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THE FIRST ASCENT OF THE FINSTERAARHORN :
A RE-EXAMINATION.

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THE seventeenth 'Jahrbuch' of the S.A.C., published in 1881, contains an elaborate article by the late G. Studer on the subject of Meyer's expedition of 1812, when his guides are stated to have reached the summit of the Finsteraarhorn by following the S.E. arête which they gained from the E.

Another article on the same subject in the forty-third 'Jahrbuch,' published in 1907, by Professor J. Lüders of Aix-la-Chapelle, also shows a remarkable grasp of the subject, since, so far as is known, the Professor has no personal knowledge of the actual route said to have been followed by the guides in 1812.

The Professor suggests that the question bears close resemblance to an Alpine criminal trial, 'in which the veracity of the traveller recounting the first ascent is attacked in the sharpest possible manner and he is made out to be a lying swindler.'

Both these articles are worthy of close study. The authors state the case so far as it could be known to them and give a verdict in favour of Meyer's guides.

It is however interesting to note that Studer was not always of this opinion, as in his 'Panorama von Bern' (Bern, 1850) he passes over Meyer's claims (p. 220) and referring to Leuthold and Währen's ascent in 1829 writes of them as 'Wahrscheinlich die ersten Sterblichen auf der Zinne des Finsteraarhorns' ('probably the first mortals on the summit of the Finsteraarhorn.')

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JACOB LEUTHOLD,
Leader on the ascent of the Finsteraarhorn, in 1828.

A concise summary of the whole position, with the arguments for and against the now generally accepted conclusions, is given by Dr. Coolidge with his accustomed accuracy in 'The Bernese Oberland,' ii. 31 seq., published in 1904; and Dr. Dübi's translation of this work, published in 1909 under the title 'Hochgebirgsführer durch die Berner Alpen,' Band. III. contains a few further references and additions. Both these great authorities are also entirely in favour of the guides' claims, although I have more than once warned my friend and master, Dr. Coolidge, of the strength of the opposite view.

During the last thirty years I have made this ascent three times—in 1883, 1903, and 1907*—and the second and third expeditions were made apart from their mountaineering interest, with the special object of studying the question on the spot. I had made myself in the meantime thoroughly acquainted with the literature on the subject—indeed on the last occasion I carried with me Zschokke's brochure of 1813 as well as a MS. précis of Meyer's own account of the expedition, first published in 'Alpenrosen,' 1852.

I propose in the following pages to examine the whole question, and I think I can do so without impugning Meyer's veracity in any way, although I shall have to show that his recorded observations are often unreliable—and that hence too much credit is not to be claimed for his general accuracy. I may as well placate any would-be foeman whose ardour this article may arouse by confessing that I fail to reconcile one of my own 'observations' of 1883 with the experience of my later expeditions when the enthusiasm of youth had given place to the calmer observation of the veteran. Moreover, in the note of my earlier ascent ('A.J.' vol. xi. p. 368) my argument in favour of the authenticity of the ascent by Meyer's guides entirely hangs on what I shall have to show is an unsustainable assumption. My argument has for many years been quoted with great approval by all advocates of Meyer, so that my reluctance to destroy it is somewhat natural. However, I have allowed Alpine critics thirty years in which to exhibit their literary acumen, and it is after all very satisfactory to have left to oneself the opportunity of pointing out one's own errors.

The original documents bearing on the question are two only, although some very interesting later references have

* And again, partially, in 1913, as recorded farther on.

been unearthed by the industry of Dr. Dübi, one of the greatest living Alpine authorities, and of M. Charles Montandon.

The earliest account of the expedition which has come down to us was published in 1813 in a little brown-covered brochure, entitled 'Reise auf die Eisgebirge des Kantons Bern und Ersteigung ihrer höchsten Gipfel im Sommer 1812,' and the preface, which is signed 'Zschokke,' expressly states 'Der folgende Bericht ward von mir nach mündlichen und schriftlichen Mittheilungen des Herrn Meyer verfasst; daher die Erzählung in seinem Namen geschieht, zu welcher jedoch die übrigen Reisegefährten wesentliche Beiträge gaben,' which being interpreted reads: 'The following report was drawn up by me from verbal and written communications of Mr. Meyer; therefore it appears as his own to which, however, the others who accompanied him made substantial contributions.'*

The other original document is Meyer's own MS., which was, however, only published in 1852. Zschokke had this MS. before him when preparing his account, published in 1813, after some delay caused by the preparation of the map which accompanies it. Zschokke expressly states that his account was supplemented by information obtained from Meyer's companions, and we know that Meyer's guides in the autumn of 1812 did actually pay a visit to Aarau † where also Zschokke lived, and when, no doubt, Zschokke heard their own narratives.

Previous notices of the expedition had apparently appeared in the local newspapers, as there is a reference to them in Zschokke's preface and in a footnote on page 85, although these accounts may have referred to the second ascent of the Jungfrau recorded in the same pamphlet.

For nearly forty years Zschokke's remained the only published account of the expedition.

During this time

- (1) The inherent improbability of such an ascent having, at this period, been successfully completed at the first attempt;
- (2) Some small points in Zschokke's recital;
- (3) The failure of Meyer's leading guide to conduct another party to the summit; and
- (4) His reported denial, when questioned, that he had ever made the ascent at all,

caused serious doubts to be thrown on the authenticity of the claim to have completely ascended the mountain.

* The italics are mine. † P. 36: *Reise auf die Eisgebirge.*

Rudolf Meyer was, during a portion of this time, and until his death there in 1833 at the age of forty-two, an inhabitant of Aarau. Born in 1791, Meyer was, at the time of the expedition in question, a little over twenty-one years of age and a student at the University of Tübingen. He has nearly always been referred to in the polemical literature which has sprung into being over his great expedition as Dr. or Professor Dr. Meyer, but this was not his title at the time and its use tends to give to his observations a weight they do not necessarily deserve. In weighing his account one must not overlook the fact that one has to do with the experience and observation of a youth.

The principal doubter was F. J. Hugi of Solothurn, a traveller of some eminence, who made various attempts to reach the summit of the Finsteraarhorn in the years 1828 and 1829, two of his guides, J. Leuthold and J. Währen, actually reaching the summit on August 10, 1829.

In 1830 Hugi published his book 'Naturhistorische Alpenreise.' Chapter VI. deals with his attempt on the Finsteraarhorn. He was accompanied by seven guides. 'Among them was Arnold ab Bühl, who accompanied the MM. Meyer of Aarau in these parts sixteen years previously and who is reported to have ascended the Finsteraarhorn. At first he was very talkative about this occurrence but contradicted himself so much that I could make nothing certain out of what he said. As we got nearer to the mountain he endeavoured to avoid all questions and inquiries and remained at some distance from the caravan. . . . When at last we descended in a N.W. direction from the Rothornsattel, I asked him for definite information where he had descended from the Finsteraarhorn. He pointed to the hanging névé on the right and said that up there was the Finsteraarhorn. Without taking notice of this, I kept on my way laughing. . . . Soon a whole row of points higher than the one he had indicated showed themselves and, when we at last reached the height [probably somewhere about the present breakfast place of the W. route] he no longer pretended that he had ever ascended the Finsteraarhorn.' (Translated.) ('Wollte er das Finsteraarhorn nicht mehr erstiegen haben.')

Dr. Dübi has pointed out to me that three years before the appearance of Hugi's book, the 'Alpenrosen' of 1827, page 319, contained an allusion by Pfarrer Schweizer to his having visited, on September 13, 1821, at Im Boden, the famous mountaineer Arnold Abbühl, 'der den höchsten Gipfel des

Finsteraarhorns *wirklich* * *erstiegen* hat ' (who *really* * ascended the highest point of the Finsteraarhorn).

This allusion points to Abbühl's enjoyment of credit for the ascent, but the introduction of the word '*wirklich*' or '*really*' may be taken as indicating that doubt did exist in some quarters even before Hugi's book appeared.

Upon the publication of Hugi's book, Dr. Rudolf Meyer sent a note to the '*Schweizer Bote*' of January 6, 1831, of which the following is the gist (translated).

'As Professor Hugi has cast doubt on the ascent of the Finsteraarhorn by Volker, Bartes, and Melchthal [Abbühl came from Melchthal and so went by that name] I feel compelled to declare that in the account which appeared in 1813 and of which Herr Kirchenrath Heinrich Zschokke describes himself the author, some of the details of the way (which is correctly shown in the map) are certainly ambiguous. These ambiguities are not my fault, as will appear from the MS. account of the journey which served to prepare the above account and which has come to light again. As I am not prepared to remain under Professor Hugi's suspicions I shall publish this account in the course of the summer, and I hope by then to produce testimony in support of the ascent.'

Hugi's answer appears in the issue of January 13, 1831, of which the following is the gist (translated):

'No one will find in my account any charge against Herr Meyer nor is it true that I question the route of Herr Meyer on the arête. This Arnold von Bühl (Melchthal), who told Herr Meyer in 1812 that he had ascended the Finsteraarhorn, was one of my porters in 1828. He pointed out to us on the spot the place where they had ascended and descended and which was the Finsteraarhorn itself. When, however, we passed this summit and he saw that the highest point lay much more to the N. he declared repeatedly that he had made a mistake sixteen years ago in respect to the highest point and that he had not ascended the Finsteraarhorn.'

M. Charles Montandon, to whom we are indebted for unearthing these very important documents ('S.A.C. Jahrbuch,' 1891, vol. xxvii. p. 384), states that the same newspaper contains up to the end of 1831 no reply from Dr. Meyer, and he concludes that the discussion was in fact closed.

Meyer did not, in fact, publish his MS., nor did it appear until 1852, long after his death.

* Italics are mine.

Hitherto writers on this subject have passed over these documents as of little importance, but it seems to me that, quite apart from Abbühl's reported negation, they may fairly be construed as telling against the authenticity of the completion of the ascent by Meyer's guides with most deadly effect.

What was the position in 1812? We have an enthusiastic, ingenuous youth attempting an ascent, the like of which in point of difficulty had, at that time, never been, nor was for nearly fifty years after, attempted. He reaches a point on the arête without any great difficulty and there he remains, too tired to proceed. About this portion of the ascent there is, save as to the precise point gained, no question, and it is of this portion alone that Meyer is a first-hand witness. Three of his guides go on and return to him after many hours with the statement that they had reached the summit, or that is what he understands. I shall examine later this point. But is it not perfectly natural that Meyer should accept their statement, that he should swallow with avidity their claim to have reached the goal of all his labours? He had, as I shall show later, no reason to doubt them, and doubtless he remained firm in his belief until Hugi's book appeared, many years after. At once he is up in arms at Hugi's questioning, as he thinks, his own statements and his guides' claims. He pens his reply quoted above, promises to publish his MS., and hopes to produce testimony in support. Then comes Hugi's reply, and Meyer realises that his own personal share in the expedition is not questioned, but he sees that he may, after all, have been misled by, or have misunderstood, his guides, and he is faced with the reported emphatic denial of his leading guide, who was at that time still living and could have been referred to. It may be that he wrote to Abbühl for the 'testimony' and failed to elicit a satisfactory reply. Thrown into hopeless doubt, all the stronger because his belief in his guides' statements had been firmly implanted in his mind all these nineteen years, is it to be wondered at that he lets the matter drop? He finds himself unable to get any testimony and realises that the publication of his MS. will not supply any more reliable evidence. One can easily picture the disenchanted man putting the whole matter aside in sheer despair of ever arriving at the truth.

When his MS. was at last published Meyer had been dead nearly twenty years, and its publication then is no evidence that he attached any importance to it or considered that it bore out his original beliefs. On the contrary, his failure to

publish the MS. in 1831 as announced may fairly be taken as supporting the opposite view.

Various reasons have been advanced for Abbühl's retraction, one that he was not on good terms with Hugi's party owing to their difference of religion, another that Hugi badgered him with questions. These reasons seem to be far-fetched. A simple reason is that when he was asked to repeat the ascent he finally owned that he and his comrades had never really reached the highest point. Abbühl is described by Hugi as at first very talkative about his expedition of 1812 but as avoiding any questions as he got nearer to the scene of operations.

On the other hand, Professor Wyss in his 'Reise ins Berner Oberland,' published in 1817, says 'I talked to Arnold Abbühl himself at Bern. He describes without any brag the dangers of the climb.'

Even if Abbühl and his comrades never reached the highest point, I shall show that they in all probability reached a point on the great S.E. arête so high as fully to entitle them to the very highest praise and, from the point of view of that period, almost equal in importance to the actual summit.

I will now examine, with my personal knowledge of the ground, the account as published by Zschokke in 1813 and Meyer's own MS., published in 1852. The material portions of each are printed side by side.

ZSCHOKKE'S ACCOUNT.*

1. Als die Eisgipfel wieder in Morgenroth brannten machten wir uns zur Fortsetzung der Reise auf. Es war der 16 August; ein schöner Tag . . . Wir wanderten über den Vieschergletscher; dann von der Grimsel Seite aus, zur linken des tiefen Finsteraargletschers, gegen den ungeheuern Granitthurm zu.

2. Wir erreichten den Bergschrund. Mühsam krochen wir darüber hin vom Gletscher ab zum festen Lande. . . . Das Klettern begann nach diesem und zwar auf einer fast senk-

MEYER'S OWN ACCOUNT.

1. Wohl versehen . . . mit Stricken, Alpstöcken und Füsseisen, stiegen wir über den harten Schnee von unserem Nachtlager wieder hinab in die ausgedehnten Gefilde des obern Vieschergletschers. Von der Grimsel-Seite aus, zur linken des tiefen finstern Aargletschers stiegen wir den mächtigen Granitthurm des Finsteraarhorns an.

2. Mit Mühe krochen wir über den Bergschrund. . . . Immer steiler wurde dann die Schnee- und Gletscherwand am Felsen, der senkrecht zum Himmel emporsteigt. Dem Kühnsten nach,

[* The text is broken up by me into numbered paragraphs for comparison.]

rechten Schneewand am Felsen. Wir traten in die Tappen oder vielmehr Stufen, die der Kühnste voran eingedrückt hatte, einen Arm immer in den Schnee tief eingrabend um den unsichern Fusstritt zu erleichtern.

3. An einigen Stellen war das glatte Eis bloss. Da hieben die Vordersten Tritte für Hand und Fuss. Alle schlangen wir ein Seil um unsern Leib dass Einer den Andern sichere.

4. So kamen wir über Felsen Eis und Schnee empor; einmal auch unter einem weitüberhangenden Gletscherblock durch, im schönsten Eisgrün prangend, dessen säulenhafte Eiszapfen wie Stalaktiten, herabhingen, und kaum von uns berührt in das Unabsehbare des Finsteraargletschers hinunterprasselten.*

5. Gegen Mittag, nach sechsstündigem Steigen, nahten wir einem der Gebirgsgipfel. Allein dem ganzen Grathe des Berges nach beugte sich der Gletscher überhangend gegen uns. Nicht ohne Mühe ward auch diese Höhe erklimmt.

* Als im Herbst des gleichen Jahres unsere beiden Walliser auf der Jagd wieder hier durch kamen, sahen sie, dass dieser ungeheure Eisblock vom Berge herab ins Thal gestürzt war.

traten wir in seine Stufen, den Arm tief im kalten Schnee eingrabend, um den unsichern Fusstritt zu unterstützen.

3. An einigen Stellen war der Gletscher nackt, kein Schnee hielt daran und wie die Fläche eines Krystals, deckte er den Felsen. Da hieben wir Tritte für Hand und Fuss und befestigten ein Seil um den Leib welches der Erste hielt wenn der wanke Tritt uns wich.

4. Weniger schüchtern kamen wir auf dem Felsen fort wo man sich nicht auf den trügerischen Schnee verlassen musste. So krochen wir schräg unter einem Gletscherblock durch der weit sich hinausschwang über die Thalschlucht, voll Spälte, vom schönen Gletschergrüne ausgefüllt; Eiszapfen hingen an seinen überhängenden Gipfeln herunter, wie die Stalaktitensäulen einer Felsengrotte, und nieder stürzten sie zuweilen neben uns, durch unsere Tritte aufgeweckt, und prasselten hinab in's Unendliche des Finsteraargletschers.*

5. Sechs Stunden lang waren wir mühsam nun hinaufgeklettert an dieser Riesenwand; um Mittag nahte der eine Gipfel des Berges, da wölbte sich dem ganzen Grathe nach der Gletscher über den Abgrund hinaus, gegen uns zu. Mit grosser Anstrengung konnten wir auch diesen erklettern und kamen so auf die Höhe.

* Als im Herbst unsere beiden Walliser die Jagd wieder hier durch führte sahen sie, dass dieser Eiskoloss vom Berge herab in's Thal gestürzt war.

6. Wir standen auf dem Oberaarhorn.

Es war ein heiterer Tag; die Aussicht unermesslich. Die hohen Gebirge der Urkantone lagen unter uns; über die Alpen Graubündens sahen wir in die tirolischen Firnen . . . nur das obere Wallis erschien uns noch als ein Thal; nur dies noch in grüner Farbe, durch Tannenwälder schwarz besprengt; die Rhone schien ein matter Silberfaden. . . . Die schweigenden Abgründe unter unsern Fusssohlen konnte man nie lange ohne Schauern betrachten.

7. Noch als ein schwarzer Felsen stand gegen Norden der höchste Berggipfel vor uns. Dies war das Finsteraarhorn. Er sollte erstiegen werden. Es war ein Uhr Nachmittags.

8. Aber mir waren die Kräfte gewichen. Ich blieb hier liegen auf dem scharfen schmalen Gletscherrücken, wo ich mir einen Sitz im Eise grub, den höchsten Thron zu dessen Füßen die Reiche der Erde lagen. Caspar Huber musste mir Gesellschaft leisten.

9. Arnold aber und die beiden Walliser wollten das Aeusserste versuchen. Ich munterte sie auf. Sie stiegen wieder abwärts auf den Gebirgsgrath. Ich erzähle Abentheur wie sie mir dieselben am Abend berichteten.

It will be noted that Meyer's immediate part now ceases. He goes on to chronicle mainly what his men told him on their return at night.

10. Mühsam erstiegen sie den hohen Felsberg. Sie glaubten

6. Aber ein einzig schöner Genuss lohnte uns reichlich für alle Strapazen. Ueber das Oberaarhorn sahen wir hinab auf die höchsten Gebirge der kleinen Kantone, über die Bündner Alpen, bis tief in die Tyroler Firnen schweiften die Blicke . . . durch eine Berglücke der Walliser Viescher-hörner sahen wir über den Gletscher hinab in das Oberwallis, das einzige Thal das uns grünlich erschien; Tannenwald und Alpen unterschieden noch schwäzere Schattten und durch dieses Dunkel schlängelte ein Silberstreifen, die Rhone, sich hindurch. . . . nur mit Schauern durfte man sich nahen dem betretenen Wege und mit unsicherem Tritte. . . .

7. Noch als ein schwarzer Felsen ragte der höchste Gipfel vor uns empor und raubte die Aussicht nach Norden. Es war 1 Uhr Nachmittags.

8. Ich als der schwächste unter ihnen blieb hier müde liegen.

9. Die andern aber muthiger, unabhaltbar eilten wieder abwärts auf dem Gebirgsgrath.

10. Mühsam erkletterten sie einen Felsen, den sie wieder hin-

auf der Spitze des Finsteraarhorns zu stehen ; aber daroben erkannten sie den Irrthum. Ein noch höherer Thurm ragte vor ihnen in die Luft, von welchem sie ein Abgrund trennte. Sie stiegen in diesen hinab und wagten sich auch an jenen. Aber nun den letzten Gipfel wollte lange Keiner von ihnen erklimmen, wenigstens Keiner wollte vorangehen. Denn der Felsenberg, vom nackten Eise bepanzert, hing über ihnen gebogen. Durch die Lücke der Wölbung sah man in den Finsteraargletscher hinab.

11. Endlich fasste Arnold Muth. Er kletterte, an ein Seil gebunden und von den Andern gehalten, auf dem Bauche kriechend, über diese hohle Eishaube, und zog die Andern darauf nach.

12. Jetzt war der höchste Gipfel des Finsteraarhorns besiegt. Es war vier Uhr. Sie hatten den Weg in drei Stunden zurückgelegt welcher in einer Viertelstunde gemacht werden zu können schien. Denn so nahe schien uns Allen die letzte Höhe.

13. Der oberste Punkt des Finsteraarhorns ist scharf wie der Sattellücken eines Berges. Das Eis darauf ist mehrere Klafter tief. Durch einen Eis-spalt sieht man den Finsteraargletscher.

14. Kein Berg ringsum scheint höher. Man übersieht alle andere Gipfel. Die finstern Berge der Schweiz, Alpen und Ebenen und Hügel, scheinen eine dunkle Ebene zu sein. Nur der Thuner See spiegelte im Sonnenschein aus der Tiefe herauf. .

untermussten, um einen höhern zu ersteigen. Auf diesem letzten Gipfel wollte keiner vorangehen ; Gletscher lag auf dem nackten Felsen, und zwischen beiden sah man durch eine Lücke hinab in die Finsteraargletscher.

11. Der Oberhasler Arnold von Melchthal endlich kletterte angebunden und von den andern gehalten über diese hohle Eishaube, und zog die Andern darauf nach.

12. Jetzt war der höchste Gipfel besiegt. Es war 4 Uhr ; drei Stunden wurden gebraucht, diesen Weg zurückzulegen, welchen man glaubte in einer Viertelstunde zu machen.

13. Diese Spitze ist scharf wie eine Kante, ganz mit Eis bepanzert und mehrere Klafter weit ragte dieses hinaus über die Felswand so dass man nur durch einen Eis-spalt hinunter sehen konnte auf den finstern Aargletscher.

14. Kein Berg ringsum scheint höher, jeden Gipfel übersieht man, und die fürchterlichsten Gebirge sind friedliche Hügel. Unbegrenzt ist die Aussicht hinab in das Berner Oberland, für unsere Blicke liegt aber alles in Nacht gehüllt und die finstern Berge scheinen

15. Ich sah von meinem Gletscher die kühnen Leute, wie sie mühsam versuchten, eine Fahne von rothem Wachstuch auf dem Gipfel des Horns zu befestigen. Sie litten von strenger Kälte, während sie vor drei Stunden, als sie noch bei mir waren, Sommerwärme empfanden. Zwar hatten sie Barometer und Thermometer hinaufgenommen; aber diese Instrumente wurden sehr unvollkommen beobachtet, dass ich darauf keine Rücksicht nehmen konnte. . . . Der Sturm war so gewaltig dass sie sich kaum auf den Füßen erhalten mochten. Noch während sie droben standen; riss der Wind die Fahne wieder von der Stange ab. Sie mussten sie aufs neue daran befestigen.

16. Nach einer halben Stunde, länger mochten sie den schneidenden Frost nicht ertragen, kehrten sie wieder zurück.

17. Weit leichter stiegen wir aus diesen Höhen von der Westseite nieder. Auch erkannten wir nun erst, leider zu spät, dass das Finsteraarhorn von dieser Seite ohne Schwierigkeit zu ersteigen gewesen wäre, da es von der Grimselseite nur mit grosser Noth geschah. Wir kamen ohne alle Gefahr herab auf den Vieschergletscher, über Schnee und Felsklippen, und zu dem Berge; an dessen entgegengesetzter Seite unser Nachtlager war. Der Berg ward überstiegen.

eine Ebene; nur der Thunersee, auf dem die Sonne sich spiegelte, glänzte aus dem schwarzen Grunde hervor.

15. Die Kälte war ausserordentlich stark, und der Wind stürmte, dass man sich kaum halten konnte, während vor drei Stunden 500 Fuss tiefer noch Sommerwärme war. Barometer und Thermometer wurde hier sehr mangelhaft beobachtet. Hier befestigten sie zum Zeugnis der Besteigung eine Fahne; aber während sie noch oben waren riss der Wind die Fahne von der Stange weg, und sie mussten solche von neuem wieder befestigen.

16. Nach einer halben Stunde, länger konnte man es vor Kälte nicht aushalten, kehrten sie wieder zurück.

17. Weit leichter und fröhlicher kamen wir nun hinunter auf der Westseite des Berges und ohne Gefahr auf den Vieschergletscher, bald über Felsenrippen, bald über Schnee hinab-rutschend. Zu unserm Nachtlager mussten wir auf der entgegengesetzten Seite hinaufsteigen; glücklich kamen wir alle durstig und müde mit dem Abend dort an. Auf dieser Seite, wo wir herabgekommen waren (westwärts) ist der Berg ganz ohne Schwierigkeit zu erklimmen; wie schwer dagegen unsere Ersteigung war, zeigt schon ein flüchtiger Anblick des Finsteraarhorns von der Grimselseite aus.

TRANSLATION

ZSCHOKKE'S ACCOUNT.

1. As the icepeaks glowed once more in the red of dawn we started to pursue our journey. It was the 16th August ; a fine day. . . . We followed the Viescher Glacier ; then from the Grimsel side, to the left of the deep Finsteraar Glacier, in the direction of the enormous granite tower.

2. We reached the Bergschrund. Painfully we crawled across it from the glacier to the firm ground. . . . The climbing thereupon commenced up an almost vertical snow-wall against the rock. We trod in the treads or rather steps which the boldest leading had trodden out, one arm always buried deep in the snow to ease the insecure footstep.

3. In some places the bare ice appeared. Then the leaders hewed steps for hand and foot. We all bound a rope about our waists so that one could secure the other.

4. We thus advanced up rocks, ice, and snow ; at one time under a far-overhanging block of Glacier preening itself in loveliest ice green, the column-like icicles of which hung down like stalactites and, scarce touched by us, rattled down into the invisible of the Finsteraar Glacier.*

* When, out hunting in the autumn of the same year our two Valaisans passed here, they saw that this enormous iceblock had fallen down from the mountain side into the valley.

MEYER'S OWN ACCOUNT.

1. Well provided . . . with ropes, alpenstocks, and footirons we descended the hard snow from our bivouac to the extensive fields of the upper Viescher Glacier. From the Grimsel-side to the left of the deep dark Aar Glacier we attacked the mighty granite tower of the Finsteraarhorn.

2. With pains we crept across the Bergschrund. . . . Always steeper became the snow- and ice-wall against the rock which mounted vertically to the sky. Following the boldest we trod in his steps, the arm buried deep in the cold snow to support the insecure foothold.

3. In some places the glacier was bare, no snow held thereon and like the surface of a crystal it covered the rocks. Then we hewed steps for hand and foot and fastened a rope round the body which the leader held in case our unstable footing gave.

4. With greater confidence we progressed on the rocks, where one was not compelled to rely on the deceptive snow. Thus we crept diagonally under a block of Glacier* which swung far out over the gorge, full of cracks filled out with lovely glacier green ; icicles hung on its overhanging pinnacles like

* When in the autumn the hunt brought our two Valaisans past here again they saw that this ice colossus had fallen down from the mountain into the valley.

5. Towards midday after mounting for six hours we approached one of the summits of the mountain—but along the whole length of the ridge of the mountain the glacier [cornice] hung over on our side. Not without trouble was this height climbed.

6. We stood on the Oberaarhorn.

It was a bright day; the view immeasurable. The high mountains of the Forest cantons lay beneath us; over the Alps of the Grisons we saw into the Tyrolese Glaciers . . . only the Upper Valais looked to us still like a valley; only this still in green colour, the pine woods picked out in black. The Rhone appeared a dull silver thread. . . . The silent precipices beneath our feet one could not look at long without a shudder.

7. Ever like a black rock stood to the N. the highest mountain summit. This was the Finsteraarhorn. It had to be climbed. It was 1 P.M.

8. But my powers had given out. I remained here lying on the sharp narrow ice arête where I dug myself a seat in the ice, the highest throne at the foot of which lay the kingdoms of the earth. Caspar Huber had to keep me company.

the stalactite columns of a rock grotto, and from time to time fell past us, awakened by our steps, and rattled down into the infinity of the Finsteraar Glacier.

5. Six hours long had we now painfully climbed this giant wall; at midday the one summit of the mountain approached when along the whole length of the ridge the glacier swelled [or arched] over the precipice [formed a cornice] in our direction.

6. But a single beautiful enjoyment repaid us amply for all fatigues. Over the Oberaarhorn we looked down on the highest mountains of the little cantons, over the Alps of the Grisons to far into the Tyrolese glaciers our glances roamed. . . . Through a mountain gap of the Walliser Viescherhörner we saw over the glacier down into the Upper Valais, the only valley that appeared to us green; still darker shadows picked out the pinewood and the [grazing] Alps and through this darkness glided, a silver band, the Rhone. . . . Only with a shudder dare we approach the path we had trodden and with uncertain step. . . .

7. Ever like a black rock the highest summit loomed above us and blocked the view to the North. It was 1 o'clock P.M.

8. I, as the weakest among them, remained lying here tired.

9. Arnold however and the two Valaisans were bent on attempting the uttermost. I encouraged them. They descended again to the arête. I am now telling their adventures as reported by them that evening.

9. The others, more courageous, not to be denied, hurried down again on to the ridge.

N.B.—It will be noted that Meyer's immediate part now ceases. He goes on to chronicle mainly what his men told him on their return at night.

10. Painfully they climbed the high rock peak. They thought to be on the summit of the Finsteraarhorn but found that they were mistaken. A still higher tower soared in the air above them from which a precipice divided them. They descended into this and ventured to attack the tower. But none of them would for a long time attempt the last peak, at least no one would lead. For the rock mountain, armoured with bare ice, hung right over them. Through the gap of the vault one saw down to the Finsteraar Glacier.

10. Painfully they climbed one rock and were compelled to descend it in order to ascend a higher one. Up this last peak nobody would lead. Ice lay on the bare rock, and between the two one saw down through a gap to the Finsteraar Glacier.

11. At last Arnold took courage. Tied on to a rope and held by the others he climbed crawling on his belly over this hollow icecap, and pulled the others after him.

11. The Oberhasler Arnold von Melchthal at last, roped and held by the others, climbed over this hollow icecap and pulled the others after him.

12. At last the highest summit of the Finsteraarhorn was conquered. It was 4 o'clock. They had taken three hours to do a way that looked as though it could be done in a quarter of an hour. For so near appeared to us all the final summit.

12. At last the highest summit was conquered. It was 4 o'clock; three hours had been needed to cover this way which one expected to do in a quarter of an hour.

13. The highest point of the Finsteraarhorn is sharp as the

13. This summit is sharp as an edge, completely armoured

saddleback of a mountain. The ice covering it is several fathoms deep. Through an iccrack one sees the Finsteraar Glacier.

14. No mountain anywhere around seems higher. One looks over all other peaks. The dark mountains of Switzerland, Alps and plains and hills, appear to be one dark level. Only the Lake of Thun gleamed in the sunshine out of the depths.

15. I saw from my glacier [position on the ice arête] the bold men, how they laboriously endeavoured to fix a flag of red waxed cloth on the summit of the Horn. They suffered from severe cold, whereas three hours earlier when they were with me they felt summer heat. They had, it is true, taken up barometer and thermometer, but these instruments were very imperfectly observed so that I could place no reliance thereon. . . . The storm was so powerful that they could hardly keep their feet. While they were still on top the wind tore the flag from the staff. They had to fasten it on afresh.

16. After half an hour, for longer they were unable to stand the cutting frost, they started back.

17. Much more easily we descended from these heights, down the West side. Also we now first recognized, unfortunately too late, that the Finsteraarhorn could have been ascended from this side without

with ice, and for several fathoms this ice stretched out over the rockwall so that only through a crack in the ice could one see down to the Finsteraar Glacier.

14. No mountain around seems higher, one sees over every summit and the most terrible mountains are peaceful hills. Unlimited is the view down into the Bernese Oberland, but for our gaze everything is wrapped in night and the dark mountains seem like a plain; only the Lake of Thun on which the sun is reflected sparkles out of the black depths.

15. The cold was exceedingly severe and the wind blew so that one could hardly hold one's self, whereas, 3 hours earlier, 500 feet lower was the warmth of summer. Barometer and thermometer were very imperfectly observed here. Here they fixed as evidence of the ascent a flag, but while they were still on the top the wind tore the flag away from the pole and they had to make it fast again.

16. After half an hour, longer they could not hold out for the cold, they returned.

17. Much easier and gayer we came down on the West side of the mountain, and, without danger, to the Viescher Glacier, at times over rock ribs, at times sliding down over snow. To gain our bivouac we had to

difficulty, whereas from the Grimsel side this had only been done with great difficulty. We got down without any danger on to the Viescher Glacier over snow and rocks and to the mountain [Gemslücke] on the opposite side of which was our bivouac. The mountain was crossed.

ascend on the opposite side; safely at nightfall, thirsty and tired, we got there. On this side where we came down (westwards) the mountain can be climbed without any difficulty; how hard on the contrary was our ascent is shown by a cursory glance at the Finsteraarhorn from the Grimsel side.

Let us now compare Zschokke's and Meyer's versions, *seriatim*.

1. These paragraphs are practically identical. The route described as well as marked on the map is perfectly clear. Meyer, student of mineralogy though he was, in describing the Finsteraarhorn as a *granite* tower is however apparently wrong. The analysis by E. v. Fellenberg of samples taken by R. Lindt ('Jahrbuch S.A.C.,' I. 309) is 'Talkiger Dioritschiefer' and 'Hornblendschiefer,' nor does the geological map show the granite as extending to the Finsteraarhorn.*

The early mention of crampons is interesting.

2 and 3. There is again only a difference of wording in these paragraphs.

Apparently Herr Kirchenrath Zschokke † was a stylist and constantly amends Meyer's phraseology.

4. These paragraphs are also practically identical, but they, especially the footnote, are intensely interesting, owing to the circumstance mentioned below. It is however a serious error to say that the icicles fell on to the Finsteraar Glacier, which lies far to the N. beyond the Ober Studerjoch.

5. These paragraphs are again very similar, but Meyer's MS.

* Professor Bonney very kindly looked into this point for me and thinks that the mountain is 'the rather hard, somewhat fine-grained, non-porphyrific gneiss of which there is much in the central part of the Oberland. . . . The rock very probably is igneous and thus is a granite, but as now its constituents have acquired a certain foliation, probably from subsequent pressure, it is rather a gneiss.'

† Dr. Coolidge kindly informs me that Heinrich Zschokke (1771-1848) was a German exile settled in Switzerland, politician and *littérateur*, best known for his 'Des Schweizerlandes Geschichte für das Schweizervolk' (Aarau 1822), a very well known popular history of Switzerland.

is more precise in stating that the actual wall, presumably from the Bergschlund, had taken six hours to climb. The mention of the cornice along the whole length of the arête is particularly important, as it fixes the spot within close limits where the party struck the great S.E. arête.

6. These paragraphs now differ. Zschokke says the party stood *on* the Oberaarhorn, whereas Meyer's MS. says they saw *over* the Oberaarhorn. Zschokke's statement is absurd and flatly contradicts the map published with his article. The error is probably due to bad writing in the MS. It is strange that Meyer, who also lived at Aarau, did not detect the error, as it is hardly conceivable that the proof was not submitted to him, but it is possible that he was away at the University of Tübingen, where he studied from 1809 till 1813.

This statement of Zschokke's misled no less a personage than the late Mr. John Ball.*

Meyer's MS. again is more precise inasmuch as he states that the Rhone was visible through a gap in the Walliser Fiescherhörner. I will deal with the view from the arête later.

7. These identical paragraphs are most important as they describe the appearance of the summit, or what was taken to be the summit, seen from the point where the party gained the arête. The time given, 1 P.M., may not, in view of the hour stated in paragraph 5, be the actual time of reaching the arête, but was probably the time at which the three guides started again, after the party had rested and looked round. The important point is that the guides did not start earlier than 1 P.M.

I deal further on with the appearance of the 'highest summit.'

8. These paragraphs supplement each other. Meyer's MS. simply says he remained at the place where they reached the arête. Zschokke adds that Meyer made himself a seat in the ice and that Kaspar Huber remained with him. These details are not such as can have been invented or imagined; the one confirms the previous statement (paragraph 5) that the arête was an ice arête at the place where they gained it, and it is quite certain that Meyer did not remain alone. As already pointed out, Zschokke's narrative does not rest on Meyer's MS. alone, but also on conversations with Meyer and

* I do not however consider that Zschokke at all 'deserves to be pilloried as an example for all editors present and future' (*Modern Mountaineering*, p. 66 (bound with *A.J.* viii.)). The Herr Kirchenrath is certainly a bit fond of his own wording, but only makes one easily explained mistake.

with the other members of the expedition. Moreover Meyer in his note to the 'Schweizer Bote' of January 6, 1831, gives the names of the guides who did continue the climb, and Huber's name is not one of them.

9. These paragraphs are again practically to the same effect. Apparently the party had gained a slight elevation on the arête and had to descend to continue the journey.

Now in no criticism or account of this expedition that I have seen has it been insisted on that at this point Meyer's and Zschokke's narratives lose their status as first-hand evidence. Before we venture into the doubtful domain of hearsay evidence, which is nearly all we possess with certainty for the doings of the guides from the time of their leaving Meyer at 1 P.M. until their return to him probably between 6 and 7 P.M., let us sum up what had been done :

The party left their bivouac on the now-called Gemslücke* when the sun had already struck the higher summits, probably about 5 A.M.,† descended to the Studerfirn, which they followed parallel to the E. foot of the S.E. arête of the Finsteraarhorn, almost to the Ober Studerjoch, until they had the great pyramid of the Finsteraarhorn immediately above them. They then crossed the Bergschrund and proceeded to *attack a very steep snow- and ice-wall* that lay against the rock. It was mostly snow, as they were able to bury an arm deep in the snow, but at a few places it was bare ice, when they were forced to cut steps and put on the rope. They were glad at times to *take to the rocks*, and at one point *crept diagonally under a huge sérac*, from which icicles broke off. At last, after 6 hours spent on this gigantic wall, they approached at midday *the one peak of the mountain, but a considerable length of the arête above them carried a great cornice* leaning over on their side. With great exertion they managed to climb this and so reached its crest.

* Hugi used this bivouac in 1828 and built a small stone shelter (*Alpenreise*, 181-3. One of the frontispieces to the book shows the building of this shelter; the other a rock-climb, the positions of the amateurs of the party being amusingly precarious). In 1907 Mr. H. V. Reade and I carefully examined the place, which is a nearly level ridge; there is still in existence a sort of shelter formed of thin slabs of rock with one side open. I have had often to note the extremely slow disintegration which these old bivouac places suffer. (Cf. *A.J.* xxv. 642.)

† Which of us does not know how hard it is to quit a bivouac before daylight!

Meyer's
Peak.

"Minor Highest
Summit." point.



Wehrli, photo.

— Ordinary route to S.E. arête. (A) Hanging glacier.
... Meyer's route.

Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.

THE EAST FACE OF THE FINSTERAARHORN,
from the Oberaar hut.

I only wish that all the valued contributions to this Journal which pass through my hands were as clear as this.

I have marked on the photograph a line of ascent which agrees with this description *and which, in one or other of its parts, is the exact line followed to-day.* The line of ascent ascribed to Meyer by Mr. G. Hasler ('Deutsche Alpenzeitung,' II. Jahrgang Heft 17, p. 119) makes Meyer gain the arête slightly higher than I do, but this route is one of the few in the Oberland that Mr. Hasler has not done, and his line has the fatal defect of not traversing any rocks, whereas rocks are specially mentioned by Meyer. In other respects Mr. Hasler's route suits my argument equally well, *but it will not fit in, as I shall show, with the theory that the guides starting from that point reached the actual summit.*

A reference to the photograph shows, descending from the S.E. arête at its N. end, i.e. nearest to the summit, a hanging glacier bounded on its left or S. edge by a broad rib or curtain of rocks set in the ice commencing almost at the bottom of the slope and reaching nearly to the crest of the arête. In the lower portion of this glacier slope just below the foot of this rib of rocks is inset the huge sérac mentioned above.

By this hanging glacier, up its centre when the snow is good, or by the rib of rocks on its S. side with occasional traverses on to the snow when the glacier is hard, the ascent is made.

Daniel Maquignaz and I, in 1903, starting from the old Oberaar Hut, walked right up to the Ober Studerjoch, until we could look down on to the Finsteraar Glacier. We retraced our steps about 100 yards and struck right up the centre of the hanging glacier which appeared to offer good going but, coming on ice, we immediately traversed close under the great sérac so as to reach the rib or narrow curtain of rocks to the S. of the hanging glacier, and by the S. side of this rib with occasional traverses on to the bounding snow slopes we reached the main S.E. arête in about two hours from the foot of the slope.

Four years later, when repeating the ascent with Mr. Herbert Reade, I did not like the look of the great sérac—we were rather later, weather having delayed our start—and so gave it a rather wide berth. And well we did, for, as my companion has vividly described (*A.J.* vol. xxiv, pp. 303-6), down it came with the most awe-inspiring thunder. We completed the ascent to the arête mainly by the N. edge of the above-mentioned rib or curtain with occasional traverses on to the snow on its N. side. We took from the Bergschrund to the arête $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours

(including some stepcutting and halts). We struck the ice arête to the S. of the little rocky peak marked 'Meyer's Peak' between *two long lengths of cornice*.

What Meyer, with practical certainty, did was to cross the Bergschrund rather on the Studerjoch side of the great sérac, then doubtless finding ice as we did he cuts some steps, ropes and then crosses diagonally under this sérac to gain the rib of rocks, keeps to this for a bit until, higher up, as the day advances and the snow gets softer, he bears away to the right up the steep snow slopes to gain the arête where I have marked. The inference, apart from Zschokke's statement, is a fair one that the arête was ice where he gained it, for rock arêtes do not carry long stretches of cornice.

The shape of this part of the mountain, dictated by natural causes, has persisted to the present day in the most remarkable manner. The great sérac which fell in 1812 might have overwhelmed two members of the Alpine Club in 1907. Meyer started up a steep snow and ice slope, as do we to-day, though its angle is no longer 'senkrecht,' but that epithet was more frequently used then than now, except by our modern Lake climbers. He alternated between rocks, snow and ice as we do, and he reached the arête close to a great length of cornice which exists to-day hanging over in the same direction to the E. as Meyer describes it. I can locate the point of Meyer's intersection of the main S.E. arête very closely. We struck the arête between two stretches of cornice; he at the upper end of the N. length, practically at 'Meyer's Peak.' The hanging glacier is the furthest to the N. of any of the slopes of snow or ice on the E. flank of the S.E. arête, and there is beyond it to the N.—i.e. nearer the summit—nothing to fit in with Meyer's description. The E. flank in that direction is a hopeless rock face, scored by shallow rock gullies, carrying little snow and forming about the worst kind of ground any climber could encounter, unsafe to climb and very exposed, and in no wise answering to Meyer's account. My 1903 party would have nothing to do with such ground. What possible object could Meyer's people have in choosing such ground, the practicability of which remains to be proved, when a good snow slope lay open to them to the arête? Moreover, there are at the point where I say Meyer gained the main S.E. arête several places on the rocks of the W. slope just below the arête where one could rest in fair comfort for some hours, as he had to do. It is scarcely likely that he sat in his icestep all that time, shelterless

on the arête. Alexander Tännler* used to be the chief practitioner on this route and, I am told, he always bore up the middle of the hanging glacier and so would reach the arête N. of our point of arrival, the same as Meyer did. About the middle of the bit of ice arête forming the upper edge of the hanging glacier there is a small rock mound or peak on the arête, which I propose to call 'Meyer's Peak.' This is very probably 'der eine Gipfel des Gebirges' to which he refers. It does overtop the Oberaarhorn. Here also is good resting ground, and since Meyer refers to his guides, when they left him, as descending on to the arête, it is extremely probable that it was very close to here that he reached the arête. From where we struck the arête it took us to Meyer's Peak, in 1907, 20 mins.

One statement of Meyer's admits of no doubt. At the point where he attained the arête there he remained.

Moreover, Meyer distinctly states that on the return of the guides they all descended *with ease down the W. face*. Now seen from Meyer's Peak and from the arête for a distance on either side of it the W. face looks quite easy and naturally invites descent. It is not steep and consists of rocks and snow slopes as described by Meyer, so that *this essential condition is also satisfied* by his having gained the arête at or about Meyer's Peak.

His narrative of the further occurrences is mainly what he understood from or what was told him by the guides on their return, so that *direct first-hand evidence, save so far as Meyer could follow the men with his eyes* (he carried usually a telescope, *vide* 'Reise auf die Eisgebirge,' p. 41), *of what took place on that part of the ascent the conquest of which is prima facie improbable is entirely absent*. The guides may have misinformed him, he may have misunderstood them, he may have wrongly reported them, or he may have jumped to conclusions.

Meyer, describing the view from the arête, says he saw through a gap in the Walliser Fiescher-hörner . . . the Rhone. But the Rhone is not seen through any gap in the range mentioned, but down the lateral valley which contains the Fiescher glacier, just below the village of Aernen. In 1907 I looked most carefully for it all day but could only see it down that valley. He says that the highest peak rose like a black rock to the N. cutting off the view. Thirty years ago in describing my

* Cf. also Dr. Coolidge's interesting note in *A.J.* xxiii. 418-421: 'The Alpine History of the Finsteraarhorn.'

first ascent ('A.J.' xi. 369) I too *say* I saw this black rock, but youthful enthusiasm imagines much, and I have never since been able to see it. There is possibly some excuse, for in 1883 the conditions were very disturbing: the arête piled with new snow, a howling W. wind, a temperature 14° F. I had at that time studied Studer's closely argued case for Meyer's guides ('Jahrbuch S.A.C.' xvii.) and doubtless got obsessed with his view. On the contrary, you see a ridge of reddish-brown rock rising gradually to a shoulder, the so-called 'minor summit' of my account. This shoulder, seen from Meyer's Peak, is apparently the actual summit.

In 1907 I looked very narrowly, with a good Zeiss glass, from Meyer's Peak at this shoulder, and the actual summit is, *I think*, visible just to the right of and partially masked by the shoulder or 'minor summit.' The highest point, if indeed seen from Meyer's Peak, is a small reddish point almost like the remaining arête, and does not look any higher than the 'minor summit' or shoulder, in fact, it is only on most narrow scrutiny and with previous knowledge that one perceives that the 'minor summit' may mask another point beyond. I well remember in 1883 as we got close under the 'minor summit,' being quite convinced that we were just attaining the final peak and being quite disappointed by the appearance of a new and higher summit; and in 1903, although I knew that the highest point was far beyond, I could hardly bring myself to realize it until we reached the 'minor summit' and saw the peak. Thus much for the view that Meyer would see.

It will be noted that Meyer states that his party took 6 hours to climb the wall to the arête, whereas the longest time taken by my party was 3½ hours. There is reason to think that Meyer's party would be slow. We have his own evidence that he was exhausted after attaining the arête, so that his powers of endurance on that day were not great. Moreover the equipment at that period would not of course be as good as now and, in addition, barometers and all sorts of impedimenta were usually carried. Still the longer time does lend some colour to the theory of his having taken a longer route, i.e. traversing diagonally from left to right, i.e. in a northerly or N.W. direction, so as to reach the arête much higher up, and this supposition, I imagine, was the justification, if indeed I did not clean jump to it, for a somewhat ingenious suggestion, which I put forward in 1883, that Meyer's party gained the arête actually at the 'minor summit.'

This suggestion was the most important contribution to the case for Meyer's guides that has been made.

The great master in Grindelwald seized immediately on the idea and holds to it with bulldog tenacity. He has often quoted it as well as the 'acute remarks' of my late friend Blezinger in the 'Zeitschrift' for 1883, pp. 507-9. I ought perhaps to say that I was alone to blame for it, and that I still possess a memorandum dated October 12, 1883, by which I finally overcame the absolute disbelief of my friend Blezinger, who was not previously acquainted with the matter at all, in such a climb having been done seventy years before. The memorandum was returned to me with his remarks written thereon.*

Writing on December 15, 1908, Dr. Coolidge says: 'I see what your theory as to the Finsteraarhorn is in Reade's paper. It is open to several *fatal* objections, so be careful before publishing it.'

* The ascent by the S.E. arête was on my 1882 programme and v. Bergen had recommended me a certain Zwald as local guide. But the charms of the Zermatt peaks detained me. Earlier that season I had met Blezinger in Tirol. He was then a man of about thirty-five, of considerable mountaineering experience, and of great personal charm. During the winter he wrote to invite me to join him in the Oberland the following summer. Of course I included in our programme, first and foremost, Meyer's 'course.' I had Peter Dangel of Sulden, a very good man, then about thirty-five. Blezinger brought Joh. Grill of Ramsau, under the Watzmann, known as Köderbacher from the name of his 'Hof,' then a man of forty-nine and one of the very best mountaineers I ever met, a mixture of determination, executive ability and sound judgment. He had got his early experience as a 'Treiber' at the royal chamois shoots—no mean school for the young climber. He first came to Switzerland when well over forty, and single-handed, with two Viennese, climbed a number of the big peaks. He has often told me in his uncouth 'Bayrisch' what risks he ran when his Herren, as they often did, 'ausgerutscht sind.' He was our leader throughout—indeed no other guide, be he ever so famous, ever disputed Köderbacher's right to command. As we passed Alpiglen on our way to traverse the Jungfrau, Köderbacher became enormously interested in the N. face of the Eiger and was with difficulty induced to give up the desire to try it. It was to satisfy his desire to do something 'wirklich schwer' that at the end of that season when Blezinger went home he led me up the great W. face of the Weisshorn. The veteran is still alive. He was a very great man on a mountain.

It will be quite understood that, with considerable trepidation, I venture to remind the great master :

1. *That the 'minor summit' has never in modern times been reached direct from the E. or Studerfirn.*

2. *That the approach to it up the E. face bears, according to my own careful observation, no resemblance whatever to the route as described by Meyer.*

The approach would, as already stated, in great part, certainly in the upper half, be up a rock face scored by shallow stone gullies carrying little snow, dangerous and difficult ground which would be chosen, *even if practicable*, by no one when the direct route to a lower point on the main arête is obviously open. I was considerably startled, at the time, to read the note in 'A.J.' xx. 142-3, wherein it was suggested that some guides in 1898 had actually reached the 'minor summit' direct, and the main object of my second visit (in 1903) was to repeat this ascent and thus to test my theory, *about which I had long become suspicious*. At the Oberaar hut, by great good luck, I met Rieder, one of the guides mentioned, a very intelligent man. At first he made the general statement that they had ascended direct from the Studerjoch. Finding, however, that I knew my subject, he got down to actual facts and pointed out their actual route, remarking 'Wir waren so lang am Grat wie an der Wand' (We were as long on the arête as on the face). *Their route as pointed out was the regular route up the rock rib S. of the hanging glacier mentioned above.**

This therefore disposed of any 'new' route. All the same, next morning we went right up to the Ober Studerjoch to make a close inspection of the direct approach to the 'minor summit,' with the result indicated above. The ground is of dangerous and negligible description.

3. *That the arête where the 1812 party struck the main S.E. arête was on Zschokke's direct statement, supported inferentially by Meyer, an ice arête, whereas the 'minor summit' is a shoulder of a rock arête continuing as such for a long way below it.*

4. *That just before the 1812 party gained the arête Meyer describes the arête for a considerable distance as carrying a great*

* Cf. also Dr. Coolidge's note, *A.J.* xxiii. 418-421, previously mentioned.

cornice. Now rock arêtes do not for considerable continuous distances carry cornices.

5. That Meyer states that the snow was so soft that the arm could be buried deep in it. But this could not be in the early morning but later, say, not earlier than 10 a.m., when the sun was making itself felt. Now to fit in with the theory that Meyer gained the 'minor summit' direct he would by that time have quitted any snow and be on rocks!

6. That Meyer distinctly states that from the point where he gained the arête they descended on the W. side without any trouble. Now no descent has ever been made on the W. side from this 'minor summit' direct.

It was gained direct by Dr. Thomas in 1909 ('A.J.' xxv. 171) and again by Mr. Millington in 1911 ('A.J.' xxvi. 88). They took respectively about $2\frac{3}{4}$ hours and 2 hours 55 mins. for the actual ascent from the foot of the buttress to the 'minor summit,' and in no single particular do their accounts tally with Meyer's statement that the going was easy.

Thus there is the *single point* of the long time taken by Meyer's party, for which I have offered a reasonable explanation, which possibly favours his having gained a point on the arête higher than Meyer's Peak, and *there are the strongest objections* to the theory of his having gained the 'minor summit' direct.

It may be argued—I will give my critics every possible weapon—that Meyer gained direct a point on the arête much higher than Meyer's Peak, if not indeed the 'minor summit.'

Most of my objections would equally apply to that theory, and moreover, as the guides *descended* on to the arête after leaving Meyer, no point between Meyer's Peak and the 'minor summit' would well answer to this condition.

To clear up this and some other points, Mr. Fynn and I on August 2 of this year, starting from the Finsteraarhorn hut, ascended the W. flank of the S.E. arête and thus attained, mainly up hard snow with some step-cutting, its crest a short distance to the N. of Meyer's Peak. A good aneroid, set at the hut, indicated 12,950 ft. = 3,948 m. We estimated the height of Meyer's Peak at about 12,800 ft. = 3,903 m. We spent about 2 hours ascending the actual W. flank from the glacier and made the descent in 45 minutes. The ground more to our right and directly below Meyer's Peak is of similar description, snow slopes mixed with rock outcrops. While seen from the E. Meyer's Peak stands out prominently on the arête, as shown in the photograph, its position seen from

the W. is not so clear, as the W. face is scored with many rock ribs, which reach to the arête, forming small rocky protuberances.

We were able to establish the points :

1. That the descent by the W. face from at or about Meyer's Peak to the Glacier at the foot is easy and quick, as described by Meyer.

2. That at a short distance above Meyer's Peak, the glimpse of the Rhone, seen down the Viescher Glacier Valley, is lost. It follows therefore that it must have been very near Meyer's Peak that the arête was gained by him.

Unless it can be shown that Meyer did reach direct the 'minor summit' or a point very close to it, the case for the guides having reached the actual summit collapses, as I will proceed to show.

I will base my case mainly on the clock, which admits of scant appeal. Meyer's guides left him at 1 P.M. at earliest (paragraph 7). They are stated to have gained the summit at 4 P.M. (paragraph 12), i.e. in 3 hours.

Now in 1903 Daniel Maquignaz and I, then a fast party, in fair conditions, knowing the route, took 3 hours 7 mins. actual walking from rather lower down than Meyer's Peak to the summit.

In 1907 Reade and I took 4 hours actual walking for the same bit. We were somewhat hampered by snow in the gaps between the gendarmes.

Claude Macdonald in 1905 took 3 hours 55 mins. : 'snow good but the rocks bad and a good deal glazed.'—'A.J.' xxiii. 339.

Fynn's party in 1907 took 3 hours 15 mins. actual walking for the same : 'Weather cool and perfect, snow in best condition, rocks free of ice and loose snow except about the fixed rope in the gully where there was a little ice and snow. We kept pretty clear of it by keeping well on the left (looking up). No attempt was made to create a record of any sort. Bergschrund was nicely bridged and the step cutting was all in hard snow with the exception of a short traverse into the rocks, when a dozen steps might have been cut in ice.'

Now we know that in 1812 the conditions cannot have been good. Meyer had spent July 27 at his bivouac on the Genslücke in a snowstorm which buried his shelter under 18 inches of snow. Next day the deep snow caused them trouble in reaching the Grimsel. Up to August 14 the weather was generally so bad that they had to wait at the Grimsel. It

even snowed while harvest was being got in. When they got back to their bivouac on the Gemslücke on August 15, they found all their belongings frozen together in a lump of ice. Were these conditions likely to ensure the condition of the S.E. arête being such that these three men make record time over absolutely new and, for the then standard of climbing, very difficult, and, even as measured to-day, when in bad condition, by no means easy ground? * Such a thing is out of the question.

As to what the men may have told Meyer on their return I pay little attention. Which of us has not had a very great deal to say after doing a great ascent and which of us has not had to listen to even greater 'Heldenthaten'? It is only the very calm and experienced mountaineer who really knows where he has actually been and what he has actually done and seen! What Meyer records of their sayings is up to a point just what they might be expected to have said. 'The ice covered the naked rock. At last Abbühl screws up his courage and leads up the last bit and pulls the others up. The summit is sharp as an edge all over ice with a great cornice.' These are all generalities that might apply to any mountain. But surely Meyer overdoes it somewhat when he puts into the mouths of a couple of cowherds and the 'Knecht' of the Grimsel the somewhat poetical description of the view. *Surely this is what he expected them to see* but it is about the last thing they would dream of describing. Moreover in point of observational powers, notwithstanding the bitter cold and the storm which nearly carried them off their feet, they exceed Tyndall and others who have described the view from the summit. So far as I can trace none of these mention the Lake of Thun which the guides make 'gleam in sunshine out of the depths' although Tyndall's and Hardy's descriptions (in splendid weather—*P. P. G.* 1859) of the view are very detailed. If Meyer's men really had seen the Lake of Thun, which can only be seen from the actual top, I wonder at their not telling Meyer that *all they saw of it was a little corner over the shoulder of the Eiger*, for all the rest is completely hidden. If they did not, it tells against their having seen it at all. The Lake of Thun actually makes so small an impression that my companion failed to notice it till I pointed it out.

I cannot attach any importance to the description of the

* Note their three hours included halts and some considerable hesitation!

view as put into their mouths by Meyer or admit for one moment that it proves that they reached the actual summit—when every other circumstance goes to show that they cannot have so done. Meyer would be more than human did he not allow himself a little innocent writing up of what he felt assured would be visible from the summit. Then again it is 4.30 P.M. before they start on their return. If they did reach the actual summit then they have to return over ground which took them three hours to ascend and *which is so uninviting that up to this date so far as I know only one party has cared to descend by that way** and they, Mr. Hasler and Jossi, a well-trained party, took from the summit to a point on the arête, quite a long way, say $\frac{1}{2}$ hour, above Meyer's Peak, 1 hour 35 min., equal to about 2 hours from the summit to Meyer's Peak.

Are Meyer's people likely to have been anything like as fast as such a unique party? If not then they can only have reached their employer after seven. He must have been pretty tired of his six hours' wait and somewhat cold! It would be dark before eight, and yet Meyer says they got back to their bivouac, down the W. face and up over the Gemslücke by dark.

The whole thing is incredible. What happened is really this. Meyer remained behind somewhere near Meyer's Peak. His three men went on as far as the 'minor summit.' This is quite a respectable climb—there are quite a lot of gendarmes—and the time 3 hours is fair time. Until they reached this 'minor summit' they would most certainly take it, as we did in 1883, for the actual summit and be somewhat disgusted to see the reddish-brown ridge continue farther. Moreover Meyer from his resting place could see them plainly on the 'minor summit.' They had done probably the hardest climb of their lives. It had taken them 3 hours. It took Maquignaz and myself over 2 hours. It was 4 P.M. Why should these men be expected to pay such pedantic attention to the 'actual top' as we do nowadays? Their wages were 25 centimes per day. Surely they had done enough. The cold was severe, the wind very strong. Every sentiment of prudence and self-interest urged them to risk no more and to

* We had the half intention, on my 1907 expedition, of descending by the same way, but the intention oozed out by the time we reached the top! I hear since writing this article that Mr. Hasler, some time ago, made a second descent, this time with the guide Heinrich Fuhrer and a lady.

hurry back to their employer, waiting below, so as to regain camp before nightfall.

How easy it is to reconstruct the scene! The three men excited, tired, ill-clad, cold, wondering how they were going to get down the steep avalanchy snow up which they had come in the morning, and with the long jagged ridge ahead that leads to the actual top.

It is not hard to picture prudence easily overcoming foolhardiness. What could it matter to the young man who was so stupid as to prefer a cold bivouac to the comfort of a decent home whether they went on to the farther point even if they could get there! Have we not all heard in our experience many similar arguments for turning back? Why expect so much more from these men one hundred years ago, when these fine distinctions were undreamt of?

Little did Abbühl and his companions dream of the long drawn out controversy which the decision of their little *conseil de guerre* would involve!

They proceeded to fix the flag in full view of the waiting Meyer and then they hurried down, say, in $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. That would be 6 P.M. They might just get back to camp by dark.

It is all clear as daylight. If Meyer saw them on what looks for all the world like the top,* *he may never even have asked them the question* whether there was a higher point beyond. He would naturally, as a youth will, ply them with the kind of question which amounts to a suggestion as to what he expected they had seen and done, and they, naturally enough, excited and anxious to get on, would acquiesce in all his suppositions.

Doubtless on the way back to camp Meyer would cast many a glance up at the great peak, but from the site of the present Finsteraarhorn hut and between it and the W. face of the S.E. arête, where they would pass, *the true top looks no higher but rather lower than the 'minor summit.'* Thus the party returning to the Gemslücke would not see that they had not reached the true top.

It is not until the more sceptical and experienced Hugi comes along, years later, that Abbühl calls once more to mind that jagged arête and farther half-forgotten higher point, the way to which looked so uninviting, and finally, under the

* Zschokke distinctly says Meyer did, based possibly on a conversation with Meyer or Huber. Further, Meyer's own description of what the men did on the summit reads much more like personal observation than mere hearsay.

cross-questions, answers the invitation to repeat the ascent by the statement *that he had never reached the actual top*. Was he not human even as we are?

One may reasonably conclude that Abbühl had equally failed to convince the other guides. Hugi's guides in the 1828 attempt, when the party got within 200 feet of the top, being only turned back by the breaking of a cornice by which Hugi and a guide nearly perished, and by the intense cold and a furious wind, were Jakob Leuthold, then 22, another Leuthold, probably his father, Lauener, Moor, Arnold Dändler, and one unnamed, possibly Währen, besides Abbühl himself.

Now some of these were Abbühl's fellow servants of the Grimselwirth and must have known him well. The Leutholds and he lived at the same village.

Although Abbühl failed to point out his exact line of descent from the arête, there were among the others, as they showed later in the day, and again the next year, men quite capable of selecting the rather obvious route. When we find them, however, abstain from this, and make a considerably longer journey to seek a problematical new route, it would seem that their belief in their comrade was not great. The rage for new routes was not yet. Their record as given by Hugi is that of keen enterprising mountaineers, not likely to be deterred by tales of mere difficulty. This tacit testimony is very suggestive, much more so even than Hugi's statement.

I accuse the men of no actual deception.* They acted well within the mountaineering canons of their day. They need not indeed have had to tell the youthful and imaginative Meyer very much. He may easily from what he saw have jumped to his conclusions.

However much my conclusions tell against the hitherto accepted version of what Meyer's guides actually carried out, no man is more impressed than I, who thrice have followed their steps, by the brilliance of the courage and ability exhibited at a period when mountaineering was attended with an inconvenience, a hardship and an exposure to which we moderns are utter strangers.

The names of Arnold von Melchthal, 'ein Knecht des

* It is not very reassuring to note that not only the 1812 expedition but also that of 1829 was disbelieved. It was apparently not the custom of the people of the country to accept unsupported claims on trust, which would seem to indicate a not too high standard of veracity.

Grimselwirths,' Alois Volker, Joseph Bortes, Caspar Huber 'Alphirten und Gemsjäger,' deserve to be remembered and held in the highest honour. They are worthy progenitors of the great school of guides of the Hasle Valley which for many years was almost unrivalled, and of that later school of guides of the Valais, among whom are to-day some of the ablest exponents of their craft.

I have already suggested that the three men may have attached scant importance to reaching the actual top, or at any rate may have failed to appreciate any great difference. Which of us has not been asked by some fair neighbour at *table d'hôte* 'Have you ever been up the Matterhorn?' and, after replying in the affirmative, another question, 'What, right to the top?'

Readers of the ALPINE JOURNAL (xi. 249) will remember the Disgrazia incident. 'In course of conversation he gave us the somewhat startling information that three years ago a body of about 200 soldiers had visited the Alp and while there had made the ascent of the Disgrazia. . . . We . . . eventually elicited from him that none of the soldiers had got to the top but that some had got as far as the glacier.'

Even Hugi ('Alpenreise' Index, page xiii.) used the words 'Ersteigung des Hornes' in describing an unsuccessful attempt. When his guides finally attain the summit he writes: 'Ersteigung des Hornes, der höchsten Spitze.'

Similar incidents could be easily matched in Alpine history to show that, if the three men did consider they had as good as completed the ascent, they were acting up to—indeed exceeding—the canons of their time.

Surely it cannot be demanded of them that they should for one instant foresee the minute criticism to which even the smallest Alpine subject is now subject, and shape their action accordingly.

I fully acquit them of any deliberate intention to deceive. I have already shown that in respect of a portion of their reported statements Meyer may certainly have written them up freely, and I have suggested the possibility that he never thought to ask them whether there was a still higher point beyond.*

If the three men did reach the actual summit in 1812, then I can only say that in my opinion their rock-climbing powers

* The Rev. J. F. Hardy's experience of Oberländers must have been unfortunate. I trust that I have produced better reasons than his suggestion. *P. P. G.* 1859, p. 301.

were not surpassed until Carrel conquered the Italian side of the Matterhorn in 1865.

There is at least one place on the route as sensational as the 'Enjambée' which turned Bennen back on his attempt on that side of the Matterhorn. Now Tyndall—no bad judge—considered Bennen a very good man.

Men of admitted experience and judgment of difficulties like Daniel Maquignaz, V. A. Fynn, Herbert Reade, Geoffrey Young, consider it extremely improbable that such a climb was carried through at that period.*

It will be remembered, moreover, that attempts to repeat the ascent in 1865 and 1870 failed.

What does Cordier, who in 1876 was the first, led by Jakob Anderegg, to repeat the climb, say? An imaginative youth like Meyer but quite experienced in difficult work, he writes of the last part of the arête between the 'minor summit' and the top: 'Cette dernière heure a été pour moi la plus émouvante que j'ai passée jamais dans les Alpes.'

I have not been able to ascertain the opinion of Mr. Seymour Hoare, who, led by v. Bergen, was the first to follow Cordier.

Köderbacher is reported to have called the last part 'eine seiner exponiertesten wenn nicht die schlimmste seiner Klettereien gewesen;' but then in his expedition, as I have mentioned, the conditions were the very worst.

We know † that three of Meyer's men were chamois hunters and all were, or doubtless had been, Hirten or goatherds. But at that date chamois were more plentiful and a hunter needed, in view of the short range of firearms, to be rather a very careful stalker than a desperate cragsman. Certainly there is no training like that of a goatherd to make a keen lad into a good cragsman. The actual leader was Abbühl—'Knecht des Grimselwirths'—and we know that many similar 'Knechte,' to wit Bennen and Melchior Anderegg, became great guides. Far be it from me to detract from the climbing abilities of Meyer's men. I have endeavoured to show that their actual performance is still, and was even more in that day, highly respectable.

Turning now to Meyer's own part in recording the expedition, his own account as published in 'Alpenrosen,' 1852, is, in my opinion, one of the most brilliant Alpine literary gems that I have ever read. No doubt the equipment and organization

* Cf. Dr. Coolidge, *A. J.* vol. xxiii. p. 420.

† See Meyer's words of warm appreciation, *Alpenrosen*, p. 11.

Meyer's
Peak.

"Minor Highest
Summit." point.



W F Donkin, photo.

THE EAST FACE OF THE FINSTERAARHORN,
from the Abschwung.

Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.

of the Meyers' expeditions was due to the older Meyers, father and uncle of our man. But young Meyer in his descriptions approaches very nearly to our modern ideas. It is to be regretted that his Alpine career seems to have ended with his campaign of 1812.

It has often seemed to me that the craft of mountaineering, and even more the art of mountaineering description, distinctly retrograded for over 50 years after these great expeditions of the Meyers. It is not until the early sixties that rocks of equal difficulty are again attacked. Even then—witness Almer's opinion as to the inaccessibility of the Matterhorn—men had not yet learned the axiom, which Alexander Burgener was the first, certainly by practice rather than by explicit enunciation, to lay down, viz. that the practicability of rocks is only decided by actual contact. Meyer's guides had a glimmering of this.

It is again not until the sixties that Meyer's calm yet vivid descriptions of actualities are surpassed by those brilliant articles of Stephen, of Moore, of Tuckett, and by Whymper's great 'Scrambles,' that are the glory of this Journal and of English mountaineering.

There is one further important point to deal with.

The 'Alpenrosen,' 1852, pp. 33 *seq.*, contains an account by Meyer of his passage on September 3, 1812, with his same two men, Huber and Abbühl, of the Strahlegg from the Grimsel to Grindelwald. This was the first authentic passage of this Pass, which again testifies to the capacity of his two guides.

This is what Meyer says (translated): 'After five long hours we reached at last the foot of the Finsteraarhorn . . . when we followed with our eyes the way which we had ventured on the ascent of its summit; *through a telescope we saw our flag-staff on the highest point.*'

The accompanying Donkin photograph, taken from Meyer's probable standpoint near the Abschwung, shows the highest point and the 'minor summit.' It incidentally also shows the face of the 'minor summit' which Meyer would have had to climb to gain that point direct.

I do not profess to explain this positive statement except on the general ground that one often thinks one sees what one expects to see,* or on the particular ground that Meyer

* Our column was on the march in the Orange Free State during the war when the officer commanding the screen sent back word
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may have concluded or have been assured that the 'minor summit' lying farther back was really the highest point. It must be remembered that his own experience of mountaineering was exceedingly small, and that he was certainly obsessed with the idea that the highest point had been gained.

At the same time it is a very definite statement, but I do not think it can be allowed to outweigh the many points, not depending on any personal factor, that go to show the extreme improbability of the case for the guides.

The first *complete* ascent of the Finsteraarhorn was, in my judgment, after attaining the Hugi'sattel in 1828, made on August 10, 1829, by Hugi's two guides Jakob Leuthold and Joh. Währen by the now ordinary route by the W. flank and the N.W. arête. Hugi himself remained behind, with his remaining men, about 200 ft. below the summit within perfect earshot and apparently in full view of the men on the summit.

The two men spent three hours on the summit building a great stone pyramid 7 ft. high in which was planted a pole as thick as one's arm and 7 ft. long which projected 2 to 3 ft. out of the pyramid.

This pyramid is stated to have been seen through a Frauenhofer telescope from Solothurn by several observers.

Hugi makes no mention whatever of his men having remarked any signs of any previous ascent. We are bound to conclude that, in view of his knowledge of the claim of an earlier ascent, he would certainly ask his people for information on the point. There appears to be no reason to doubt his good faith in the matter. (Cf. 'Alpenreise,' pp. 207-210).

It is interesting to get a sidelight on what was considered in 1829 to be difficult: 'When Leuthold and Währen got back to us they were pale as death. Even their voices and their whole outward appearance were altered. Leuthold declared afterwards often that for no price would he in such a deep state of the *névé* repeat the ascent' (*ibid.* 209).

This Jakob Leuthold, whose portrait from a sketch made by M. Burkhardt in 1842 for Desor's 'Séjours' forms the

that a party of Boers was advancing in *column of squadron*. The column halted whilst two of us rode out to reconnoitre. The position of the enemy was pointed out to us, but we could find no trace of any enemy and nothing except some fields of waving mealies! Which of us cannot multiply similar cases!

frontispiece to this article,* deserves more than a passing mention. Born in 1806, the son of a former intendant † of the Grimsel and brother-in-law of a later intendant, the well-known Zybach, in whose service he stood, he became at an early age the recognised leader among the Hasle men for any serious mountain expedition.

Accordingly in 1828 and 1829, he was Hugi's chief guide, and with his comrade Hans Währen reached in the latter year the summit of the Finsteraarhorn. Hugi's pages contain very warmly appreciative references to his skill and daring. On one occasion his watchfulness and instant intervention saved Hugi from a very serious accident, and on another occasion when Hugi sprained his ankle, Leuthold and Währen alternately carried him down bodily during the night. The relations between the somewhat exacting Hugi and his guide were evidently of the very best.

When Agassiz, Desor and their party paid in 1840 the first of their classic visits to the Grimsel, Leuthold and his comrade Währen were at once engaged as leaders. Desor's pages abound with constant references to the ability and fine traits of Leuthold, who is certainly entitled to recognition as an able, intrepid and very intelligent guide.

Besides his ascent of the Finsteraarhorn referred to above, he was the leader on the first ascent of the Lauteraarhorn in 1842, and on an early crossing of the Strahlegg. He died of pneumonia at the early age of thirty-seven.

Währen, the other guide, was Leuthold's lieutenant, a stonemason by trade, and reputed the strongest man in the Oberland. He was also one of Zybach's best men, and Desor tells an interesting story of his great keenness and insistence on accompanying the party, of whom, by the way, Forbes was one, notwithstanding violent inflammation of the knee. After Leuthold's death, Währen appears to have succeeded him as leading guide to Desor's party.

* The date under the portrait of Jakob Leuthold should be 1829. The attempt in 1828 was unsuccessful.

† The intendant was nominated by the communes of the Hasle Valley under the control of the Bernese Government, and was one of 'les puissans et les habiles de la vallée.' Zybach is described by Desor as 'un bon gros papa en habit de milaine jaune . . . et qui sous des dehors très simples cache un esprit adroit et observateur. Töpffer's references to him will also be remembered. He was evidently a man of considerable character and a great friend to the early mountaineers and investigators.

It is well to recall the memory of these worthy pioneers of our great pursuit, and I hope that abler hands than mine will one day extend our knowledge of their lives and doings.

The mountain then remained undisturbed until August 16, 1842, when Joh. Jaun—a good Hasle name—and Heinrich Lorentz,* the guides of Herr J. Sulger, attained the summit by Leuthold's route. Dr. Coolidge has placed me under a further obligation by pointing out to me that Jaun's own account of this expedition appears in 'Matériaux pour l'Etude des Glaciers par Dollfus-Ausset,' Strasbourg, 1864, Tome v., Ire Partie, and he has since published in 'A.J.' vol. xxv. pp. 186-7 an interesting note on the subject.

Jaun and Lorentz reached the summit (p. 361) at 11.30 A.M. and 'fanden dort einige kleine Eisenstäbe und ein Knäuel Faden und Nadeln welche Jacob Leuthold und Hans Währen vor einigen Jahren dort zurückgelassen hatten. Wir machten eine kleine Pyramide' ('found there a few little iron rods and a ball of thread and needles which Jacob Leuthold and Hans Währen had left behind there a few years before. We built a little pyramid').

On page 362 Jaun † mentions his ascent with Herr Sulger, Lorentz, and Andreas Abplanalp aus Hasle-Grund, and says 'trafen unsere Fahne noch an. Wir vergrösserten die Pyramide, &c.' ('We found our flag still there. We enlarged the pyramid.')

* *Bernese Oberland*, vol. ii., 1904, and *A.J.* vol. xxv. p. 187, say Jaun and Andreas Abplanalp, but according to Jaun his companions on this expedition were Heinrich Lorentz aus Wasen and Melchior Bircher von Guttanen 'Knecht von der Grimsel.' Sulger went back with Bircher and the two others completed the ascent ('Matériaux,' Tome 5, p. 361). Studer in his *Panorama von Bern* (1850) says: 'nur von zwei Führern begleitet,' but gives no names. But Jaun must be held to have known his companions.

† This Jaun was born in Meyringen in 1806 and died in 1860. He was a wood-carver in winter, chamois hunter in spring and autumn, and guide in summer. He led Agassiz up the Jungfrau in 1841 and repeated the ascent in 1842. He was apparently one of Mr. Hardy's guides in ascending the Finsteraarhorn in 1857. He travelled with Dollfus in the Pyrenees, the Sierra Nevada, the Sierra Morena and the Vosges, and vol. 6 of the above work contains many notes by Jaun indicating high intelligence. See also Dr. Coolidge's note, *A. J.* vol. xxv. pp. 186-7; but Jaun's own article in the 'Matériaux,' 'Ascensions courses et séjours dans les hautes régions par le guide Hans Jaun, 1841 à 1860,' is most instructive.

We have also Herr Sulger's own detailed account, reprinted in the 'Jahresbericht' for 1908 of the Basel Section of the S.A.C., of his successful ascent* on September 6, 1842. He says: 'Resten einer Pyramide die seiner Zeit von den zwei Führern Leuthold und Währen aufgerichtet wurde fanden wir nicht, wohl aber drei dünne eiserne Stäbchen durchaus ohne Rost und etwas aufgewickelten Faden mit einer darin fest eingerosteten Nadel, was nun nicht mehr an der glücklichen Besteigung dieses Kolosses durch genannte Männer zweifeln liess.' ('We found no remains of a pyramid erected at the time by the two guides Leuthold and Währen, but three thin little iron rods, entirely free of rust, and some rolled up thread and a needle fast rusted therein, which thus left no doubt of the successful ascent of this colossus by the men named.')

While therefore Hugi's guides in 1829 are not reported to have made any mention of signs of any previous ascent, Sulger's guides in 1842 do report the signs of an earlier ascent, which they ascribe to the 1829 expedition and with justice, since a ball of thread and a needle would certainly not have lasted for thirty years. We know moreover that Jaun was a colleague and friend of Leuthold, who very probably had mentioned his forgotten needle and thread as guides will. (Desor, 'Excursions et séjours dans les Glaciers,' p. 359).

It is peculiar to note the doubt that apparently existed even of the 1829 expedition; little wonder that the far more serious expedition of the 1812 party was totally unaccepted.

Of course no absolute proof for or against the completion of the ascent in 1812 can ever be forthcoming. I am quite content to leave the matter now. I should not indeed have taken it up but for an ever-growing consciousness that my contribution of thirty years ago to the subject was an unjustifiable assumption. If I have thrown some further light on an Alpine problem of the greatest interest, and particularly if I have succeeded in making my friends, the great master in Grindelwald, the originator of minute critical discussion on Alpine subjects, and that other great authority Dr. Dübi, even reconsider their strongly held opinions, I am more than repaid.

* Strange to say, Sulger never refers to Jaun's ascent in August; in fact, one would conclude that his own ascent was the first since Leuthold's. Sulger survived his expedition nearly seventy years and died lately in Bâle.

NOTE.—After reading Captain Farrar's article very carefully, in the light of my own experiences with him on the Finsteraarhorn in 1907, I find myself in entire agreement with his conclusions. The following points seem to me established beyond doubt :

(1) Meyer's party ascended the E. flank of the S.E. arête by what is practically the route taken now, and reached it at what Captain Farrar has called 'Meyer's Peak.' To diverge to the right in order to strike the arête higher up would be sheer lunacy.

(2) From this point the 'minor peak' would be taken by anybody for the actual summit. I may add that there are many view-points on the S.W. of the mountain from which this peak looks as high as, if not higher than, the summit.

(3) If Meyer saw his guides hoisting a flag, it must have been on the minor peak.

(4) The guides cannot possibly have reached the true summit and returned in the time recorded, which is confirmed by the fact that the party descended the W. face and returned over the Gemslücke to their bivouac before dark.

Perhaps I may be pardoned for adding that, in my opinion, no one who has not actually done the climb in question is quite in a position to judge of the evidence.

H. V. READE.

THE FIRST ASCENT OF MT. SIR SANDFORD, THE
LOFTIEST SUMMIT OF THE SELKIRKS.

BY HOWARD PALMER

(Secretary of the American Alpine Club).

BESIDES the proud honour of being the monarch of all the Selkirks, Mt. Sir Sandford possesses three other claims to distinction among the prominent peaks of Canada. First the fact that directly or indirectly it has repelled more assaults by aspiring climbers than any other mountain in the Canadian Alps, no less than nine separate parties having retired discomfited from before it. Second, the circumstance that of all the known peaks of similar rank within these bounds, Mt. Sir Sandford alone compels its assailants to transport their equipment on human shoulders for the better part of a week as a preliminary to the attack proper, and to rely for their support during its