precautions as to time and weather I can see nothing on either side of it to make it more dangerous than other expeditions, which have long been looked upon with general approval. From our crossing of the bergschrund to the beginning of our descent, 5½ hours in all, we were in or close to the couloir on the Italian side, and during that time we neither saw nor heard anything go down it, with the exception of one small stone, which fell from immediately below us and had probably been dislodged by our passage over it.

Let nothing which I have said be interpreted as an assertion that this couloir is a healthy place in which to spend an afternoon. It must be remembered that we were safe on the top of the rock rib close under the col before 8 o'clock in the morning. Up to that time no part of the couloir had been touched by the sun. Mr. Middlemore, on his much criticised first crossing, unaided as his followers have been by crampons and a comfortable hut more than 9000 ft. above the sea, reached the same point at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

Successes and Failures in 1920.

By NOEL E. ODELL.

(Read before the Alpine Club, December 6, 1920.)

WE were greeted on our arrival at Argentière, on July 3, by torrents of rain, and every feature down to about 6000 ft. was enshrouded in cloud. This was at once attributed to the advent of that member of the party—a meteorologist, by the way—who has the reputation of bringing bad weather wherever he goes, at least in British mountains: it looked as if the extent of his evil influence was wider even than he had supposed! However, the optimists of the party triumphed, and by evening three happy individuals were to be seen visiting the snout of the Argentière Glacier, and even literally tasting glacier-ice once more after so many years' absence from its spell!

The day after arrival some of us walked down to Les Bossons by way of training, and endeavoured, with partial success only, to procure crampons from Simonds' 'Fabrique.' (In passing, it may be mentioned that Simond Frères turn out an ice-axe with wonderful balance and for real use.) We

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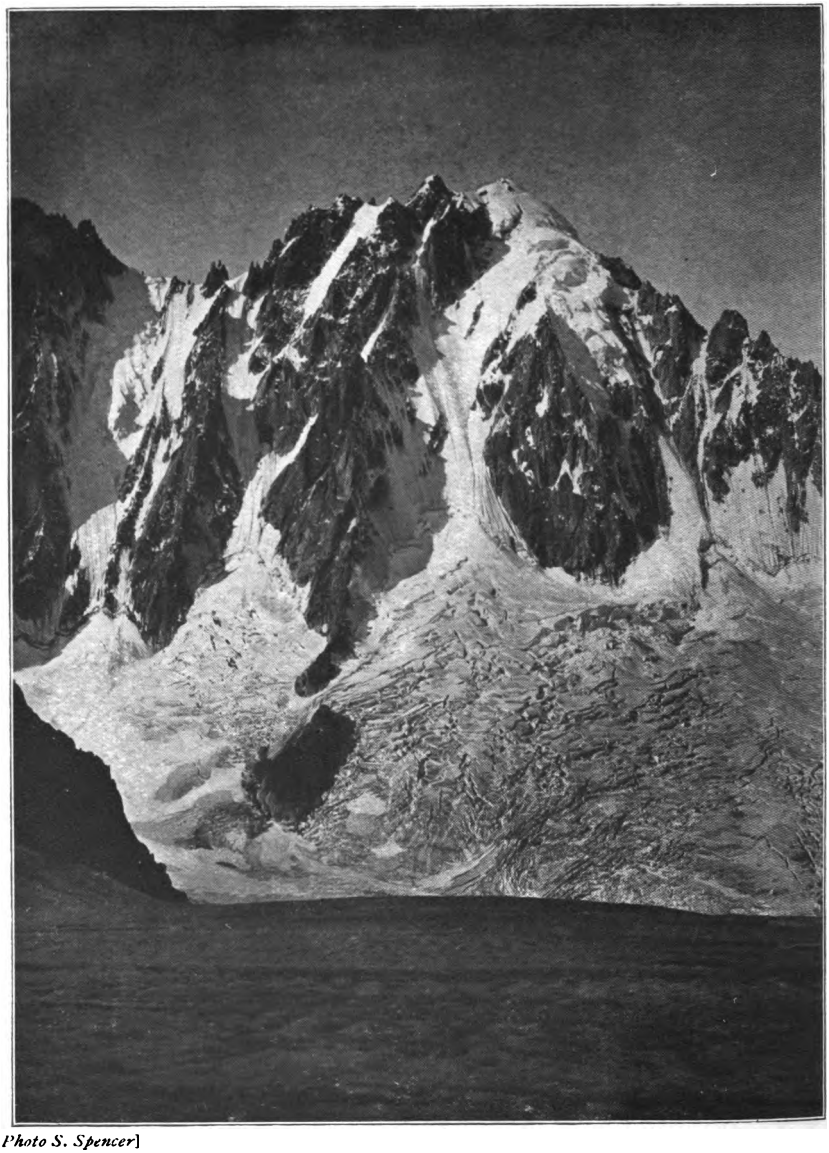

Photo S. Spencer]

AIGUILLE VERTE

FROM COL DU CHARDONNET

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returned to Argentière by way of the Montanvert and the Mer de Glace.

The following day there seemed to be a general restlessness to be off and doing something serious. Consequently Frazer, Siobart, and I left Argentière in the afternoon, and toiled up the track to the Lognan, adding to our already sufficiently loaded rucksacks what firewood for the hut we could collect in the woods. The Lognan inn proved, as it ever did on later expeditions, a most demoralising flesh-pot to climbers bound for the Jardin hut, although the opinion was always stoutly advanced that indulgence here saved consumption of supplies at the hut! Anyhow, whether or not this was the cause of it, the party undoubtedly took its time on the long walk up the glacier to the Jardin. And well it might, for what lovelier place is there than the Argentière Glacier when the evening sun strikes up that long vista towards the Col Dolent with its array of steep icy precipices on either hand. Before leaving England Captain Farrar had told me about his attempt on the Aiguille Verte from the N.E. by an arête running steeply up from the Argentière Glacier. This attempt he made on August 21, 1898, with the guides Daniel Maquignaz and Kederbacher. They got about half-way or so up the ridge when the difficulties and the approach of night obliged them to turn back. I wish Captain Farrar could have been here to-night to tell us all about this expedition.

We identified this ridge running up from the huge rognon in the glacier. It seemed in its lower part to offer wonderful stretches of clean rock ridge, and higher up all the uncertainty and complexity of character and structure that go to form a really first-class climb. But in our untrained condition it seemed folly to entertain any idea of tackling such a proposition. The hut had been occupied by a party a month previously, who according to the book had made the first ascent of the season of the Aiguille d'Argentière. This had been our intention, as a very good training climb. But whether from the invigorating effects of hot soup and tea, or from the spell induced by that marvellous scene from the door of the hut—the unsubstantial forms of the Verte, Les Droites, and Les Courtes bathed in moonlight—the extremists of the party had the audacity to suggest that the aforementioned ridge of the Verte looked too enticing to be neglected on the morrow, and that at least an attempt might be made upon it! The night was cold and the weather most promising. There was the chance of a new route completed and a first ascent of

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the Verte for the year. We would go prepared for a night out.

We were off at 3.45 A.M., and soon sped across the glacier to the rognon at the foot of our ridge. By 4.30 we had skirted the rather crevassed portion of glacier on the S. side of the rognon, and were starting up the ridge. Almost from the very outset the climbing was severe—that is to say, severe as adjudged by British rock-climbing standards. The first big gendarme looked impossible to take direct, so after traversing round on to the right side of it in hopes of easier ground, a way was found up its steep N. face. The rock-structure was of that uncompromising holdless character, with joints or ledges about 20 ft. apart, and formed angular recesses just too wide open to climb effectually by 'bridging.' I could only get up one or two places by jamming my axe and then practically swarming up it. A second breakfast at 7.10 gave renewed vigour for the struggle—a struggle with some of the hardest rocks within my experience. As we got higher we were confronted with snow treacherously plastered on to the rock slabs. One had to cut a step and then very gingerly climb into it for fear of its breaking through into the next one below. At some places it was necessary to clear long stretches of snow from the rock, and at others to deal with verglas, or cut steps in a sub-layer of ice stuck on to the rock. After several hours of strenuous work of this nature we reached at 1 P.M. a dos d'âne of rock running up from a gap in the ridge. Captain Farrar had told me that the highest point reached by his party was a small gap in the ridge with a sensational dos d'âne above it, and that they had piled some stones together in the rocky cup of the gap. Well, the stones, if there, were deeply submerged in snow, but we concluded we had reached his highest point.

The dos d'âne was surmounted after much struggling and anxious inquiries, meanwhile, from those below. The top of it landed one on a gallery on the great N. wall of the ridge, and a more stimulating situation it would be hard to find. To gain the arête again from here was the next problem, and while the second man jammed himself for a belay in a horrid wet crack at the back of the ledge, the leader negotiated what was considered one of the hardest pitches of the climb, that is, a slab at a high angle with a 6-in. coating of snow. But the dos d'âne already passed was a small affair compared with another higher up. Here one straddled a painfully sharp steep knife-edge at a considerable angle for 80 or 90 ft. with a

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most profound drop down to the ice-slopes descending from the ridge of the Grande Rocheuse.

Meanwhile, clouds had been gathering around the summit above us, and we had been too occupied to notice occasional falling snow-flakes. At 4 P.M. it was put to the party that we must either turn back at once or find a place where we were, or higher up, for the night, and try to reach the summit the next day. In view of the bad weather prospects it was regretfully decided to retreat. We had reached an altitude of about 12,000 ft., and not much more than half the total length of the ridge, as far as we could judge, and there seemed to be a good many hours of hard climbing ahead up to the summit. After descending nearly as far as the first dos d'âne we thought it looked possible to get off the ridge on the S. side if the final cliff above the bergschrund were negotiable. We scrambled down a fairly easy gully, and after searching in many directions found we were quite cut off by a sheer 300-ft. wall and an impossible looking bergschrund. So the only thing to be done was to climb up again to the arête and descend by way of all the difficulties of the morning. One abortive attempt was made to get down the steep *northern* slopes to the glacier, and then darkness overtook us and we had speedily to find a place whereon to spend the night. All that there was available for a perch on this steep N. face of the ridge was a split block sticking out of the ice-slope, and in the crevice of this block, scarcely more than 2 ft. wide and 3 ft. long and open at the ends, we huddled together for the night. Although it snowed on us most of the night, and we were at an altitude of about 11,000 ft., yet by dint of singing loud and long, the programme extending through Stobart's almost inexhaustible répertoire to any and every hymn we could think of, we were enabled in some small degree to ward off shivering—at any rate that of the audible variety—and keep ourselves more or less awake. Vivid lightning to the N. and E. and ominous rumblings of thunder gave lively imaginings of excitement to come in our exposed position. At 3 A.M. we carefully and painfully straightened ourselves out from the cramped position of the night, and no cases of frost-bite were reported. On the first gleam of light at 4 o'clock we saw that our difficult work of yesterday was rendered more difficult for the descent by the fresh coating of snow on everything. All the cramp and chill of the night were soon forgotten on the first stretch of extremely delicate work down smooth rock alternating with ice—the

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whole freshly covered in snow. At 7 A.M. we reached a sufficiently commodious ledge, and we were right thankful to be able to relax tension and eat the remains of a lingering supply of food. From here we could see a likely bridge over the bergschrund below, and accordingly we cut straight down to it to avoid the difficult work of the previous day on the N. side of the first towers. By 9.30 we were across the bergschrund, and not a little thankful to terminate for the time being our visit to the N.E. face of the Verte after thirty hours on it. Lognan was reached at 11.30, and not long after Argentière, where the rest of our party were anxiously awaiting us, having expected us back not later than dinner-time the previous evening.

Captain Farrar has lent me a copy of an extract from the *Bollettino* of the Italian Alpine Club, published in 1905. It contains a description by the Signori Gugliermina, E. Canzio, and G. Lampugnani of the climbs on the Aig. Verte up to that date, and contains some instructive illustrations. Captain Farrar has marked on a view of the N.E. face his line of route and the probable height reached. It seems to show that he got higher than we did, but what is more interesting, he avoided a great deal of the difficult climbing on the lower part of the ridge by cutting in on the S. side and striking the arête proper somewhere where we tried to make a hurried exit and failed on the descent. Apart from the difficulty of prospecting steep rocks from above, the bergschrund this year was quite impossible at the point where he crossed it. He says our conditions must have been much worse than his.

A route which starts in the couloir to the S. of our arête was made in 1895 by Mr. V. A. Fynn and Mr. P. Goudet. They eventually worked on to the buttress of rock to their left, which led them to the foot of the Grande Rocheuse: they descended on the Talèfre side. In 1876 Messrs. Cordier, Oakley-Maund, and Middlemore, with Jacob Anderegg and two other guides, ascended the Verte from the Argentière Glacier by a route on the N. side of the couloir of which our arête formed the S. bank.

But a veritable *tour de force* was made in 1901 by the two Gugliermina, with Brocherel of Courmayeur as a porter. They went straight up the terrific-looking couloir immediately under the Col de l'Aiguille Verte, and after hours of difficult ice-work spent the night on a rock at about 11,800 ft. They crossed the col at 11 A.M. next day, and reached Montanvert at 9 P.M. From our arête we could see the line of their ascent,

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which this year seemed to lie in part directly beneath delicately suspended hanging glacier.

The only other attempt on this side of the mountain that I am aware of was the unsuccessful one by Lord Wentworth with Emile Rey and another guide in 1876 by way of the ridge from the Petite Aiguille Verte. Captain Farrar likewise made an attempt along this ridge in 1898, and reached the last tower immediately to the N. of the Pointe Carrée.

Two days later we were out again, and Frazer led my wife and myself by a most delectable and instructive route, and a safe one withal, through the main Argentière icefall to above Lognan.

We next visited Montanvert, and started off at 2.30 the following morning for an unknown destination—some mooted the Charmoz, others the Grépon.

The advantages of guideless climbing are many; the disadvantages, it may be argued, are considerable. Not the least inconsiderable is the fact that one reads descriptions of climbs, and learns all the trials and errors of one's forerunners. Yet on the mountain, instead of trusting to such mountaineering instinct as one may possess, there is a tendency to recall this book-gleaned knowledge and work to that.

I must accept the responsibility for leading the party astray on the Nantillons Glacier on this particular day, costing us our peak.

Mummery relates when his party was cutting up the Nantillons Glacier how another party, led by an Oberlander, was rapidly overtaking them on the rocks to the right, now known as the rognon. Burgener by herculean efforts reached the upper glacier simultaneously. Mummery then observes that the rocks are undoubtedly the proper route. Now having this incident fast in my memory, we made straight for the rocks, and started up what looked the most feasible route. Things went all right, but higher up the climbing became increasingly difficult, and there appeared no way of traversing away to easier rocks to the left. After a couple of hours of this unexpected kind of thing, we decided to descend and go up by the glacier. The man at the tail of the rope took the lead down, and led us away to the right and across a steep snow-slope to an extremely steep stretch of ice-plastered rock running abruptly down to the bergschrund. All this cost so much time that anything ambitious had to be postponed, and a return made to the Montanvert. On our way back we were able to render some aid to a Swiss who had met with an

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accident below the Aiguille de l'M., and had to be carried back to the Montanvert. He had the grit to struggle down to dinner that evening and stand the whole English company champagne! It seems unheard of that no stretcher was available at the Montanvert.

More expeditions followed, some successful, others failures: the weather in July being exasperating at times for climbing.

On August 2 my wife, Frazer, and I went up to the Grands Mulets, and next morning at 12.15 started in glorious moonlight for the Mont Blanc. We found raquettes very useful when the snow got soft. On the Grand Plateau the weather looked doubtful, and at the Refuge Vallot a high wind had got up. We waited two hours, and meantime were joined by other parties, who soon decided it was too bad to proceed. We were the last to leave the hut, and the wind and driving snow on emerging made it hard to keep on one's feet, much less make the right direction. We all eventually reached the Grands Mulets, and later the Montanvert.

Our next successful attempt was the Grépon. Since our failure on the Nantillons rognon, we had been driven back by a blizzard from the Charmoz-Grépon Col. This time we climbed the Grands Charmoz first and then traversed the Grépon. We were greedy enough to hope for the Blaitière as well, but another party ahead of us just as we were descending from the Charmoz spoilt our chances.

The Grépon is without doubt one of the finest rock-climbs imaginable. Its sublime surroundings are possibly the secret of some of its charm. As regards difficulty, our expectations were not quite reached, possibly due to our wearing rubber shoes—that ideal footgear for most types of rock—but, on the other hand, we carried three axes, heavy rucksacks, and our boots, in view of our designs on the Blaitière. A pleasant way to the Charmoz-Grépon Col, avoiding the rather loose upper reaches of the couloir, was found by breaking through on to the Mer de Glace side by a steep chimney near the parting of the ways for the Charmoz and Grépon, and thence by easy ledges to the col. We saved exertion by traversing into the Mummery crack about half-way up, the top being reached comparatively fresh. This traverse needs delicate balance.

The delight of the whole climb seems to me concentrated about that wonderful *Abseil* from the lower summit to the gap near the 'vire aux bicyclettes.'

The next expedition was, as far as I can ascertain, a new route on the Petits Charmoz. It ran up the E. face from

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the small Glacier de la Thendia to a gendarme on the ridge N. of the Col de l'Etala, and gave about 1000 ft. of fine slab-climbing of moderate difficulty on remarkably sound rock. Mr. W. H. Lewin, who has had the audacity to take up mountaineering, and more especially rock-climbing, at an age when many think it is time to give it up, led the lower part of this climb, starting from near the foot of the couloir running down from the Col de la Bûche on the E. The finish was made up the southern chimney to the summit of the Petits Charmoz. Mons. Émile Fontaine made a route hereabouts, but I think it lay a little farther to the right, or N. of ours.

I should like to refer to a contrivance which Mr. Lewin has designed *to protect the leader in exposed situations on rocks*. It consists of a small pulley through which the leader's rope is passed. It is hitched by him to any handy projection, the idea being that in case of his fall there is, so to speak, an elastic belay whereon it may be checked by a vigilant second. The pulley might be of use in the case of an accident, and its lightness (16 oz.) makes it well worth carrying. It is on sale at Beale's in Shaftesbury Avenue.

The weather round about August 4 became stormy, with lightning actually setting fire to the woods, while balls of fire on two successive nights were seen balancing on the points of the roof of the hotel. I shall never forget the sight of the colossal discharges off the top of the Dru.

Our next expedition from the Montanvert was the Grand Dru, admirably led by Frazer. A party benighted on the Petit Dru delayed our start until their return to the hut, and so we were unable to traverse both peaks. Frazer, who adapts his clothing to every degree of temperature, left his shirt on the Grand Dru: this was picked up some weeks later by Mr. Carr, who may like to take this opportunity of returning it to its owner!

My last expedition before leaving Argentière was with Mr. Carr and his guide, Ignace Zurbriggen, of Saas-Fée. From the Flegère we ascended the prominent little rock peak on the main ridge called Le Pouce. It reminded me in many respects of the 'Inaccessible Pinnacle' in Skye. Young Zurbriggen, who is at any rate a first-class rock climber, led us by a new and very difficult route up its N. side. Perhaps I may mention that Alasdair Odell, aged 2 (named after Sgurr Alasdair in Skye), made the ascent to the Col des Montets in a perambulator, but proceeded to foot it at a great rate

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down the other side to Le Buet—possibly an indication of mountain fleetness to come!

Before closing this paper, I should like to mention that useful preliminary training for the party was had last Easter at a camp in Glen Nevis, and I venture to support Mr. Raeburn's opinion that the conditions of the snow and the actual climbing obtainable on Ben Nevis and Carn Dearg at Easter make it an invaluable home training-ground for guideless climbers.

F. F. Tuckett's Diaries and Letters.[1]

TO the dwindling band of his contemporaries as well as to mountaineers of a younger generation it has been for years a matter of regret that no collection of F. F. Tuckett's Papers and Articles should have found a place in our English Alpine literature. A career remarkable and in some respects unique obviously deserved a permanent record: while Tuckett's friends felt that it would be a pity if no attempt was made to present to the public some sketch of a figure and a character so conspicuous in the early annals of the Alpine Club more complete than the notice published at the time of his death in this Journal (vol. xxvii.). What we looked for in the present work was, therefore, a sympathetic portrait of the man together with a summary of his mountain wanderings that would emphasise their distinctive features and bring into prominence Tuckett's varied qualities as a pioneer.

Our hopes and expectations, we must regretfully confess, have been only imperfectly fulfilled. Tuckett's natural modesty and habitual avoidance of publicity concealed from all but his family and intimate acquaintances a character of singular charm and a mind at once exact and versatile, and stored with the most varied knowledge. His interests and sympathies were as wide as his travels, and these extended to every quarter of the globe.

His relative, who has contributed the concise biographical sketch which opens the volume, has been too discreet in a case where there was no call for discretion. We miss the personal details, the intimate human touches, which enable

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[1] *A Pioneer in the Alps.* Alpine Diaries and Letters of F. F. Tuckett, 1856-1874. (Arnold, 21*s.* 1920.)

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