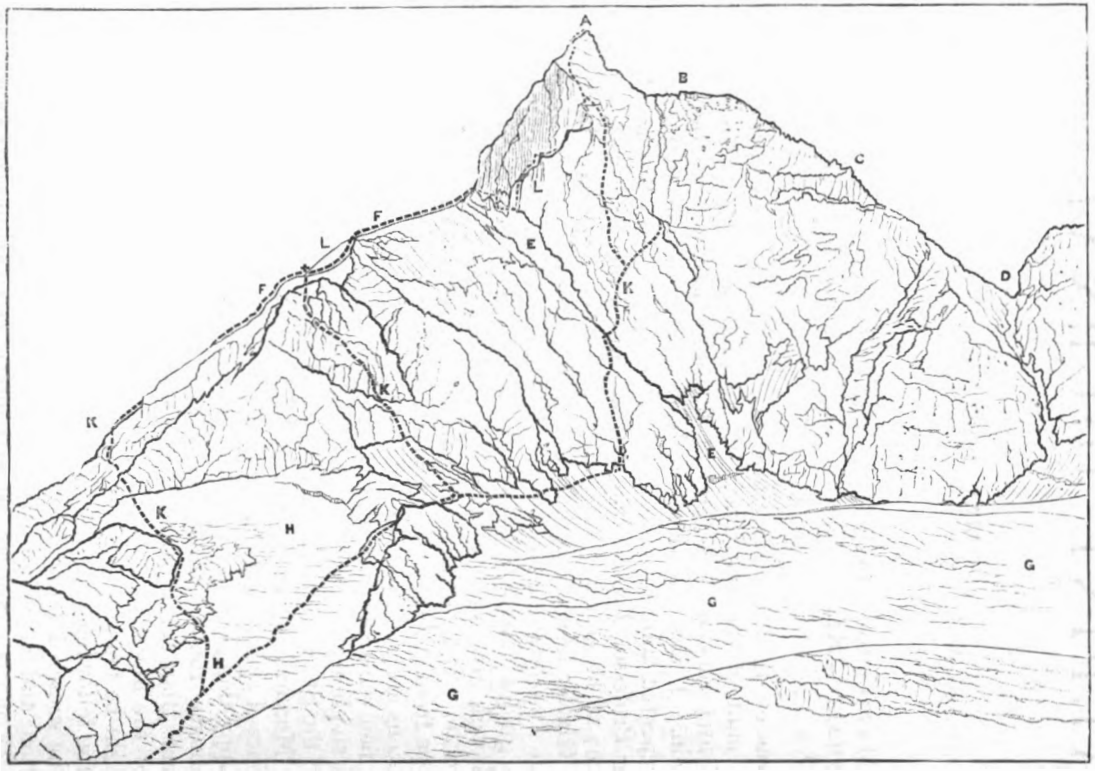

THE MATTERHORN FROM THE STOCKJE, WITH THE ROUTES OF MESSRS. MUMMERY AND PENHALL.

References—

A Summit of Matterhorn.
B The Breil Shoulder (*l'épaule*).
C 'The Great Tower.'
D The Col du Lion.
E Penhall's Great Couloir.
F The Z'mutt Ice Ridge.
G G Part of the Tiefenmatten Glacier.
H H Lateral Glacier.
K K K Mr. Penhall's Routes.
L L Mr. Mummery's Route.
X Mr. Penhall's Sleeping Place.

THE

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THE MATTERHORN FROM THE ZMUTT GLACIER. By W. PENHALL. Read before the Alpine Club, February 3, 1880.

IT was on reading, some three years ago, Mr. Whymper's account of the Matterhorn in 'Scrambles in the Alps,' that I first conceived the idea of finding a new way up the mountain. I was surprised to learn that, notwithstanding their repeated failure on the Breil ridge, neither Mr. Whymper nor Professor Tyndall had ever attempted the north-western face; all he says is, 'The ghastly precipices which face the Zmutt Glacier forbade any attempt in that direction.'

Then I ascertained that in the first ascent from Breil the Italian guides actually got on to the upper part of this Zmutt face, though Mr. Grove gives a very unfavourable account of their route. Still his opinion was based on an inspection of the slope from above, and everybody knows what inaccurate impressions are got under such circumstances.

The fact remained that no one had given the Zmutt face or ridge a single trial. At that time, however, I had never been even to the Stockje, and my plans were of the vaguest possible kind. Moreover, when at Zermatt, later in the year, none of the guides I spoke to seemed to jump, as I had expected, at my 'happy thought,' and I contented myself with going up by the ordinary route. Later, however, when descending from the Dent Blanche, I carefully examined the north-western rocks of the Matterhorn, and the impression I got was that a way might be found. I consequently decided to make an attempt the following year.

In the winter I found Mr. Conway was bent on the same expedition, and we accordingly engaged Ferdinand Imseng for the month of August, 1878. Our programme was a most ambitious one, including, besides the Matterhorn, new routes for the Weisshorn, Rothhorn, and Dom.

Before trying the first of these we considered four or five days of uninterrupted fine weather indispensable, and as they never came we left Zermatt, having again only looked at the Matterhorn. I was delighted, however, to find that Imseng was really very anxious to see what could be done, though he would not venture an opinion as to the probable result.

Last year I was unable to get away so soon as I should have liked, and I anxiously read the letters I had from Imseng about once a week during the summer, each telling me in wonderful German that the Matterhorn had not been done, though he generally hinted someone was on the point of starting, and that I had better be quick. At last he wrote to say he had been up the Weisshorn, from Zinal, and that the gentleman he accompanied in that expedition was about to turn his attention to the Stockje.

I hurried at once to Zermatt, where I arrived on Friday, August 29, when I found Imseng was assisting at a festive entertainment under the Riffelhorn. I saw him in the evening, and he was in most exuberant spirits, the cause of which was soon explained, he had just concluded a most enjoyable day by winning thirty francs at a sort of bottle-breaking pool, which formed the closing feature of the banquet.

Then we discussed our plans, and decided that if the weather kept fine we would make an early start the following Monday morning so as to give time for examining the face, and then sleeping out as high as possible we would try and reach the summit on the Tuesday.

Louis Zurbrücken, of Macugnaga, with whom Imseng has done a good deal of chamois hunting, was engaged as second guide. The next day I went for a training walk up Castor, with Zurbrücken, and from what I could make out of his guiding qualities, I felt very glad I had secured him.

On Monday, September 1, we got up at 2.30 to find the valley full of clouds, but not wishing to throw away the slightest chance, we set off half an hour later with a porter carrying blankets, and walked somewhat despondently up through the pine forests, looking in vain for a single star to encourage us. Presently Imseng reminded me that the evening before I had said there was no need to tell the other guides where we were going, as our first attempt was so likely to come to nothing. 'Well,' he said, 'we did as you told us, but unfortunately we did not all say the same.' Then I found they had construed what I said into directions to deceive, so one had given out we were going to Zinal, another that the Dent d'Hérens was our destination, while the porter

had still further drawn on his imagination and explained quite proudly that he had mentioned to several of his friends that we were going chamois hunting, but where he did not know exactly. He seemed to think his fabrication very ingenious because it happened to be the 1st of September, and the absence of rifles or any offensive weapons a perfectly unimportant detail.

We agreed that after all this preamble something must be done, and we pushed on; but when we came to the highest châlets the weather looked so very unpromising that we devoutly wished ourselves back in bed, and we all crawled into a hay barn and went to sleep. On looking out at 7.30 I found the Matterhorn was nearly free from clouds, though all the other mountains were still covered; we thought the wind had changed a little, and we started once more. Hitherto we had formed no plan as to our exact route, and when we got nearly opposite the Stockje we waited and consulted. I wanted to go much further up the glacier and try the middle of the face. Imseng's only objection to this was that if we went that way probably we should find no suitable place to pass the night, while on the arête we should.

This seemed reasonable, so I gave in, and we turned up a rather steep slope of hard snow on our left; after three-quarters of an hour we reached some rocks which brought us to the arête, about 1,500 feet above the glacier. The rocks of the arête were climbed without difficulty, and above them after half an hour of snow we came to hard ice, up which we had to cut steps for 2 hrs., until in fact we reached the first of the rocky teeth visible from Zermatt.

Here we left our knapsacks and the porter, and passed the first and second teeth without difficulty, the third was more troublesome, and then we saw we should have to leave the arête and go to the left or Zermatt side, over a very objectionable looking slope of loose rocks, with some ice and snow at intervals. It was a place of no extraordinary difficulty, but as the slightest slip would probably have landed the whole party somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Matterhorn Glacier, we thought it unwise to attempt to pass it so late in the day, when the sun had been on it for several hours. We decided, therefore, to go no further that day, and turned our attention to the rest of the route. So far as we could see it would be necessary to leave the arête again, higher up, and then go to the right of it, and one thing we did not like was that a great many stones fell from that region, and then swept down a curious curved gully into the great couloir which

descends from below the teeth where we were standing, obliquely across the face to the head of the Tiefenmatten Glacier. The central part of the face seemed freer from falling stones.

However we reasoned that by keeping as far as possible on the arête we should not long be exposed to falling stones, especially as we should be up there in the early morning. We could find no slab of rock large enough for us all to sit down upon, so we had reluctantly to retrace our steps down the ice slope to a patch of rocks where we could pass the night, and we calculated that having good steps ready made we should be able to reach the teeth again in little more than half an hour.

The sunset was one of the most perfect I have ever seen in the Alps, not a single cloud was visible, not a breath of wind stirring.

The panorama round the great glacier below us was magnificent, but all our attention was centred on one object in it, and straining my eyes at the gaunt slopes above, I fancied, as the light failed, I could make out not one, but half-a-dozen possible routes. The guides were most confident, saying that, with such weather, it must succeed. So after an excellent repast we spread out the blankets and tried to compose ourselves for the night.

The place was only prospectively a suitable one, the rock was far from flat, and after the sun had set we found half an hour's rest quite as much as we could endure at a time, so we got up and tramped backwards and forwards over a very limited exercise ground, and then lay down to shiver again.

About 10 P.M. we felt distinctly there was a wind, and soon we agreed it was rather strong and more than rather cold. Imseng, always hopeful as to the weather, said the wind invariably rose about that time, and it would subside before sunrise. I had never before heard that such was the case, but the sky was so clear I hoped he might be right, still, how we should have got through that night I don't know but that we had a small spirit lamp on the Russian principle which would just boil a soldier's mess tin. Zurbrücken and the porter held a blanket to keep off the wind, and Imseng and I cooked. First we made chocolate till that was all gone, then we went in for mulled wine. The third brew of this exhausted the spirit, and being once more unoccupied our attention returned to the weather. The moon first surrounded itself with a broad bright band, and shortly disappeared, then the stars over the Tiefenmatten Joch were obscured, and though the hour of

sunrise was approaching, the wind increased instead of abating. It seemed madness to think of going up, and stop still we could not.

When it was light a few flakes of snow fell, and, expecting a storm, we began the descent at once. We did not take the same route as in going up, but left the arête immediately, and traversed the rocks obliquely, so as to get a better view of the central part of the face. After we had examined it pretty carefully for about ten minutes a mist formed and concealed it entirely, so we continued the descent, and left the rocks at a point which appears almost immediately under the summit when viewed from the Stockje. We skirted under the rocks, and finally reached the Zmutt Glacier by the same snow slope up which we had gone the day before.

We glanced up from time to time only to see the upper part of the mountain entirely covered with watery clouds.

As we went down we met Mr. Mummery coming up with Alexander Burgener. We thought for a moment of going to the Stockje and waiting for a time in the hope we might be able to get up the next day. The weather had, however, so thoroughly disgusted us, that we went on. Mummery was wiser and waited. Leaving the guides on the highest grass slopes I ran down to Zermatt; soon after I got there I began to think I had the best of it, for a few drops of rain fell and the wind came in gusts, banging the shutters about and raising a cloud of dust. Yet the storm did not burst, but seemed to think better of it, and passed off. About 6 o'clock Imseng came up to me and said very seriously that Zurbrücken had just been to consult the priest, and the opinion of that worthy was that it would be fine the following day, and—would I like to start again after table-d'hôte? I confess I should hardly have proposed it myself, but as he suggested it I agreed, and after several delays, owing to the provisions, the guides' supper, &c., we found ourselves at 10 o'clock once more trudging up the too familiar path; we were all half asleep, and the events of the two previous days seemed like a dream. When we were above the pine forests some rhododendron bushes looked very inviting, and we called a halt for 10 min.; we lengthened it into 20, and then went on. After reaching the glacier we took exactly the same route as in descending the day before, and at 3.30 we were close to the place where we had to take to the rocks. Here we waited 1 hr., and had breakfast, the spirit lamp being again brought into requisition.

The first few steps after getting on to the rocks were diffi-

cult, and probably a better place might be found higher up; afterwards we climbed on cautiously, as at places the rocks were loose; we kept well to the right where, although steeper, they became firm, and in 1 hr. and 5 min. we were at the side of the couloir. We found the point where we came upon it unfavourable for crossing, and accordingly went up parallel to it for 20 min., to a place where it is very narrow, and then a dozen steps in the snow took us across in less than 5 min. The character of the rocks changed at once, they were no longer loose, but smooth and much steeper, at the same time offering enough small cracks to make climbing quite safe and agreeable. We kept in the middle of a wide ridge ending almost precipitously, and as we went on more care was necessary, owing to the increasing steepness. I had my axe attached round my wrist by a thick piece of cord, and had paid no attention to the fastening for some time, when suddenly it snapped, leaving the loop still on and in about six leaps the axe was in the couloir below. Though I regretted extremely the loss of an old friend closely connected with all my previous climbs, I believe I got on better without it. Thinking such would be the case, Imseng suggested I might carry a little more, and while we were making a fresh disposition of the knapsacks, we noticed Mummery on the arête just at the highest point we had reached two days before.

About $1\frac{3}{4}$ hrs. from the point where we crossed the couloir we found ourselves standing on a narrow ledge of rock just below a small precipice which there was no possibility of ascending. Although we were conscious that every minute was of the utmost value, we were here compelled to call a halt in order to decide upon the direction of our further advance.

This was the point we had observed carefully during our descent on the previous day. From the position we then occupied we were only able to command a view of the precipice itself, and of the rocks on its left; we had remarked the impossibility of ascending the former, and the latter had struck us as of an exceedingly forbidding nature, both on account of their seeming steepness and smoothness. We had determined that the best way would probably lie round the rocks on the right, which I have said we were unable to see. From the ledge where we now stood we were able to examine the latter with precision. The rocks were of a most unattractive nature. They combined in themselves all the qualities which are most hateful in rocks: they were very steep, they were very smooth, in texture they were hard, and they were of that dark colour which many of us associate with the most difficult bits of

climbing we have come across. We could not see to what they led, or what would be the nature of the climbing above them. We felt that certainty of success here would not be assured, and turned to examine the alternative route.

Here we were met by long slopes of smooth rocks, rising one above another in apparently endless succession. Our choice then lay between this and the short piece of bad rock followed by—we knew not what.

We could not afford to hesitate for long, and we at once commenced to tackle the latter, led on by the delusive hope of finding an easier way when the corner was turned.

For the first few yards the difficulties we had to surmount were of no great moment, but every step we took was the parent of more abominable offspring; the ledges and cracks which alone gave a trifling foothold, became every moment fewer and smaller, and as a natural consequence our rate of advance, slow enough at first, became scarcely perceptible. After ¾ hr. of this kind of work we found ourselves a hundred feet from where we started, the precipice still unsurmounted, the patch of snow which we knew lay above it still far out of reach, and further progress absolutely impossible. We descended a few feet to a perilously small ledge, where we waited, conversing rather with blank looks than audible words.

Happily there was now no doubt as to what we had to do; the only course clearly was to descend once more to the foot of the precipice. It was easy enough to come to this decision, but to carry it into effect was a matter of no small difficulty.

Any attempt to describe the events of the hour which followed would be pure waste of time. Many of my readers must have been in similar positions, and their memories will assist them in picturing to themselves what language is unable to convey. By those who do not know what slopes of this kind are like, any endeavour to give an idea of our position would be at once dismissed as incredible.

For 1 hr. and 5 min. we were forced to descend with the utmost care, each being obliged to devote his whole attention to himself and give up all idea of assisting his companions.

At last we found ourselves once more on the ledge we had so unfortunately abandoned, with considerable increase of fatigue, considerable diminution of flesh at the ends of our fingers, and two hours of valuable time lost.

We again waited a few minutes before trying the way to the left. On starting again we got on better than we had anticipated for the first half-hour, when suddenly we came upon

fresh and unexpected difficulty; the rocks were no longer wet, but covered with a thin coating of ice. They would not have been particularly easy under the best of circumstances, and with this additional complication they required the greatest caution. Fortunately this did not last long, and we were soon standing on a narrow strip of snow that we had not noticed before. The appearance of the upper part of the mountain changes constantly, and from this point we were amazed at the size of the crags above us on our left, and I am still puzzled as to why they form no feature of the distant view.

One thing made us quite happy: the rest of our way was clear, there was nothing to prevent us from getting to the part of the face at which we knew the Italians must have traversed it in their first ascent. So on we went over the same sort of smooth rocks, of which we had already had so much, then passing another patch of snow we bore to the left, and on nearing the broad couloir which separated us from the arête, again struck straight up the face.

Presently Imseng pointed out a good place for crossing the couloir, where some rocks in the middle, almost overhanging, would give us protection if stones should fall. As luck would have it, some did fall just as we reached the spot mentioned, and we escaped them entirely; but as we watched them down the couloir up which we knew the other party had come, but an hour before, the guides began to institute a comparison between their way and our own.

The fact was, the sun had just reached the rocks above. A few rapid steps took us to the arête, and 2 min. afterwards we saw a rope attached to the top of a steep gully in the couloir. We regarded it with great curiosity and interest, feeling sure it had been there for fifteen years, but the next day we learned that Mummery's party had been up a little higher, and then finding it impossible to get on to the arête, had attached the rope in descending to this place.

Our work was practically over, so we proclaimed a halt, but though not sorry to sit down, we were restless to get really to the top, particularly when a shout from the shoulder told us the other party were rapidly descending, so after a few minutes we scrambled on, and in little more than ½ hr., we were at the southern end of the final ridge— time 3 P.M.

It was not unpleasantly cold, so having considerably lightened the knapsacks and wine tin, we enjoyed the view for a good half hour, and then moved on to the true summit. and prepared to descend. The top, though from all accounts it changes its appearance rapidly, looked just the same as it did

in 1877, but soon after leaving it I noticed the mountain had made great progress in one respect: the number of ropes above the shoulder had been largely increased. In one place there were three ropes and a rusty chain all together. Now I think one of the hardest things one tries to do on a mountain is to help oneself with a rope; of course anybody can come down like a sailor, but my experience is that if I take the rope in one hand and try at the same time to hold on to the rocks, at one moment the rope is slack and I get my fingers on to a small projection; the next it is made tight from below, my hand is wrenched from the rocks, and there is nothing for it but to leave go altogether, or else trust to it entirely; another objection is that the permanent rope gets mixed up with the rope with which the party is attached. Now though I should like to see all such artificial aids removed from every mountain in the Alps, I have only referred to this subject to make one protest. I heard before leaving Zermatt that negotiations had already been opened with the Swiss Alpine Club, with a view to building a hut on the Zmutt ridge. If this is done, ropes at the bad places are sure to follow, and the way will soon be marked out by the same scatter of broken glass and sardine boxes which at present disgraces the northern route.

Let us try and keep one side of the Matterhorn at any rate for those who really admire the most wonderful mountain in the Alps, and who like to climb it for its own sake, and then we can give up the other arêtes to be decorated, if necessary, with chains and ladders from top to bottom, and so formed into the cockneys' high road from Breil to Zermatt!

From the shoulder we went down at a good pace so as to reach the glacier before it got dark; this was just accomplished, and then having finished up everything we had in the way of food, to excuse ourselves for not going on at once, we said to one another we would wait till the moon rose, after that we stumbled on over the glacier and down the most abominable short cuts, finally reaching Zermatt at 9.45.

Refusing to answer any questions till the following morning we went off to bed, and I confess for my own part I could scarcely keep awake while I undressed, This was hardly to be wondered at. We had had two hours' sleep on Sunday night; none on the arête on Monday night; we had walked all Tuesday night, and Wednesday of itself would have been a tiring day even if one had started fresh.

What a night's rest in the Alps will do is wonderful, but I was disgusted when, on looking out at 9 next morning, I saw my guides sitting on the wall as if they had been up hours. I

must now give them their due. Of Imseng it is almost superfluous to speak; he has been engaged in several of the most difficult expeditions that have been done of late years, and the only charge I have ever heard brought against him is that of rashness. Even this is, in my opinion, unfounded, for I know no guide who is quicker in detecting real danger when it exists, or in taking the best means to avoid it.

Zurbrücken is a younger man, and I had never before seen him on a hard mountain, but I am sure his activity, sureness of foot, and weight-carrying capabilities will soon give him an acknowledged position among the best guides of his district. If I might be allowed to read a moral from the expedition I have just tried to describe, I should say it goes to prove what has been pointed out before, that a rock face ought never to be condemned from mere inspection. Any competent mountaineer might, I believe, look at the Matterhorn from the Stockje and report the face perilously steep, and raked with falling stones; yet if he proceeded to climb it, he would find that up the middle of it there lies a way, quite as free from the danger of stones as many expeditions now frequently made.

The time we took will be very little guide to those who follow.

Let a good walker sleep at the Stockje and cross the glacier so as to be on the rocks soon after daybreak; in less than 5 hrs. he may reach the summit, and I feel confident he will look back to the climb as one of the most interesting in the Zermatt district.

Two routes having now been made up the Zmutt side, the question naturally arises which is the better? I will not attempt to answer this, but simply say, so far as my observation goes, Mr. Mummery's way is the longer, and though easier for the first 3 hrs., is exposed to greater danger from stones in the upper part; while the face affords more continuous difficulty and less real danger.

The First Ascent of the Matterhorn by the Zmutt Arête. By A. F. Mummery.

ON September 2 Alexander Burgener and I left the Stockje about 5 P.M., and made for the outer or north-west corner of the great buttress on which rests the Matterhorn Glacier. We soon reached a small moraine, and, having ascended it for a short distance, took to the rocks behind. These gave us an