in the dark in the forest below the Pierre Pointue. Our day's work had thus extended to nearly 20 hours, of which 17½ hours were actual walking. As regards practical utility, I fear that the Brenva route up Mont Blanc possesses few advantages over that by the Mont Blanc du Tacul. But it has one merit which the latter lacks, that of directness. It is also incomparably more interesting and exciting. I trust therefore that some one will be found sufficiently enterprising to give it another trial. The ice arête is the only *very* serious difficulty on the route, but that might very easily be found insuperable, in a high wind for instance, or after fresh snow. For this reason he will be a rash man who attempts to descend to Courmayeur by this way, as the position of a party having got down so far, and then finding it impossible to get any further, would be, to say the least, unpleasant.