

BIETSCHHORN.

BY HANS LAUPER.

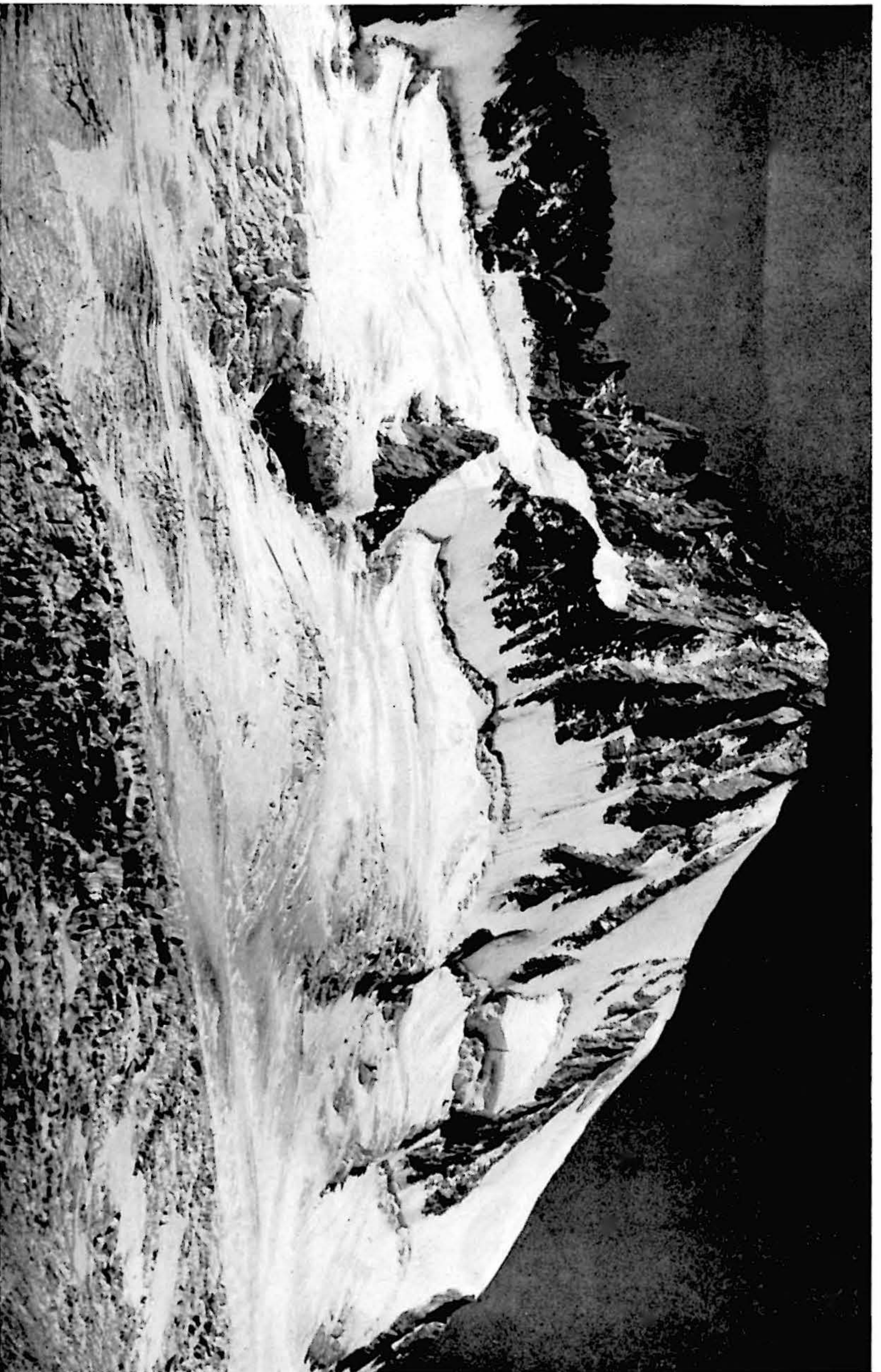
II. *The East—or Baltschieder—Face.*

THE history of the ascents by the E. face has been treated at considerable length in this JOURNAL (cf. 'A.J.' 10, 20-23; 23, 651; 24, 87-92; 25, 641-644; 28, 305-306). The origin of most of these papers was a statement by Messrs. C. T. Dent and J. Oakley Maund to the effect that their party on July 25, 1878, had climbed the Bietschhorn by the S.E. arête. As has since been proved, mainly by the Rev. W. A. B. Coolidge [*Climbers' Guide to the Bernese Oberland*, Vol. I, Part II (1910), pp. 83-89] and by Captain Farrar ('A.J.' 25, 641-644; 28, 305-306), the line of ascent of Messrs. C. T. Dent and J. Oakley Maund in 1878 was *not* by the S.E. arête, but by the perfectly distinct E. spur.

This E. spur runs from the highest point of the Bietschhorn down to the *Äusserer Baltschiederfirn*, disappearing into the glacier just W. of Point 3098 m. of the Siegfried map. This E. spur, about 2500 ft. high, has been comparatively neglected by climbers, although it provides (at least to my mind) much better climbing than the usual W. arête. In previous years this may have been partly due to the absence of suitable night quarters on the E. side of the Bietschhorn, but to-day there stands a very comfortable hut of the S.A.C., the *Baltschieder-Klause*, 2793 m. (cf. *Die Clubhütten des Schweizer Alpen-Club im Jahre 1927*, No. 32), at the Jaegithierweidli above, N. of the confluence of the *Äusserer* with the *Innerer Baltschiederfirn*. Apart from serving as a base for several fine expeditions in the Baltschieder region, this hut now serves as a starting-point for the ascents of the Bietschhorn by the E. face.

The East Spur.

From the hut a little path leads N.E. over rough slabs reaching the *Äusserer Baltschiederfirn* in the neighbourhood of Point 2888 m. of the Siegfried map. Bearing N. to avoid the icefall, this glacier is crossed to the lower end of the E. spur (W. of Point 3098 m., *Siegfried*), which is best gained from the N. just where its rocks plunge down into the snows of the



Photo, E. Gyger.

BIETSCHHORN, E. Face and N. (Snow) Arête.



Photo, E. Gyger.

BIETSCHHORN, W. Arête and part of S. Face.

glacier. The broken rocks are easily climbed to a level snow crest, whence a gendarme has to be climbed or turned on the N. slope of its base. Thus the E. spur is reached where it becomes quite steep. The best plan is to adhere to the crest throughout. The difficulties of the climb are considerable, but they diminish as the summit is approached. The spur leads straight up to the highest point of the Bietschhorn (6-8 hrs. from the Baltschieder hut). This is a fine expedition and quite free from the danger of falling stones.

The first party to climb the E. spur (Messrs. C. T. Dent and J. Oakley Maund in 1878) ascended from the glacier to the shallow couloir N. of the E. spur (see sketch). They found this dangerous, as was to be expected, and immediately bore away to the right, S., on to a rib which brought them up to the crest of the E. spur. This way may be a short cut when descending the E. spur provided that conditions are perfect; and it was taken by Dr. A. Scabell's party on August 1, 1911 ('A.J.' 28, 305), and by my party on September 5, 1919. We had left the summit at 9.50 A.M. and reached the glacier below the bergschrund at 3.30 P.M., going very slowly. On July 22, 1925, I came down the E. spur again, this time with W. Richardet, A.A.C.B., following the E. spur to its end, which is more convenient. We had ascended the Bietschhorn by the W. arête in 4 hrs. from the Bietschhorn hut, and descended the E. spur in 4 hrs. 50 min. On both these occasions we returned to the Bietschhorn hut by way of the Baltschiederjoch.

The E. spur can also be gained by the route of Herr von Kuffner's party (1892). In this case the ice-bank between the foot of the E. spur and Point 3098 m. is crossed to the bay, enclosed by the E. spur and the S.E. arête. The spur is then reached over its southern flank, but, to my mind, this is no improvement on the ordinary route.

The East Ridge.

North of the E. spur there is a well-defined rock rib which was climbed by Mr. James Alexander with Oskar Supersaxo on September 2, 1927. Supersaxo has kindly communicated the following details to me:—

The foot of the E. face of the Bietschhorn was reached as described above. After crossing the bergschrund, which gave no trouble, the above-mentioned party bore to the left, taking immediately to the rocks of the E. ridge. The crest of this

was followed over loose and broken rocks up to the point where the ridge deviates slightly to the N. There the rocks were sound, but the climbing rather difficult, becoming easier as the summit approached. The highest point was reached in about 7 hrs. from the Baltschieder hut. The climb is described as a very fine expedition.

Supersaxo thinks that the more northerly ribs would also go, but most certainly would not be any improvement on the routes described in this paper.

III. *The North Arête.*

There are two ways of climbing the Bietschhorn by its N. arête: starting from the Bietschhorn hut on the Schafberg, one may cross the lower levels of the Nest and the Birch Glaciers and then ascend a broad snow-filled couloir to the gap S. of the Galen (3050 m.), whence a snow ridge leads up to the Baltschiederjoch (3-4 hrs. from the Bietschhorn hut). The Baltschiederjoch can also be gained from the Baltschieder hut in less than 3 hrs., but the approach to this hut, which stands at the S. foot of the Jaegihorn, by the wild Baltschiedertal is long and tiresome.

From the Baltschiederjoch moderate slopes lead up to a rocky spur giving access to a narrow snow crest over which the summit is reached. This ridge is often adorned with huge corniches which may render the ascent difficult as well as dangerous. The N. arête can also be approached from the Bietschhorn hut by a more direct course, which makes the détour to the Baltschiederjoch unnecessary. This course I took with my friend R. Wyss, A.A.C.B. (now with Mr. Visser in the Karakoram). On September 7, 1919, we left the Bietschhorn hut at 2.30 A.M. For once we both were glad to leave the little cabin, for it had been overcrowded to such an extent that Wyss had to put up with a bench as a bed and myself with half of the table, the other half of it being occupied by a guide. The Schafberg was too familiar ground to me to delay us, as it did others, judging from the lights wandering astray and the shouts asking for route directions.

From the level of the Schafberg we crossed the nearly level névé of the Bietsch and Nest Glaciers towards the N.E. to the rocky spur which runs down from Point 3712 m. of the N. arête to the Klein Nesthorn (3348 m.). The bergschrund did not give much trouble, neither did we find the rocks very difficult, although they are very unstable and their ascent



Photo, Ad Astra-Aero.

BIETSCHHORN from 15,000 ft.

demands a good deal of care. One does not climb up to the crest of this rocky spur until the N. arête is gained a few yards above Point 3712 m. From here we ascended the sharp and quite steep N. arête. At first we were able to advance on an outcrop of rocks on the W. side of the crest. But higher up these rocks disappeared beneath the snow and we followed the very edge of the ridge. I had all leisure to enjoy the sensational view down on both sides of the arête, because my companion took the lead, giving me at the same time a very fine demonstration in step-cutting. When at 8 A.M. we reached the northern summit and climbed over the few gendarmes to the highest point, I felt quite sorry that the pleasure had not lasted longer. We allowed ourselves nearly an hour's rest on the top, and then descended the W. arête in $3\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. to the Bietschhorn hut.

IV. *A Winter Ascent of the Bietschhorn, by the W. Arête.*

The weather had been fine for about two weeks, and as there was every promise that it would so continue for some time longer, my friend Fritz Egger, A.A.C.B.,¹ and I made up our minds to try the Bietschhorn.

On January 25, 1918, we reached the Bietschhorn hut on the slopes of the Schafberg after 7 hrs.' strenuous walking from Wiler. We found the door snowed up to the roof and had to break a window in order to force an entrance. The sleeping-room was in comparatively good order, but half the kitchen was filled with snow. Nevertheless, we spent a comfortable night.

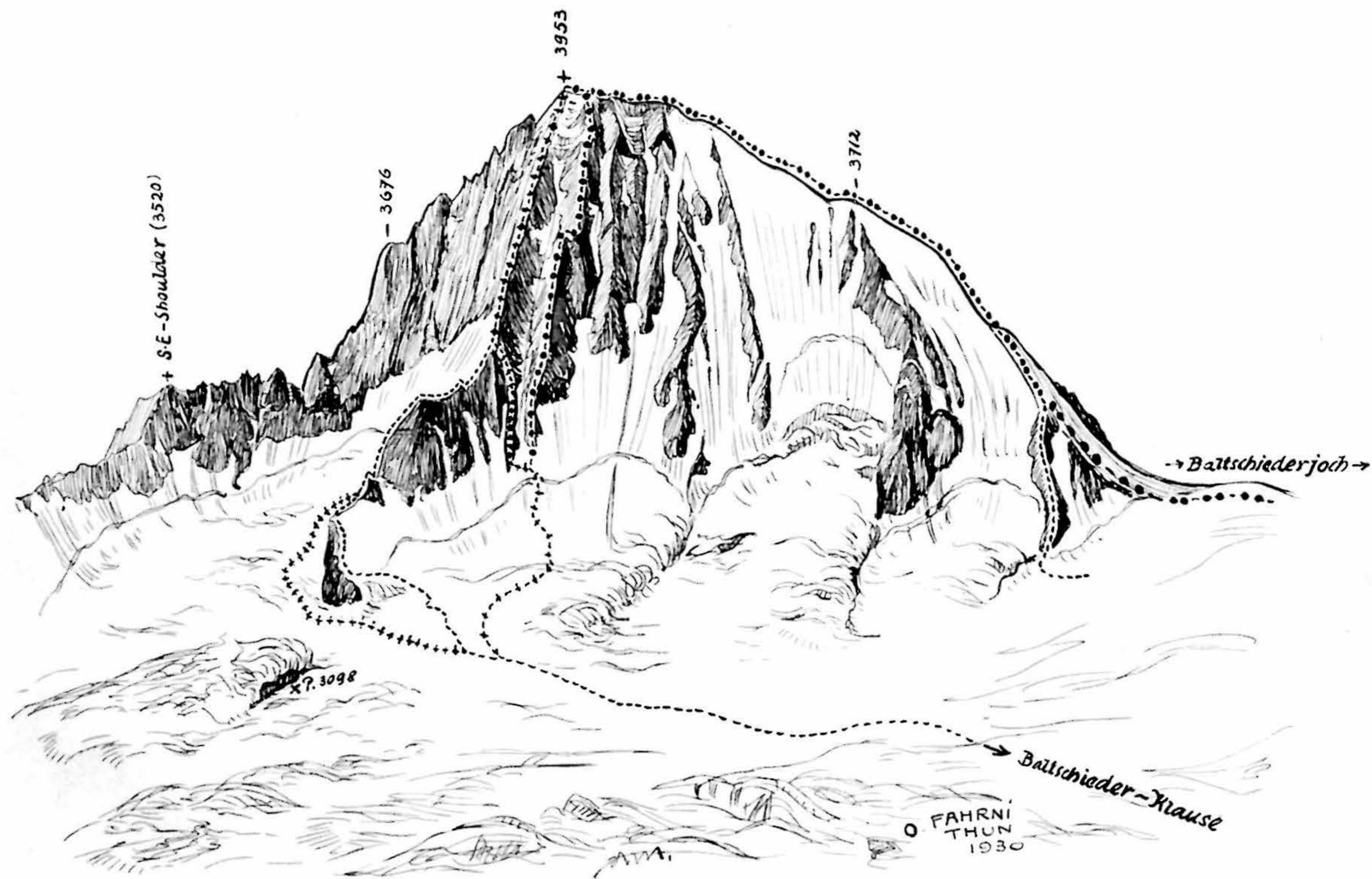
Next morning we left the hut at 4 A.M. by the magic light of a full moon: The snow in the vicinity of the hut was of a soft powdery nature and very deep, making our progress decidedly slow. But as we approached the steeper slopes of the Schafberg the snow became hard, and, kicking steps, we were able to ascend straight up. At 6.15 we reached the Schafberg, just before day broke.

It was 7 A.M. when we arrived at the foot of the W. arête of the Bietschhorn. The ascent of this ridge was at first quite easy. But where the ridge becomes steeper and quite narrow the deep powdery snow on the crest proved a great nuisance, necessitating the greatest caution in our movements. Only one could move at a time while the other paid out the rope,

¹ The first winter ascent of the Bietschhorn was made by Dr. H. Morgenthaler and G. Ghiardola, both members of the A.A.C.Z., on February 2, 1916.

progress thus again becoming very slow. The cold was not excessive; indeed all day long there was not the slightest breath of wind. The climb was not exactly difficult, but required constant care, and, what was still more annoying, consumed time—very much time. The day was creeping on, and we were well into the afternoon with the summit still far above us. After about three-quarters of the arête had been surmounted the so-called 'Red Tower' came into view. This is a great conspicuous gendarme not very far from the junction of the W. and N. arêtes. The base of this gendarme was reached after a long traverse on the S. face. Here we met with hard tough ice, hidden under a treacherous layer of snow, where step-cutting proved an arduous and difficult task. It was necessary also to make the steps very deep and reliable so as to facilitate our descent. The approach of the gendarme itself was more difficult, for the ridge at its foot, even in summer extremely narrow, was crowned with a sharp crest of snow. The 'Red Tower' was buried under snow, but was fortunately free from ice. Sooner than we had judged from its repulsive appearance, this obstacle lay behind us, and gave access to the peculiarly friable ridge above. At 4.45 P.M. we reached the N. summit of the Bietschhorn. The nearly level ridge leading to the highest point was heavily corniced and, in addition, bore on its crest a huge sérac. Even could we turn this obstacle, which we did not think we could manage, the necessary time could not be afforded.

The view from our standpoint was simply marvellous. All around us even the more distant peaks stood out with absolute clearness, while over the valleys darkness had already closed in. Only then did we realize that the sun was soon going to disappear behind the western mountains. One more look we cast around and then began the descent, going as fast as circumstances permitted. As the last glimmer of daylight disappeared we were just climbing down over the 'Red Tower,' and when we reached the ice-traverse it had become quite dark. The large steps we had cut when ascending stood us in good stead now. Cautiously, ever so cautiously, we crept downwards over all the crests and gendarmes ascended during the day. Suddenly the moon arose from behind the mountains, to meet us like some good friend. In its clear yet unreal light the night lost all its horrors. It was so clear indeed that we dispensed with a lantern. From Monte Leone to the Dent du Midi we could recognize every single mountain. Exquisite indeed was the shimmer of moonlight on the circle of snowy peaks during all these long quiet hours of descent.



Drawn by O. Fahrni.

BIETSCHHORN, E. Face.

At midnight we reached the Schafberg. Here we sat down for a short rest and, smoking a well-earned pipe, took in the overwhelming beauty of this winter night.

The descent over the steep slopes of the Schafberg again required great care. At 1.30 A.M. we re-entered the hut after an absence of nearly 22 hours.

(Concluded.)

The East—or Baltschieder Face—of Bietschhorn.

(Explanation of Sketch.²)

— . . . — route of Messrs. D. W. Freshfield and C. C. Tucker, with François Dévouassoud and Fr. von Allmen, July 10, 1866, from Baltschiederjoch over the N. arête.

Point 3712 = point where the first party to ascend the Bietschhorn gained the N. arête (Sir Leslie Stephen, with Joh. and Anton Siegen and Jos. Ebener, August 13, 1859).

— + — + — + — + line of ascent of Messrs. C. T. Dent and J. Oakley Maund with Joh. Jaun and Andreas Maurer, July 25, 1878. This route is sometimes a short cut for a party which descends over the E. spur when conditions are good.

+ + + + + Herr Moritz von Kuffner's (with Alexander Burgener and Aloys Kalbermatten, July 26, 1892) variation.

— — — — — ordinary route when ascending over the E. spur for a party which starts from the Baltschieder-Klause, 2793 m. (cf. 'A.J.' 25, 641-644).

— . . . — E. ridge, route of Mr. James W. Alexander, with Oskar Supersaxo, September 2, 1927.

CLIMBING IN GREENLAND, PETERMANN PEAK.¹

By J. M. WORDIE.

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 4, 1930.)

GREENLAND, like Spitsbergen, has occasionally been visited by mountain climbers, but generally only as subsidiary to explorations of a wider nature.² In West Greenland

² By Herr O. Fahrni, to whom we are again much indebted.—*Editor.*

¹ See map at end of this volume.

² The opposite coasts differ very considerably in accessibility: there are regular summer sailings to the W. coast, whilst on the E.