

being covered or carried off. Jumped these dry by help of my long *bâton*. Henry and the guide both jumped in. An hour earlier, I believe, we could not have passed, as the water, in the main stream and torrents, had evidently fallen much. Second gorge begins about an hour from Kandersteg, and struck us amazingly. The river foaming down this steep descent is a specimen of a mountain torrent in its power. First view of the Kanderthal remarkable, through this magnificent frame. Reach the Gemmi road at first bridge, thence 30 min. to Kandersteg. Evening fine, so got in dry at 5.45. The rest of the party arrived at 6.30, having left Leukerbad a little before 12. They had the storm—not very heavy—all the way up the ascent; dried and lunched at a comfortable little hotel [Schwarenbach] on the col, and arrived well, but not particularly struck with the pass. Inn better than I supposed; dinner good, beds not bad.

(*To be continued.*)

THE EARLY ASCENTS OF THE DENT BLANCHE.

BY W. A. B. COOLIDGE.

As a certain amount of confusion seems to prevail with reference to the precise routes by which the early ascents of this magnificent peak were effected, I should like to put on record a number of facts which I have collected in the course of years.

The first ascent of the Dent Blanche, as is well known, was made on July 18, 1862, by Messrs. T. S. Kennedy and W. Wigram, with J. B. Croz and J. Kronig. The party started from Bricolla, and followed the Col d'Hérens route to the upper snow field, whence they gained the S. arête (probably somewhere between the points marked 3,729 and 3,912 mètres on both editions of the Federal map), and made their way up it, being occasionally forced on to the S.W. face by great rock-towers on the arête. As the ascent was made during a terrific storm the narrative* of the route followed is not quite as precise as might be desired.

The second ascent was that by Mr. J. Finlaison, with Christian Lauener and Franz Zurfluh, on September 11, 1864, the party thinking at the time that the peak had never been conquered.† Starting from Bricolla, they climbed up the steep rocky W. face, not touching the S. arête till within a few steps of the summit, for Lauener had tried it earlier in the same season, though unsuccessfully. Thus a new route was struck out and, perhaps owing to the terrible

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. i. pp. 33-9.

† *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 292-301.

experiences of the 1862 party in the storm, the 1864 route was followed by the next four parties, viz.—

June 17, 1865. Mr. Whympfer, with Christian Almer, Michel Croz, and Franz Biner.*

September 3, 1868. Mr. J. Stogdon, with Ignaz Biner and Franz Andermatten.†

July 26, 1870. Mr. Coolidge, with Christian and Ulrich Almer.

September 6, 1871. Mr. W. E. Utterson-Kelso, with Joseph Gillioz and Jean Martin.†

Thus of the six ascents of the mountain which were recorded up to the end of the first week in September 1871 one (the first) was made by the S.W. face and S. arête, five by the W. face—the start having been made in every case from Bricolla or a bivouac near it.

The seventh ascent was made on September 13, 1871, and is of considerable historical interest. It was effected by Mr. Robert Fowler, with Peter Knubel and J. M. Lochmatter. Mr. Fowler has kindly supplied me with the following particulars of his ascent:—His party started from Bricolla, and gained the summit by the usual route up the W. face; but thinking (quite rightly) that the danger of falling stones would be considerable on that face, in the afternoon they ‘descended mainly by the S. arête,’ to the snow-fields at the S. foot of the peak, turning one great rock tower by its W. flank. Mr. Fowler’s description of his route, and a sketch he made at the time (of which he has sent me a tracing), confirm me in the belief that his line of descent was very much that taken, up and down, by Mr. Kennedy’s party in 1862. Mr. Fowler’s party returned to Bricolla, and next day crossed the Col d’Hérens to Zermatt.

The very day that Mr. Fowler was making his ascent (September 13, 1871) my aunt, the late Miss Brevoort, and I, with Christian and Ulrich Almer, Niklaus and P. J. Knubel, two porters, and our dog Tschingel, left Zermatt, in order to attempt the ascent. We crossed a variation of the Col d’Hérens, just W. of the figures 3,595 on the Federal map,‡ and bivouacked that night on some lofty and exposed rocks a good deal farther to the N., somewhere near the point marked 3,714. The next morning (September 14) the two porters returned to Zermatt; P. J. Knubel remained at our camp to take care of Tschingel, whilst the rest of the party—five in all—started at 5.30 for the peak. I copy the description of our ascent from my diary: §—‘We crossed an ice slope, and then climbed a

* *Scrambles amongst the Alps*, pp. 274–80; *Ascent of the Matterhorn*, pp. 215–22.

† Private information. I found Mr. Stogdon’s card in 1870, Mr. Utterson-Kelso’s and Mr. Fowler’s in 1871.

‡ These are the rocks by which Forbes tried unsuccessfully to force his way in 1842 (*Travels in the Alps of Savoy*, pp. 304–5). We named the pass ‘Pollingerjoch,’ in honour of the struggles of Alois Pollinger, then a young porter, now one of the leading Valais guides; but I am glad to say that the more appropriate name ‘Wandfluhjoch’—suggested by M. de Déchy in 1873 (*S. A. C. Jahrbuch*, vol. ix. p. 191.)—has quite superseded that which we gave to it in a joke.

§ See too *Alpine Journal*, vol. v. p. 277.

rocky spur, reaching the foot of the great S. arête (very high up on the Ferpècle side) at 7.18. We halted for breakfast from 7.45 to 8.3. Then, keeping below the jagged crest, we "traversed" not very difficult rocks, and struck the arête at the point gained in ascending from Bricolla at 9.3. The arête, and indeed the whole mountain, was in a most favourable condition, and we reached the top at 9.48. We enjoyed a superb view, though there were a few clouds. We found my old paper and the names of Messrs. Utterson-Kelso and Fowler, who had ascended on the 6th and 13th inst.' On the descent we followed the same route back to our breakfast place, whence N. Knubel was despatched to pick up his brother and Tschingel. 'The rest kept along the S. snow arête, mounted several points, and at length emerged on rolling snow-fields and gained the Pollingerjoch,' from which, after being rejoined by the Knubels and Tschingel, we all descended to the Stockje, where we camped a second night, and returned to Zermatt next morning. At Zermatt we found Mr. Fowler, who, on September 14, had learnt from the howls of Tschingel (indignant at being left behind) that another party was attempting the ascent.

I have been thus particular in describing our ascent of 1871 as it was a notable one in several ways. It was the first time that the peak had been climbed by a lady, and the first time since 1862 that the ascent and descent had been made by the S.W. face and S. arête, while never before apparently had anyone chosen Zermatt as a base from which to attack the peak. My recollection of our route is that we kept just beneath the crest of the S. arête from our breakfast place to the point where we struck the arête, just where we had struck it the year before when climbing straight up from Bricolla. I cannot remember encountering any difficulties in 1871, and the whole climb was a great contrast to our experiences in 1870, when my aunt had been forced to remain behind with a porter when some way up the W. face, generously allowing me to go on to the top (2 hrs. off), while on the descent we had suffered greatly from falling stones. I imagine that from the foot of the S. arête we followed very much the line taken before us by Mr. Kennedy and by Mr. Fowler.

Since our ascent Zermatt has served as the usual starting-point for the ascent, except in a few cases where new routes have been forced up the N.E. and down the W. arêtes. Monsieur de Déchy, on August 5, 1873, repeated our ascent with curious exactness, and has published a detailed narrative of his experiences.* Amongst our successors one party at least made a slight but useful variation in the line of ascent usually taken. Mr. Frederick Gardiner, with Peter and Hans Knubel, on July 12, 1876, starting from the Stockje hut, climbed the peak, but, owing to much ice and snow on the rocks, followed the S. arête 'almost in its entirety;' this limitation meaning, he tells me, that they skirted round the W. flank of a tower of rock instead of climbing over it. This ascent showed that when the usual route was 'closed' (an event of not infrequent occurrence) the peak

* *Jahrbuch des Schweizer Alpenclub*, vol. ix. pp. 176-201.

was yet not inaccessible to a party determined not to be beaten by it. It was duly chronicled and described in these pages,* and this 'new route' appeared in its proper place in Mr. Conway's 'Zermatt Pocket Book' (p. 101), issued in 1881, and in Signor Vaccarone's list of 'First Ascents,' appended to the 'Bollettino del Club Alpino Italiano' for 1885. But it cannot be expected that every climber should be thoroughly versed in ancient Alpine history, and hence I was not surprised to read in a summary of the climbing season of 1889 which appeared in the 'St. Moritz Post and Davos News' for October 26, 1889 (p. 3), that a new and most useful route had in 1889 been discovered and frequently followed up this peak, one which avoided the well-known smooth rocks on the W. face, but was none other than that up the S. arête! I thought it well to send a correction of this slip, pointing out that this route had been already taken by Mr. Gardiner in 1876, and this correction was courteously inserted by the editor in the number of that paper for November 9, 1889 (p. 17). Here I thought the matter ended, as Mr. Gardiner's notes had been before the Alpine world for over thirteen years, and had not ever, so far as either I or he was aware, been publicly challenged. It was, therefore, with genuine amazement that in the same paper for November 30, 1889 (p. 50), I perused the following paragraphs:—

An occasional correspondent, who is a well-known member of the Alpine Club, writes to us as follows: 'I notice that in your issue of November 9 it is said (p. 17) that the first ascent by the route along the crest of the S. arête of the Dent Blanche was made by the well-known climber Mr. Gardiner with Peter and Hans Knubel on July 12, 1876. This is, however, quite a mistake. The route in question had already been followed (and probably for the first time) on August 24, 1874, by Mr. F. Morshead, who took this route in his ascent on that day with Mr. Seymour Hoare and the guides Hans von Bergen and Hans Jaun.'

Our correspondent, after giving some details of a subsequent ascent of the Dent Blanche in 1879 by Mr. Morshead, when the Blatten was the route chosen, goes on to say, 'In order to be absolutely certain that my memory was trustworthy, I wrote both to him and to Seymour Hoare, and they both entirely confirm my recollection.' It is often a matter of great difficulty to trace out the history of an Alpine peak. Local guides have not been concerned in some of the ascents of note, and thus accurate information can often not be obtained on the spot. On the other hand, some of our most energetic English climbers have failed to give us the benefit of published accounts of their experiences, and thus the desired knowledge as to past ascents of peaks is hard to come by. We therefore welcome any additions and corrections which our readers can supply us with, and shall always be happy to publish them.

These statements, I confess, strongly excited my curiosity and interest. Mr. Gardiner, the chief person concerned, had never heard of these facts, nor had Mr. Conway, admittedly the highest authority on all matters relating to the Alpine history of the Zermatt peaks, while I myself, although I flattered myself that I had paid a good deal of

* *Alpine Journal* for November 1876, vol. viii. p. 114, and for February 1878, vol. viii. pp. 376-7. Mr. Gardiner in his published narrative says, 'Knubel told me that he had once before attempted the ascent by the southern arête with the guide Lochmatter, but had found it impracticable,' the reference being probably to Mr. Fowler's descent in 1871.

attention to Alpine history in general, was equally in the dark. Both the gentlemen who were named as having been up the mountain in 1874 were at that moment members of the Alpine Club, yet neither had thought it worth while to send a few lines to the 'Alpine Journal,' or in any way to call attention to their ascent, despite Mr. Gardiner's claim, set forth publicly in 1876. As the matter seemed to me one of great historical interest, I requested Mr. Gardiner to communicate with Mr. Morshead on the subject, and I am enabled by the courtesy of both gentlemen to give the following extracts from Mr. Morshead's reply:— 'I never thought about my ascent of the Dent Blanche with Hoare in 1874 as an ascent by a new route. . . . I made no notes and thought nothing more about it' until he was asked for details by the 'occasional correspondent' of the St. Moritz paper, whose name he mentions. 'Under these circumstances I do not think that I can claim any credit for a new ascent, and I would rather leave that with you. I had not noticed the account in Conway's book, and should not have said anything if I had; for an ascent made unintentionally and never recorded for the good of others cannot be considered a proper ascent.' Mr. Morshead has since written to me to the same effect, but in even more emphatic terms. Mr. Morshead's letters thus settle the question in Mr. Gardiner's favour, and the last uncertainty as to the early Alpine history of the Dent Blanche is thoroughly cleared up.

I trust these pages may be of some use to the future historians of the Alps (in a wider sense even than that in which the phrase was applied to Bourrit a hundred years ago), while to all who have made or are planning new routes I would commend the comments of the editor of the St. Moritz paper given above, the gist of which Mr. Conway has tersely summed up in these pages in the words, which no mountain explorer should ever forget, 'An unrecorded ascent is nothing; one badly recorded is little more.'*

IN MEMORIAM.

SINCE the appearance of the last number of the Journal two more of the original members of the Club have passed away—the Bishop of Durham and Lieut.-Col. Eustace Anderson. It will probably be somewhat of a surprise to many to learn that Dr. Lightfoot claims a notice in these pages. His name, however, will be found among those named by Mr. W. Longman, in his account † of the early days of the Club, as having given in their adhesion to its formation; and Professor Hort writes as follows:—

'All his letters of that period are lying before me. On December 5, 1857, he begins thus: "I write a line or two in haste to ask you what you intend to do about the Alpine Club. Shall you join? . . . I shall feel rather like an impostor, as it is very little probable that I shall ever get up another 13,000 feet. But I feel disposed to follow your lead in the matter of the said Club."'

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xiii. p. 166.

† *Ibid.* vol. viii.