

them difficult but solved the problem by the most exposed, airy and exhilarating ice-climb I ever did.

I reckon sixteen essentially different ways to Mont Blanc. I wish I had done them all!

NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

FIG. 1.—This was taken from the inner end of Col Eccles in 1921 during the ascent of Mont Blanc by Eccles' route. Pic Eccles is seen high on the right, and the top of the Aiguille Noire de Péteret just shows over the left flank of the Pic.

FIG. 2.—This was taken from the Innominata face in 1919 during a halt at 13.30 on the crest of the branch rib. The skyline shows the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret on the extreme left (a snow cap), with Punta Gugliermi at the right end of what appears to be a level summit ridge but really descends steeply. On the right of the deep gap is the Aiguille Noire de Péteret with the middle section of the Fresney glacier below it. The snow-sprinkled rock mass in the right lower corner is Pic Eccles—a bird's eye view.

FIG. 3.—This was taken at the same time as Fig. 2, with which it joins. Pic Eccles is again seen, in the left lower corner. To the right of it, in the middle of the view, is a near part of the branch rib, and above that is seen a bird's view of the Punta Innominata with the Aiguille Joseph Croux further off to the left. The Fresney glacier is on the left, whilst the Brouillard glacier fills the right half of the picture. Beyond its snout are dimly seen the great terminal moraines of the Miage glacier which there fill the floor of the Val Veni.

FIG. 4.—This was taken in 1919 from the highest rocks on the main Brouillard ridge at the top of the Innominata face. The rock mass in the middle distance on the left is the Eckpfeiler of the Péteret arête of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur. The snow cone on the right is the summit of the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret. The dip between these is the Col de Péteret, beyond which is seen the Brenva glacier in bird's eye view.

This photograph of the Col de Péteret is of peculiar interest because it is perhaps the only one ever taken from this near point of view before the massive rockfall of November, 1920 (see *A. J.* 33. 433), by which the Col de Péteret and the ridge of the Eckpfeiler above it were greatly changed.

NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF THE INNOMINATA FACE OF MONT BLANC DE COURMAYEUR

By T. GRAHAM BROWN *

THE paper mentioned in passing by Mr. Courtauld earlier in this number¹ was an attempt to reconstruct the history of the exploration of the climbing ways to Mont Blanc de Courmayeur from the Innominata Basin.² It dealt only with the earliest phase of

* The writer of this footnote is probably not the only reader of this *Journal* who has found that articles 'by the Editor' in old volumes, and the necessity of turning to another page to find who he was, were alike aggravating: hence this breach of tradition.—*Editor*.

¹ See p. 129.

² *A. J.* 52. 254; *A. J.* 53. 46, 144.

that history—the phase which ended in 1877, when James Eccles was the first to reach Mont Blanc from the Basin in question. After that pioneer ascent there remained three prime objectives for further efforts: the achievement of John Birkbeck's original project by way of the Brouillard arête from Col Emile Rey; the enlargement of Eccles' route by the inclusion of one or more sections of the lower Péteret ridge; and the direct ascent of the Innominata face of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur. Mr. Courtauld's valuable narrative in the present number of the *Journal* suggests that this is perhaps an apt place to resume the history of the Innominata Basin and to try to recover that of the Innominata face. For the sake of completeness, however, it may be convenient first to recapitulate the attempts made on the direct route during the earliest phase of the exploration of the Basin.

In 1872, the Marchese Agostino Durazzo started direct from the Cantine de la Visaille and made the first ascent of the Punta Innominata on the lower Innominata ridge, whence the lateness of the hour forced him to turn back.³

In the following year, 1873, Girdlestone and Utterson-Kelso started direct from Courmayeur, entered the Basin, avoided the Punta Innominata by ascending the Brouillard glacier, reached the Col du Fresnay, and had attained a point between that col and Pic Eccles when the lateness of the hour again forced them to retire.⁴

The third attempt on the Innominata face was made in 1874 by Garth Marshall with Johann Fischer and Ulrich Almer. They bivouacked on the lower part of the South arête of the Punta Innominata, and on the following day, August 31, they followed the route taken by Girdlestone and Utterson-Kelso, and continued it to Pic Eccles, then reached for the first time. (With slight variations, this approach was taken by almost all later parties on the face, by those which followed Eccles' route on the Péteret arête, and by Seymour King and his few successors on the ascent of the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret from the Col de Péteret.) After traversing the crest of Col Eccles, which joins Pic Eccles to the face, Marshall and his guides reached the rock of the Innominata face for the first time in its history. The direct rib described by Mr. Courtauld leads up, with three chief steps, to the skyline of the upper and more level part of the Brouillard or South arête of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur, which the rib reaches at a point distant about one-third of the length of the aforesaid arête from the summit (or about 900 ft.). It may be regarded as certain that Marshall's party climbed the rib more or less over the first and past the second steps, and that it reached the base of the still unclimbed third step. As it was then too late in the day both to seek for a mode of circumvention and thereafter to win the summit, the party retreated in its tracks. When nearing the bivouac after a difficult descent, the party was thrown into a crevasse by the collapse of a wide snowbridge. Almer escaped with his life, but Marshall and Fischer were killed.⁵

³ See *A. J.* 52. 265.

⁴ See *A. J.* 53. 51.

⁵ See *A. J.* 53. 144.

In 1875, Eccles examined the face whilst on his way to the small peak which now bears his name and has been mentioned above. What he saw did not encourage him. He was searching for a way up to Mont Blanc de Courmayeur, and he apparently failed to detect the possibilities of the direct rib which had been attempted by Marshall.⁶ In the event Eccles selected the way by the upper Péteret arête, on which he succeeded in 1877.⁷

The Innominata face was not again visited until about forty years after Marshall's attempt (the third in all), but the story of the rebirth of the 'problem' during these inactive years is not without interest. Eccles' success in 1877 must have seemed at the time to have settled the wider and primitive problem of the ascent to Mont Blanc de Courmayeur from the Innominata Basin, and as such it would serve to blind his contemporaries and immediate followers to other possible routes.

Twenty years had passed since Marshall's attempt before the problem reappeared briefly but openly in Alpine literature. In his book,⁸ Güssfeldt described the view of the face which he had from 'Pointe Jones' on the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret during his ascent of the Péteret ridge over that summit in 1893; and he remarked that the most direct route to Mont Blanc from Val Veni would be up the Brouillard glacier, but that it had not as yet been found possible to climb the cliffs above that glacier. Güssfeldt himself does not appear to have formed any personal project about the Innominata face, and his passing reference seems to have fallen upon stony ground.

It was not until 1899 that the direct ascent of the Innominata face again became a definite personal project which eventually led, many years later, to an actual attempt. The Torino Hut on the Col du Géant was about to be opened in that year, and the Turin section of the Italian Alpine Club resolved to make the opening an occasion. Our late member, Signor E. J. Mazzuchi⁹ resolved to celebrate the occasion in his own way—by 're-opening' the ascent of the Aiguille Noire de Péteret, which had been shunned since the fatal accident to Signor Poggi in 1892. Mazzuchi was greatly impressed and attracted by the view of the Innominata face from that summit, and his expedition aroused interest at the celebrations. One of the latter was a walk across the Little Saint Bernard Pass, and when the party halted to admire the view of the South-east side of Mont Blanc, somebody said: 'An Italian must climb it,' and somebody else, indicating Signor Mazzuchi, said 'Here's our man.' This incident confirmed Mazzuchi's project, which came slowly to fruition, because the Tronchey arête of the Grandes Jorasses also claimed his attention and was his objective in many attempts. In 1902, however, Mazzuchi made a careful examination of the Innominata face from the Punta Innominata, the best near view

⁶ See *A. J.* 53. 152.

⁷ See *A. J.* 53. 154.

⁸ Paul Güssfeldt, *Der Montblanc*, 1894, p. 265.

⁹ From whom the writer obtained this and other information.

point for the face and one of the most impressive in the Alps¹⁰; but his actual attempts were not made until 1916.

During the first decade of the twentieth century the direct ascent of the Innominata face finally became a widely recognised problem, the early solution of which was thereafter delayed by two tragic deaths in 1912. Andreas Fischer, son of Marshall's guide, Johann Fischer, and himself a notable mountaineer, formed the romantic project of climbing the 'wall' on which his father had turned back, and of completing his father's work.¹¹ He apparently thought at first that Marshall's party had attempted what was later to be Eccles' route (1877); and a repetition of Eccles' route was his objective when Andreas Fischer climbed the Punta Innominata in 1906 to examine the face, a purpose frustrated by cloudy weather. A later careful consideration of the problem turned his attention to the more direct line (that really attempted by Marshall's party), and he wrote shortly before his death in 1912 that this problem was then still unsolved. In laying their plans for a campaign in 1912, Andreas Fischer and Ernst Jenny, with the guide Ulrich Almer, chose a direct attempt on Mont Blanc from the Brouillard glacier as their chief objective. The campaign began in the Bernese Oberland, where the summit of the Aletschhorn was reached at the beginning of a storm in which Andreas Fischer lost his life during the descent. It was a tragic coincidence that Ulrich Almer was a member of the two fatal parties in which the father and the son lost their lives, and that each of the accidents put a stop to attempts which might well have solved the problem of the Innominata face.

In the meanwhile, however, that problem had become a matter of common knowledge amongst mountaineers, and many ambitious climbers had been attracted to Courmayeur by the possibilities of the Italian flanks of Mont Blanc. Amongst these many novel or uncompleted routes, the direct way up the Innominata face from Col Eccles (then called the 'Col du Mont Blanc') must have drawn the attention of all (but they were not many) who saw the face from a near point of view—as it did in the cases of Karl Blodig and Oscar Eckenstein when they made the first ascent of Mont Brouillard in 1906, a point of view from which the rib is seen grandly in profile.¹² In one such case a definite personal project was born. When H. O. Jones, one of the greatest explorers of the Italian flanks of the Range, paid the first of his six visits to the Quintino Sella hut on the Miage face of Mont Blanc in 1907, his objectives were an exploration of the then virgin Rocher du Mont Blanc (in a guideless ascent with A. E. Bellars and Eckenstein, he reached a summit point for the first time that year), and the ascent of the Brouillard ridge from Col Emile Rey—the second of which he brought to success in 1911. Bad weather in 1907 prevented any exploration of

¹⁰ See the frontispiece of this number, reproduced from a photograph taken from Punta Innominata by Dr. T. G. Longstaff in 1933.

¹¹ Andreas Fischer, *Hochgebirgswanderungen*, 1912, see the re-issue of 1924, pp. 18, 38, 112, 114, 117, 298.

¹² *Zeitschrift, D.Ö.A.V.*, 40. 168, 1909; reprinted in Karl Blodig, *Die Viertausender der Alpen*, 3rd edition. (N.D.), p. 326.

the Brouillard ridge, but on July 12 of the following year he and E. H. Compton made a guideless ascent of Mont Brouillard from the Quintino Sella hut with that end in view. From Col Emile Rey, Jones reached and closely examined the well-known rock couloir of the now usual route and also detected another possible but more difficult line of ascent just to the west of the col. Then the two of them went up to Mont Brouillard, and it was perhaps there that Jones' project on the Innominata face was born.

In any case, H. O. Jones made a fruitful ascent of the Punta Innominata in 1909 (August 11) to inspect the Innominata face as well as the S.W. flank of the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret, on which he had designs and achieved them later in that same year. It may be remarked that no good view in which routes could be detected on the Innominata face is to be had from Val Veni or even from the present Gamba hut, and that the Punta Innominata is in fact the only near point from which a good and open view of the breadth and detail of the face may be had. The importance of Jones' ascent of the Punta Innominata in 1909 lay in the photographs which he took of the Innominata face from a point on the summit ridge of his peak a little S.E. of the true summit¹³—these photographs were the first adequate views of the Innominata face ever to be taken, and their importance in the history of the face was very justly stressed by J. P. Farrar in a later year.¹⁴ When Jones brought the photographs home in 1909, he closely examined them with Farrar, who always held that a second line of ascent to Mont Blanc de Courmayeur might also possibly be made to the right or E. of the rib attempted by Marshall in 1874.¹⁵ The problem of the direct route up the Innominata face thus attracted attention in a small circle at home after the climbing season of 1909, which was reputed to have been the worst season in the past fifty years; and it was then also that the problem achieved a wider recognition when the correspondent of *The Times* (the present Lord Schuster) mentioned it by name in an article: '[many climbers] planning their campaign, thought of the great southern routes up Mont Blanc, of the Brenva, the Innominata ridge, the Brouillard and the Aiguille Blanche de Peuteret, . . .'¹⁶ Lord Schuster's reference to the face, the effect of which in drawing attention to it was also emphasised by Farrar,¹⁷ has an additional point of interest, because this was apparently the first time that the word 'Innominata' was applied to the projected route, although 'rib' would have been a better description than 'ridge.'

¹³ The two photographs were reproduced separately with Jones' paper on the ascent of the Brouillard ridge from Col Emile Rey, *A. J.* 26. facing pp. 251, 256. They were printed side by side to illustrate Mr. Winthrop Young's narrative of the same ascent in *Great Hours in Sport*, edited by John Buchan, 1921, at p. 132.

¹⁴ *A. J.* 33. 3. 1920, where Farrar wrongly gives the date as 1911—it was 1909, as stated above.

¹⁵ See, for instance, *A. J.* 33. 1. 1920.

¹⁶ *The Times*, September 7, 1909, reprinted in *Peaks and Pleasant Pastures* by Claud Schuster, 1911, p. 57.

¹⁷ *A. J.* 33. 3, 1920.

The next climbing season, that of 1910, was also marred by bad weather, and, as the same correspondent of *The Times* put it: 'The three great Courmayeur specialists, Mr. Jones, Herr Pühn, and Herr Pfann, must perforce mature plans which even their rival daring and skill could bring to little.'¹⁸ In contrast, the season of 1911 was one of the best ever known, and H. O. Jones succeeded not only in completing the ascent of the Brouillard arête from Col Emile Rey with Karl Blodig, Winthrop Young, and the guide Joseph Knubel, but also in the traverses of the E. and W. ridges of the Grandes Jorasses, both of which he had explored in previous years. With his old project on the Brouillard arête thus brought to fruition, Jones' thoughts seem to have turned in 1912 to the problem of the Innominata face. After his first ascent of L'Isolée (one of the Dames Anglaises), again with Winthrop Young, Jones made a second ascent of the Punta Innominata with his own guide, Truffer, on August 14. His object must have been another close inspection of the Innominata face and also an examination of the S.E. arête of the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret, an ambition which had suggested the ascent of L'Isolée from the Gamba hut to clarify the way.¹⁹ On the following day, August 15, H. O. Jones, his young wife, and Truffer, met their deaths on Mont Rouge de Péteret through no fault of their own, but by pure accident. Thus for the third time death intervened in the history of the Innominata face, for there can be little doubt that H. O. Jones, had he survived, would have made a bold attempt to solve its problem before the First World War caused a halt in the sport.

Before his early death thus cut short a career of fine achievement and greater promise in the field of science, Humphrey Owen Jones had spent parts of six consecutive climbing seasons at Courmayeur, where, despite bad fortune with the weather in most of them, he achieved the new ascents with which his name is chiefly connected: the Rocher du Mont Blanc (South point in 1907, traverse of all points in 1910), the Monts Rouges de Triolet (1909 and 1910), the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret from the Fresnay glacier (1909), Mont Blanc by the Brouillard arête from Col Emile Rey (1911), the descent of the E. arête and the ascent of the W. arête of the Grandes Jorasses (both in 1911), and the ascent of Pointe Isolée of the Dames Anglaises (1912). These achievements, several of which were snatched from the weather in bad seasons, were the rewards of intimate contact with the Italian flanks of the Range, and of a deep study of their problems; and they naturally suggest that Jones, in Lord Schuster's words, was a 'Courmayeur specialist.' That of course he was, but not that alone, for Jones was a great mountaineer, and his one Alpine season of really reliable weather, that of 1911, proved his ability and his physical endurance.

The quality and intensity of what H. O. Jones achieved in five weeks

¹⁸ *The Times*, September 6, 1910; see also Claud Schuster, *Peaks and Pleasant Pastures*, 1911, p. 38.

¹⁹ This, the Fresnay access to the Dames Anglaises and the Aiguille Blanche, had recently been advocated by Claude Wilson (see *A. J.* 25. 501, 1911).

of climbing with various amateurs and guides in 1911 has rarely been surpassed, and it deserves to be recorded here. Climbing throughout with guides, he began his campaign on July 29, with Mr. R. Todhunter, when they crossed the Col des Aigles and the Col du Clot des Cavales in Dauphiné. Two days later, after Mr. Winthrop Young had joined the party, they made a new route to the Dôme de Neige and then traversed the Barre des Ecrins over Pic Lory. Next, Jones and Young made a good traverse of La Meije whilst Todhunter crossed the Brèche, and then they all quitted Dauphiné for Courmayeur. After an exploration of the E. arête of the Grandes Jorasses from the Col des Hirondelles with Winthrop Young on August 6, Jones fulfilled a long-standing promise to attempt the Brouillard arête from Col Emile Rey with Karl Blodig. Young was invited to join the party with Knubel, and the ascent was made successfully on August 9 after the initial crossing of the glacier had been prepared on the previous day. On August 11, Jones and Young climbed the Grandes Jorasses and descended by the E. arête, whilst they ascended the W. arête of the same mountain three days later. Then, whilst Young went over the Col du Géant to Chamonix, Jones and Todhunter reached the same destination by traversing Mont Blanc on August 17 by Kennedy's route on the Miage face and the Chamonix route for the descent. Two days later, on August 19, Jones, Todhunter, and Young, led by Knubel, climbed the Mer de Glace face of the Grépon—the third ascent of the face, but the first to be made by the route to the higher summit. Winthrop Young then decided to end his season with that fine ascent, but he went to Zermatt with Jones, who now joined Archer Thomson for three more expeditions.

On August 25 Jones and Thomson climbed the Täschhorn and were prevented from completing the traverse to the Dom only by new snow and the extreme cold, which threatened frostbite; on August 28 they traversed the Matterhorn by the Zermatt and Italian ridges and returned over the Furggjoch the same day; and on August 30 they ended the campaign with a second traverse of the Matterhorn, this time by the Z'mutt arête with descent by the usual route to Zermatt. The guides who took part in these expeditions were Henri Brocherel, Laurent Croux, and Joseph Knubel, but Knubel alone shared nearly the whole list (except the first expedition and the traverse of Mont Blanc on August 17) with H. O. Jones; and the twelve expeditions made by Jones in thirty-three days included four new ascents and one new descent, all these being of high standard. The weather, of course, had been exceptionally good that season; but if H. O. Jones' achievement had been correspondingly exceptional, it serves as a great example for emulation.

Much later, Mr. Winthrop Young referred to his own contact with the problem of the Innominata face in 1911 and 1912 whilst he had been H. O. Jones' companion. In 1921, and a decade after the event, Mr. Young first published his own narrative of the ascent of the Brouillard arête from Col Emile Rey.²⁰ There, referring to Jones' invitation to him

²⁰ In *Great Hours in Sport*, edited by John Buchan, 1921, pp. 117-151.

to take part in the attempt, but speaking for himself, Mr. Young wrote (p. 120): 'I should have preferred trying one, or even two, entirely novel lines up the south-east face of Mont Blanc, of whose feasibility I was convinced.' That this referred to the Innominata face (as it literally and topographically did), there can be no doubt, because the narrative was illustrated by a reproduction of H. O. Jones' photographs of that face (taken from the Punta Innominata in 1909, as mentioned above) with the title: 'The South-eastern face of Mont Blanc.' Mr. Young's previous knowledge of the face had been by hearsay from others, because the ascent of the Brouillard arête in 1911 was the occasion of the first of his two personal contacts with the Italian flanks of Mont Blanc; and it is therefore evident that his 'novel lines' on the Innominata face were those of H. O. Jones' examinations and project, to which Winthrop Young must have referred in effect.

This narrative of the ascent of the Brouillard arête from Col Emile Rey was reprinted by Mr. Winthrop Young in 1927 with a few verbal changes and minor additions;²¹ and he inserted two additional footnotes in the 'definitive' or fifth edition of his well-known book in 1947. The first of these footnotes (on p. 288) was appended to the quotation about 'two novel lines' on the Innominata face given above, and it read: 'Climbed later, and known as the Pear-buttress and Col-major routes'—an obvious reference to the Via della Pera and Route Major on the Brenva (*not* on the Innominata) face of Mont Blanc.²² The second footnote is of greater interest in our present connection, and it concerns events on the Brouillard climb itself. When Jones and Young had reached the final snowy section of the Brouillard arête near Mont Blanc de Courmayeur (p. 301), the note added that they looked down and 'traced out a buttress route,' which they examined next year (1912) from the Dames Anglaises (L'Isolée) and 'had determined to try it later that season. It is now known as the Innominata route.' This is obviously a reference to H. O. Jones' project of two years earlier (1909), when he examined and photographed the Innominata face for

²¹ G. Winthrop Young, *On High Hills*, 1927, pp. 298-320.

²² This confusion between the Innominata face (to which the text really referred) and the Brenva face is of slight consequence, and may readily be excused in view of the lapse of thirty-six years between the events themselves and the writing of the footnote; but because the latter would seem to antedate and extend Mr. Young's connection with the history of the *Brenva* face of Mont Blanc, the following may be added: in 1928, nearly twenty years nearer the events, Mr. Young told the present writer that his attention had first been drawn to the Brenva face by G. L. Mallory in 1912 (that is, not before the 1911 climbing season, but a year after it), during their crossing of Col d'Hérens, when Mallory asked him to examine the face during his approaching visit to Courmayeur. At that time (1928), Mr. Young remembered only one projected line on the Brenva face, that of Route Major—the Via della Pera was not to be climbed until five years later. It may further be added that no climber of Mr. Young's experience would be 'convinced of the feasibility' of Route Major and the Via della Pera by mere inspection before the first ascents had been made. The former *may* be defended at the top by an impracticable ice-wall; the rocks on the latter look to be of that sort and steepness which demand direct contact before the question of their feasibility can be decided.

that purpose, and it is interesting as a confirmation that Jones had decided to attempt the route in 1912, as was said here before ; but the formation of the upper Brouillard arête would have prevented such a route from being 'traced out' in the downward view, even if it could have been distinguished at all, which I doubt.

The unconnected deaths of Andreas Fischer and H. O. Jones in 1912, gave the Innominata face an increased spell of immunity, but it was in that same year that two great parties, those of the Gugliermana brothers and of Courtauld and Oliver, adopted the old project and carried forward the adventure, in the latter case to success. It was in July, 1912, that G. B. and G. F. Gugliermana, G. Lampugnani, and A. Zanutti left the Gamba hut in the Innominata Basin with the intention of climbing the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret by Seymour King's original route,²³ which goes by way of Pic and Col Eccles and had not been repeated since the first ascent in 1885. The problem of the Innominata face was by this time a common topic in Courmayeur, and when the Gugliermana's party was stopped at Col Eccles by bad weather, the brothers examined what was to be seen of the rib above them and resolved to attempt the ascent at a later date.²⁴ As Mr. S. L. Courtauld has related on previous pages, he and E. G. Oliver went to Courmayeur in 1912 for the ascent of the Péteret ridge, but fell under the stronger spell of the Innominata face, to examine which they climbed the Punta Innominata in the following year, on July 15. They had no luck with the weather at these two visits to Courmayeur, and after Courtauld had to return home in 1913, Oliver paid another visit to the Gamba hut with Valère Fynn to secure telephotographs of the details of the face, a purpose which was frustrated by thick weather. The bad conditions in 1913 seem also to have frustrated the plans of Guido Mayer, who appears to have had designs on the Innominata face,²⁵ but comes no more into the story.

Oliver reached Courmayeur in July, 1914, but the outbreak of the First World War prevented Courtauld from joining him, and for the next five years the Innominata face was the preserve of Italian climbers. Thus the brothers Gugliermana made the first of their three attempts on the face in 1915,²⁶ and although they do not appear to have reached any great height, they were then the first to lay hand on its rocks since Marshall's attempt more than forty years before. In 1916 they returned to the attack with a porter from Alagna.²⁷ On this occasion they were able to force the difficulties on the first step of the ridge, but were then halted by a mass of ice. In view of the lateness of the hour they descended and bivouacked lower on the face, but the weather turned against them during the night, and they had to abandon the attempt. It was also in 1916 that Signor E. J. Mazzuchi made two of his attempts

²³ *A. J.* 12. 419, 431, 1885-6.

²⁴ *A. J.* 35. 87, 1923.

²⁵ *Jahrbuch, S.A.C.*, 54. 22-25, 1919.

²⁶ *A. J.* 35. 87, 1923.

²⁷ *A. J.* 33. 8, 1920 ; 35. 87, 1923 ; G. B. and G. F. Gugliermana and G. Lampugnani : *Vette*, 1927, pp. 237, 243, 244.

on the face. On August 8 he left the Gamba hut for a bivouac above the Col du Fresnay, but whilst he was at the bivouac there was a great fall of ice and rocks on the Innominata face, the attempt had to be abandoned, and he 'renounced for ever his project on the S. arête of Mont Blanc.'²⁸ Mazzuchi nevertheless returned to the attack within the fortnight, and he again reached the bivouac in doubtful weather on August 20, when he climbed Pic Eccles and returned to the bivouac. Bad weather during the night unfortunately forced a retreat next day.²⁹ In his last bid for the route in 1918, Mazzuchi reached the 'red rocks' on the lowest step of the ridge, when the weather broke again and he had to return.

In 1919, and at their earliest opportunity after the war, S. L. Courtauld and E. G. Oliver began their actual attack, and achieved the triumph which has been described so well by Mr. Courtauld in this number of the *Journal*. One small and pleasant incident he omits, but it should not be allowed to pass unrecorded: he and Oliver knew about Mazzuchi's great interest in the face, and of his attempts on it, and when they were deciding their plans for the coming campaign, they invited him to join in the attempt. As Signor Mazzuchi told the present writer, this generous invitation, which he was unable to accept, left him with a lasting impression and a very happy memory.

A few words may be given here to the events of 1919 especially in connection with a mistaken interpretation of the line followed at the successful ascent and now corrected by Mr. Courtauld. The Gugliermina brothers and Francesco Ravelli made a final bid for the route on August 14, when they reached a bivouac near Col Eccles; but they were there deterred by stonefall on the face and descended next day without making an attempt.³⁰ It was this party descending towards the Col du Fresnay which Courtauld and Oliver saw from the Punta Innominata whilst making their final inspection of the route on August 15. Then came the successful ascent which has been described by Mr. Courtauld on previous pages, and concerning which the following points should be noted: At a reconnaissance from the bivouac on August 19, in the evening before the climb, it was Adolf Aufdenblatten and Adolphe Rey who overcame the *mauvais pas* on the flank of the lowest step of the rib and fixed a rope there;³¹ on the day of the climb, August 20, it was Aufdenblatten who led practically throughout; and the line adopted was in all essentials that taken by subsequent parties—they surmounted the first step, then followed the crest of the rib (the horizontal snow arête is an unmistakable feature), were first forced on to the W. flank of the rib close under the level of the second step, kept to that flank until they traversed the couloir at a high level to the branch

²⁸ Entry in the book at the Gamba hut.

²⁹ From private information.

³⁰ Entry in Gamba hut book; *A. J.* 35. 88, 1923; *Vette* (loc. cit.), 1927, p. 238.

³¹ This incident was subsequently attributed to the two guides Rey, and it was apparently described as if made during an independent attempt on the route.

rib on their left (W.), which they followed up to its junction with the direct rib, and then to the skyline. This line of ascent as far as the beginning of the traverse must have been that taken by Marshall's party in 1874, and it was again taken by the Guglierminas to a little short of their high bivouac at the second ascent of the face in 1921. The route adopted by Courtauld and Oliver is, in fact, the natural line which would be taken by all experienced parties.

The Gugliermina party had abandoned its project for the time being, and on August 18, whilst Courtauld and Oliver were on their way to the Gamba hut for the successful ascent, Signor Ravelli went up to the Col du Géant to join Signor G. Rivetti and three other friends, who had come from the Grandes Jorasses hut by a fine traverse of the Rochefort arête. This combined party then set out late in the evening of August 19 (Courtauld and Oliver had by then settled down in their bivouac), for the ascent of Mont Blanc from the Col du Midi. A dramatic surprise was in store for the Italians, who reached the summit of Mont Blanc on August 20, thence to see a party coming towards them from Mont Blanc de Courmayeur—for that sight proved that the Innominata face had been conquered. The two parties met at the Vallot hut, where the Italians learnt full details about the climb.³²

The Guglierminas, who were one of the most gallant, as they were perhaps the greatest, of the guideless parties of their day, were naturally disappointed when the Innominata face fell to Courtauld and Oliver at their own first attempt. But it says much for them that they returned to the attack two years after the successful ascent of 1919, and it is only proper to conclude this phase of the exploration with the second ascent of the Innominata face by G. B. and G. F. Gugliermina, Francesco Ravelli, and the porter, Lucien Proment, in 1921.³³

These climbers left the Gamba hut on July 31, 1921, for a first bivouac above the Col du Fresnay, but instead of taking the usual route up the Brouillard glacier, they crossed the small and harmless Châtelet glacier and traversed the Punta Innominata to the Col du Fresnay—an approach which had the interesting outcome that they eventually reached the summit of Mont Blanc without (or almost without) having set foot on a glacier. On August 1 they continued the ascent and followed Courtauld and Oliver's line (and that of Marshall) as far as the point at which the 1919 party began their traverse to the branch rib. The Gugliermina party, however, now kept to the flank of the main rib, reached its crest above the second step, and there bivouacked for the second time between the second and third steps and probably near the point at which Marshall's party must have turned back in 1874, forty-seven years earlier. On August 2 they crossed the wide couloir to the branch rib at a rather higher level than that of the line taken by Courtauld and Oliver, and thereafter they followed the 1919 line of ascent.

³² *Riv. Mens., C.A.I.*, 39. 21, 1920.

³³ Entries in the books at the Gamba and Dôme huts; *Riv. Mens., C.A.I.*, 41. 23, 1922; *Riv. Mens. C.A.I.*, 42. 145, 1923; *A.ŷ.* 35. 87, 1923; *Vette* (loc. cit.), 1927, p. 238.

After a night spent at the Vallot hut, their third on the climb, they descended on August 3 by the Dôme route to Courmayeur.

As far as the Innominata face is concerned, the line taken during this ascent was essentially the same as that taken by Courtauld and Oliver in 1919. But it was perhaps natural for the Gugliermis to emphasise the differences between the two lines on the face, and to stress the originality of their own ascent. Thus arose the later misconception which Mr. Courtauld has now corrected,³⁴ although his technical note,³⁵ the only record to be made by a member of the party before the publication of the narrative in this number of the *Journal*, was in fact admirably clear. The Gugliermis may nevertheless have misread it, because they wrote of the 1919 party :³⁶ ' They did not follow the main arête, but almost exclusively the Brouillard Glacier and the wall or face above this glacier, which wall they gained after having touched [Col Eccles], and climbed the " mauvais pas " overcome by us in 1916.' And in their account of their own ascent in 1921, the Gugliermis, who encountered some mist at the top of the first step, described (and indicated on a photograph) Courtauld and Oliver's traverse as beginning at far too low a level.³⁷ The real novelty of the 1921 expedition lay in fact below the actual face, and consisted in the addition of the traverse of the lower Innominata ridge to the ascent of the face above it. But there is no need to stress the element of mere novelty, because the persistent attempts of the Gugliermis brothers with various companions, and their final achievement of an ascent which was not to be repeated again for another eleven years in spite of renewed attempts by other climbers, are an essential and an unforgettable part of the history of the Innominata face. They deserve and win the homage of all mountaineers who admire enterprise, courage, and the spirit of adventure.

The splendid ascent of Courtauld and Oliver's party in 1919 solved what may be called an ancient problem as far as Alpine history is concerned, and it ended a phase chiefly of ambitions and projects, but also of actual attempts in its later years ; and it is perhaps curious that, until the hour of the successful ascent, the point at which Marshall and his guides must have turned back in 1874 had not again been even nearly reached by the subsequent parties which had attempted the ascent without success. Here the history of the face may, therefore, pause, but it does not end : for Farrar's suggestion of routes more to the east³⁸ was destined to arouse new ambitions and to bear fruit.

³⁴ See p. 131 here.

³⁵ *A. J.* 33. 129, 1920.

³⁶ See, for instance, *A. J.* 35. 88, 1923.

³⁷ *A. J.* 35. 90, 1923.

³⁸ *A. J.* 33. 8, 1920.