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## MOUNTAINEERING IN THE SOUTHERN ALPS OF NEW ZEALAND.

BY E. A. FITZGERALD.

ON December 31, 1894, I left Christchurch with my friend Mr. C. L. Barrow and Mattias Zurbriggen, of Macugnaga (Mr. Conway's guide in the Himalayas), for the Southern Alps of the South Island. Some other gentlemen of New Zealand accompanied us. After five days' travelling we reached the Hermitage, a small hotel in the Hooker valley. This was run by a company, lately bankrupt, and is now closed; we therefore had to camp higher up the valley. The first mountain which drew our attention was Mount Sefton, 10,359 ft. high. This rises abruptly from the Hooker valley, nearly 8,000 ft., almost sheer precipice. We decided to try it first, so on January 11 we started up and made a bivouac at an altitude of 5,390 ft. on a ridge between the Huddleston and Tewaewe Glaciers. We were accompanied on this attempt by Mr. Mannering, Mr. Ollivier, and Mr. Adamson, all members of the New Zealand Alpine Club. The day, however, proving unsatisfactory, we were obliged to return to the Hermitage. Next day being as bad, we started on January 14, and walked up to the Ball Hut. Next day we decided to try Mount Tasman, 11,475 ft., the next-highest mountain to Mount Cook in the island. Accordingly on the 15th we made a bivouac a little below Glacier Dome, between the Freshfield and Hochstetter Glaciers. It rained heavily on the following day, but we stayed on, and at 2.20 on the morning of the 17th we started, the party consisting of Mr. Ollivier, a young fellow called J. Clark, whom I had engaged as porter, Zurbriggen, and myself. We climbed up

the rocks to Glacier Dome, then cut across the Hochstetter Glacier, and taking the south-east arête attempted to gain the Silberhorn. We were driven back by bad weather about 10 A.M., when still about 1,500 ft. from the summit. We returned to the Ball Hut. The gentlemen of the New Zealand Alpine Club now left me, returning to Christchurch on the 21st. I came back with them myself as far as the Hermitage. The weather being fine, I determined to make another attempt on Sefton, alone with my guide Zurbriggen, so at about 5 o'clock on the night of the 22nd we started for our old bivouac. Next morning the wind was blowing very heavily, so much so that we could not keep our lanterns alight, and we had to wait for dawn before starting. About 4 o'clock we left the bivouac, but did not get very far, owing to the weather. We returned that morning to the Hermitage, and I arranged with my friend Mr. Barrow that we should try Mount Sealy, 8,631 ft., on the next day. Mount Sealy has been frequently attempted by the leading members of the New Zealand Alpine Club. Messrs. Harper, Johnson, Fyfe, Graham, Mannering, and Malcolm Ross have all at one time or another attempted the ascent, but the peak remained still virgin. At 5 o'clock on the morning of the 24th we left, and climbing Mount Ollivier, 6,298 ft., we skirted along the Sealy range, and ascended the mountain by the east arête. After a difficult climb, over extremely rotten rocks, we reached the summit at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We stayed there about an hour, and returned by the same route, reaching the Hermitage about 10 o'clock at night.

On January 25, the weather being fine, I left with Zurbriggen for our Sefton bivouac. Next day the weather proved terrible, the snow coming down to the Hermitage.

On the 29th we made another unsuccessful effort. Our stores now running short, we had to drive down to Pukaki on the 31st, some forty-six miles, and get fresh supplies. My friend Mr. Barrow left me here, and returned to Christchurch. When I got back to the Hermitage I found that the rocks of Sefton were so covered with fresh snow that it was impossible to think of climbing it for the present, so we went up the Tasman valley to the Ball Hut, to have another try at Mount Tasman.

On February 4 we bivouacked again on the Hochstetter ridge, and on the 5th, at 2.20 A.M., we started for Tasman, the party consisting of Zurbriggen, our porter Clark, and myself. At 5.40 we reached the arête that we had tried

before, and at 10 o'clock we reached the summit of the Silberhorn. This mountain must be about 10,400 ft. From here we descended to the saddle, between the Silberhorn and Tasman, thence following the arête, we reached the summit of Mount Tasman at about half-past twelve. We reached our camp on the Hochstetter ridge at 6.30 that evening, the ascent having occupied sixteen hours. The route lay almost entirely over ice and snow, and up steep arêtes. A cutting wind blew the whole day, and we had great difficulty in getting down, our steps having been filled with powdery snow. The 6th and 7th of February we spent at our camp; during this time I sent Clark and Zurbriggen for fresh supplies. On the 8th, at a quarter past two in the morning, we started to ascend Mount Haidinger, 10,107 ft. We went up the Glacier Dome, then getting on to the arête leading to Haast, we followed this till within 1,000 ft. of the summit. Cutting across the east face, under some very bad overhanging glaciers, we reached the long arête that leads to Mount Haidinger. This is about a mile in length, and we had to follow all along it, cutting steps in places, as it was mostly snow. At 10.20 we reached the summit; it was a glorious day, and we got a magnificent view of the sea and the green valleys of the West Coast, also of the brown plains of the Mackenzie country towards the east. We came down by the same route, and reached camp at a little after six. Next day we rested there, and on the 10th we descended to the Hermitage, to try Mount Sefton again.

On February 12 we made an attempt, but were driven back by the weather at the bivouac. On February 14 we at last found a fine day, and at 12.45 A.M. we left our bivouac. We went straight up towards the Footstool, till we were nearly under its rock precipices; then we cut across the head of the Huddleston Glacier, and forcing our way through a tremendous ice-fall, the crevasses of which were larger than any I have seen in the Swiss Alps, we reached a small arête that led to the col between Sefton and the Footstool. We had most magnificent moonlight, or we should not have been able to accomplish this in the night. At daybreak we reached this col, and commenced the ascent of Sefton. Never have I in all my experience seen rocks in such a fearfully rotten condition as these, and Zurbriggen also agreed that in all his travels he had never seen anything to equal them. The slightest touch would at times dislodge tons. We had to go up a most fearfully steep arête to

reach the summit, near which there occurred what was very nearly being a fatal accident, a large rock falling down, throwing me completely over, and cutting two strands of the rope that held me. Zurbriggen was very badly placed at this moment, and was all but torn from his foothold. Had we fallen here we should have come straight down 7,000 ft. to the Mueller Glacier. At 10.25 we stood on the actual summit, which is an ice cone. We came down by the same route, without accident, as far as the glacier. Here we very nearly had to spend the night out, owing to some of the ice bridges we had crossed in the morning having broken through. It was not till past midnight that I regained the Hermitage; Zurbriggen was so fatigued that he stopped at the bivouac. We had been 24 hrs. underground the most severe work; also the tension on our nerves had been great all day, owing to the almost incessant danger. Zurbriggen admitted that never in his life had he done anything worse than this, not even when he and Eckenstein ascended the Dent Blanche by its face. We were considerably embarrassed going through the enormous crevasses and ice-fall of the glacier, being only two on the rope. We used crampons in this ascent, and without them we could never have reached the summit, as hours must be spent in step-cutting.

The New Zealand Government have long desired to find some feasible col to the West Coast. Up till now nobody has ever crossed the ranges. For the last few years survey parties have explored the valleys of the West Coast in search of this passage, but up till now without success. Zurbriggen and I, therefore, set ourselves the task of finding such a passage. I had had the advantage of several magnificent views from the peaks I had tried; so on the 19th we made a voyage of reconnaissance up the Hooker Glacier, till nearly opposite Baker's Saddle. I thought I now had found a feasible route, so on February 24, taking a small day's provision with us, Zurbriggen and I started, without blanket, or tent, or anything, to cross to the West Coast. We knew that we should have several days before us, but we thought it best to be as lightly laden as possible. We crossed over a saddle almost due west of Monte Rosa, about 6,997 ft. in the map brought out by the Royal Geographical Society of London of the central portions of the Southern Alps. We found an easy track up to this saddle, there being only 25 min. of snow work. On the other side, leading down to the Copeland valley, there was no ice or glacier at all. A

mule track could be built here, the pass resembling in many ways that of the Monte Moro leading from Macugnaga to Mattmark. We reached this saddle in about 6 hrs. from the Hermitage, and it has now been named Fitzgerald's Saddle by the Survey Department. The descent had to be made beside the Copeland River till we should reach Scott's house, situated on an island near the mouth of the Karangarua River. For two days and a half we fought our way down, amidst almost impassable scrub, before reaching our destination. We had considerable difficulty in fording the river, and we suffered a good deal from want of food and shelter, as it rained during one of the nights and part of one day. Here I met with Mr. Harper, who was doing some exploring for the Government; he agreed to accompany me back. We decided to return by way of the Fox Glacier; so on the 28th we left Scott's house, and travelling by way of the beach to Gillespie's township, and thence to Little's homestead, we reached the snout of the Fox Glacier. Here bad weather overtook us, and for two days we were obliged to camp in a shelter made for ourselves of ferns and the bark of trees.

On March 3 we went up the Fox Glacier as far as Chancellor's Ridge, and camped. Bad weather came on in the afternoon, and it snowed heavily. In the night it cleared, and the thermometer dropped to below freezing point. We suffered greatly from the cold. On the morning of the 4th we went up the Victoria Glacier and passed over a col to the Fritz Glacier. This col was named Blackburn's Col. We then ascended to the head of the Fritz Glacier, and reached the Franz Joseph Glacier by a col we named after Zurbriggen. We crossed the whole head of the Franz Joseph, and came over on to the Tasman side by a pass called Graham's Saddle, just at the foot of De la Bêche. We were not on the top of this saddle till about 8 in the evening. Here we had to climb down some steep rocks, and night overtaking us we were obliged to sit out the whole of it on a narrow ledge, not 200 ft. from the bergschrund of the Rudolf Glacier. It was extremely cold that night, the thermometer dropping to 25° Fahr., and a cutting S.W. wind was blowing. We also found out that we were in the line of falling stones; we could not move, however, owing to the darkness and the fact of the stones being all covered with ice. In the morning we reached the Rudolf Glacier without much difficulty in about half an hour. We now only had to walk down to the Tasman Glacier, and we soon reached

the Ball Hut without further incident. Here we were detained for a week by a fearful storm, and on March 11 I started down to reach the Hermitage. Here I met Mr. F. F. Tuckett, who had come up to see the Tasman Glacier, and I returned with him to Christchurch, arriving there on March 14, after having been away two months and a half. I left my guide, Zurbriggen, to bring down our tent and camp arrangement from the Hochstetter bivouac. When he went back there with Mr. Adamson, of the Hermitage, finding the weather fine, he started to ascend Mount Cook on March 14. Mr. Adamson went as far as 10,000 ft.; Zurbriggen completed the ascent alone, reaching the summit at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. He ascended by the north-eastern arête, not touching Mr. Green's route by the Linda Glacier at all. He described his route to me as extremely easy, but he was much impeded by the fresh snow that had fallen during the week of bad weather, when we were imprisoned in the Ball Hut. Mount Cook was ascended for the first time by a party of New Zealanders on December 25, 1894, by the western arête from the Hooker Glacier. Both Mr. Green and Mr. Mannering, on previous occasions, nearly reached the summit by following the Linda Glacier. I did not try the peak myself, as my desire was to do virgin peaks only. The climbing in the Alps of New Zealand is far different from and much more difficult than what we get in the Swiss Alps. The weather is of the most changeable character, and even the oldest weather prophets would not dare to prophesy for 6 hrs., much less for 24. The condition of the snow is worse than usually in Switzerland, and the rocks are so rotten that it would be difficult to believe how easy it is sometimes to dislodge huge boulders weighing tons and tons. The average snow line might be placed at 6,000 ft., while the valleys range from 2,000 to 3,000 ft.; thus a mountain like Sefton, which is only 10,359 ft., is in reality as high above the Hooker valley as the Matterhorn is above Zermatt. Another great difficulty is that of portage. It is almost impossible to get a man to come on to the glaciers; most have a species of supernatural dread of anything pertaining to ice. I only succeeded, after great difficulty, in getting one porter—Clark—and he was only nineteen, and could not, of course, carry the weights that an older man could. The rottenness of the ice on some of the glaciers is also wonderful; the Fox Glacier, for instance, flows down to within 700 ft. of the sea amidst almost tropical vegetation; the Franz Joseph Glacier flows down even lower, I believe.

*Pinna di  
Ciamponeu.*

*Point 3,379.*

*N. Arête.*

*Corno Bianco.*

*E. Arête.*

*S.E. Arête.*

*Corno di Puvia  
(on E. Arête).*



Many of these glaciers advance very rapidly, such as the Franz Joseph, that moves 15 ft. in a day, so that Mr. Harper told me, when he was surveying it, his trigonometrical statements became quite useless after a few days. I should advise anybody coming out with the intention of climbing these Alps to provide himself with light Mummery tents and every species of condensed provision. I myself found, as a rule, that it was difficult even to carry a Mummery tent anywhere; almost all my camping was done in the open air, with simply a small square of macintosh sheeting to throw over myself to keep off the damp. This I could easily carry in my pocket. I was glad to learn afterwards that the New Zealand Government are now in process of cutting a track through to the West Coast by way of the saddle that I discovered on February 24. I cannot speak too highly in praise of my guide, Mattias Zurbriggen. Without him I could never have had the success that I have had. His energy was untiring. All the work devolved on him, as we could not get porters, and although I did as much as I could myself in the way of carrying loads, he, of course, did the lion's share of the work from beginning to end. His marvellous sure-footedness was the only thing that saved us from instant death on Sefton, and his patience in the face of the many obstacles that presented themselves to us, such as bad weather, which necessitated six attempts on Sefton, was marvellous. He took great interest in the work from beginning to end, as can be easily seen by his solitary ascent of Cook, made from pure love of the mountains and from the desire to see for himself what sort of a climb the mountain afforded.

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### THE CORNO BIANCO.\*

BY CLAUDE WILSON, M.D.

(Read before the Alpine Club, May 7, 1895.)

**T**HERE are probably some members of the Alpine Club who have never even heard of the Corno Bianco, and doubtless more who, though familiar with the name, would find some difficulty in picking it out on a general chart of the Alps. This difficulty could not be removed in the

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\* The two illustrations which accompany this paper are reproduced from drawings by Mr. Ellis Carr, the general view being founded on Signor Sella's photograph from the Linty Hut, the other on a slight sketch made by Mr. Willink from the summit.