

THE WETTERHÖRNER

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I. SPEER'S ASCENT AND THE EVENTS OF 1845

Introduction

STANHOPE TEMPLEMAN SPEER made the first ascent of the Mittelhorn peak of the Wetterhörner in 1845, and his narrative of the climb probably played a greater part in the beginnings of mountaineering as a sport than the part usually attributed to Sir Alfred Wills' ascent of the Hasli Jungfrau peak from Grindelwald in 1854. Speer's narrative received immediate and wide publicity, which did not wane quickly; Wills' ascent was given little or no publicity at the time, and his earliest published account of it (in his *Wanderings among the High Alps*) did not appear until mid summer, 1856, too late to attract recruits before 1857 to the sport which had already been established. Wills brought in early recruits to the young sport; Speer's service was to prepare the way for the sport itself. The events of 1845 were therefore of importance, and they are interesting in themselves.

At this time Speer was a medical student at the University of Edinburgh, where he eventually graduated in 1848. In 1844 he had made a curious attempt from Chamonix to reach the highest level on Mont Blanc from which he could return without spending a night on the mountain, and, before turning back, he had passed the Grands Mulets rocks, on which there was then no shelter. Later in the same year he made an ascent of the Buet under winter conditions, in spite of the opinion published in Geneva that the Buet was inaccessible at such a late date. Many years afterwards he published a paper on *Mountain Sickness* in which he alluded to his experiences on these expeditions; but at the time itself he seems to have been moved by the spirit of adventure and the attraction of exploration—two motives (and the only ones) which are clearly expressed in his Wetterhorn narrative.

Speer's alleged attempt in 1843.

More may be said here about an alleged attempt by Speer to climb the Wetterhorn in 1843, to which I have referred recently in this *Journal*¹. In 1916, the late Canon Horsley published some extracts from the old *Visitors' Book* of the Grimsel²; and one of these, given under the date, 1843, ran as follows: 'Started the 8th July from the Grimsel, accompanied by three guides, Jaun, Bannholzer, and Michel, in order to plant a flag on the virgin peak of the Wetterhorn. Stanhope Templeman Speer.' So striking and adventurous a project *in 1843* interested me even more than would have a similar unsuccessful project in (say) 1845, and for the following reason:

In 1845, British newspapers and journals were full of news about

¹ *A.J.* 58. 536, 1952.

² *A.J.* 30. 212, 1916.

Sir John Franklin's preparations and final departure to seek a North-west Passage; and although it was clearly recognised that such a passage, if found, could have no commercial or other material value, great public interest was aroused. This rose from height to height until the very eve of the Crimean War, nine years later, when definite proof (to be finally confirmed in 1859) reached this country that total disaster had overtaken the expedition. The question of Franklin's fate had by then been a chief topic of discussion for many years (it was named in the first place even when bad news from Constantinople was threatening war with Russia a few months before its outbreak³); and the curious fact that the supposedly practical-minded British public had become conscious of, and inflamed by, the immaterial lure of adventure, exploration, and discovery *for their own sakes*, was noticed at the time⁴. What had happened was that exploration (with its adventure) had come to be *generally* recognised as a worthy objective *in itself*, irrespective of the value (if any) of what might be found; and I think that it cannot be far wrong to date the beginning of this general attitude to the sailing of Franklin's ships in 1845. It is also my belief that this general admiration for exploration *per se* was one of the great factors, perhaps even the greatest single factor, which caused mountaineering to become a conscious sport in the early 1850's.

As far as British climbers are concerned, the classic ascent of Mont Blanc from Chamonix was begun by Colonel Mark Beaufoy in 1787, a week after de Saussure's famous ascent of the mountain, the third; and British ascents (with Chamonix guides) became more frequent after the end of the Napoleonic wars. This ascent, however, was regarded, and rightly, not as an exploration but as a test of stamina and determination—a great athletic feat; and, before technical difficulty came to be recognised as a challenge, it offered the supreme mountain feat in the Alps, because Mont Blanc was the supreme summit. It is therefore not strange that the early British climbers who had succeeded on Mont Blanc, and had thereby proved themselves on the supreme Alpine feat, did not attack other high but lesser Alpine peaks; but in or about the summers of 1853 and 1854 a new general objective began to attract British climbers—the conquest of *new* Alpine peaks and the forcing of new or rarely crossed glacier passes. The ascent of the Hasli Jungfrau from Grindelwald by Sir Alfred Wills at the very end of the 1854 climbing season was an example, but by no means the pioneer, of this new trend, which was born, as I believe, of the general

³ *E.g.*, see the *Athenæum*, 31st December, 1853, p. 1595: 'the three tropics of daily conversation—the Arctic Regions, Constantinople, and St. Petersburg.'

⁴ *E.g.*, see the *Athenæum*, 9th March 1850, p. 259: 'The idea that the North-West Passage, if discovered, would be of any material benefit to us as a commercial people has been for long abandoned. . . . The interests of science are the sole remaining incentives to our zeal. We want knowledge—and search eagerly for it, though we see no way in which it can be turned to account in the market or on the exchange. This, in an age so often characterised as material, in all its aspects, is well worthy of remark and full of suggestion'.

opinion in Britain that exploration was a worthy end in itself. That opinion had been firmly and widely established by 1854, but it was not (I think) prevalent before 1845, when some sort of 'scientific usefulness' had to be advanced to excuse exploration or mountaineering. Speer's evident ambition to climb an *unclimbed* peak, and his attempt to climb the 'virgin' (his own word) Wetterhorn in 1843, would therefore be important as an addition to the few British instances of true pioneering climbs before the new general opinion had been born at home, and ten years or more before the birth of the sport in the Alps.

There were some seeming errors in Speer's later narrative⁵ of his actual ascent of the Mittelhorn if that had really been made in 1845. Thus Speer claimed to have made the first crossing of the Lauteraarjoch

⁵ Stanhope Templeman Speer: *Bibliography*. The following is a list of Speer's own writings used as sources of information in this paper:—

Ascent of the Wetterhorn, etc. (dated 'Paris, August 20' and called Speer's 'Narrative' in the present text), published in the *Athenæum*, No. 940, p. 1055, on November 1, 1845.

A letter in *The Times* of January 23, 1846, correcting some mistakes in a version of his narrative printed in that paper on January 17. This is only of interest as an indication of Speer's good knowledge of the mountains through which he passed.

Mountain Sickness: in the *Association Medical Journal*, January 21 and 28, 1853, pp. 49–53 and 80–87. I am indebted to Dr. H. Clegg, editor of the *British Medical Journal*, for a photostat copy of this article. Speer here gives some information about his earlier climbs and his Mittelhorn ascent, for which (and also for his narrative) he gives a wrong date ('1846').

A letter in the *Daily News* of August 7, 1856. This letter was written to amplify and correct the references to early ascents on the Wetterhörner in Sir Alfred Wills' *Wanderings among the High Alps*, which had just been published. Speer, whose object was to give due credit to Bannholzer and Jaun for their conquest of the Hasli Jungfrau (from Rosenlauri) in 1844, gives in this connexion some interesting information about his own first objective and so on. Wills referred to this letter in a footnote in the second edition of his *Wanderings* (1858, p. 264); and, acting on this clue, Mr. Macintosh (then assistant secretary of the Alpine Club) brought the letter to light in 1904, at the time when W. A. B. Coolidge, Dr. Heinrich Dübi, and Valentine Richards were trying to unravel the early history of the Wetterhörner ascents. This letter is quoted here from Mr. Macintosh's MS. copy in the Library of the Alpine Club.

Speer's *Narrative* was many times reprinted or its story re-told in the third person: A French translation appeared in *Le Moniteur universel* of Paris on December 23, 1845 (No. 357, p. 2861). In *The Times* of January 17, 1846, this French version was translated back into English. In *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* of January 23, 1846 (vol. 5, p. 59), the *Athenæum* narrative was reprinted nearly completely. In the following year, 1847, Speer's story, in various forms, began to appear in popular annuals and gift-books. Instances of these are *The Excitement* (vol. 18, p. 208, 1847) and *Curiosities of Modern Travel* (1847, p. 107). Charles Williams gave the story nearly in full in his compilation, *The Alps*, which appeared during 1853 in separate parts and in 1854 as a complete book. A long and detailed account of Speer's ascent was included by W. H. D. Adams in his anonymous compilation, *Alpine Adventure* (1878), and was republished in two later editions under the title, *Alpine Climbing* (1881, 1882). Finally, the most readily accessible version of Speer's story is the complete reprint of his *Athenæum* article, with notes by W. A. B. Coolidge, in the *Alpine Journal*, vol. 17, p. 107, 1894.

on that occasion, and he described his descent from the Mittelhorn as being made through the 'terra incognita' of the Rosenlauri glacier. Both of these statements were wrong if they referred to 1845, but they would have been true for 1843 or for any date before the last day of August in 1844. Also, Speer's statement that he saw the flagstaff on the 'Shreckhorn' (*sic.*, really the Lauteraarhorn, not the Schreckhorn) which Desor planted there in 1842 (and was surprised to see it still intact in September of the same year), seemed to suggest that Speer saw it in 1843 rather than two years later and three years after the planting.

No actual year was given by Speer in his narrative, and I wondered if it was a belated account of an ascent which had been made in 1843 or 1844—in the former case Speer must have mistaken the name of one of his guides in his Grimsel entry, and in the latter case there must have been a mistake in the year to which the entry applied. A definite clue seemed to be offered by the single significant date in Speer's narrative—'Thursday, July 4,' the day on which he left Interlaken for his actual ascent. I looked this up, to find that it was true only for 1844, and neither for 1843 or 1845, when July 4 was respectively a Tuesday and a Friday. But I then found news items in the *Athenæum* (August 16th) and *The Times* (August 19th) of 1845 which proved conclusively that Speer's actual ascent was made in that year. But I was not quite satisfied, and early in 1949, Herr Riggerberg, the present owner of the old Grimsel book, searched it (at my request conveyed through my friend Dr. Oskar Hug and Herr Othmar Gurtner) for possible entries by Speer. It was proved that the entry published in this *Journal*, and quoted above, was made by Speer in 1845, and that the date, '1843,' given in this *Journal* was an error. There can now be no doubt that the quoted entry was made by Speer at the Grimsel immediately before he set out for his successful ascent.

This settled a question which had given me a lot of thought but had no connexion with any controversial issue, and to that extent (at least) was of no importance. But I have treated it here at length to show how easily one may be misled by what seem to be inevitable conclusions from apparently trustworthy 'facts.' Let us look again at Speer's Grimsel entry: He left the Grimsel on a different date (if only by a day) from that given in his narrative; the 'Wetterhorn' (i.e., the 'Wetterhorn proper,' or Hasli Jungfrau) *was* 'virgin' on any date before August 31, 1844, but was *not* virgin in 1845; and Abplanalp (not mentioned in the entry) was one of Speer's guides in 1845, whilst Bannholzer (mentioned) was *not*. Taken at their face values, these points would, I think, convince any one who knew the early history of the Wetterhörner that Speer's Grimsel entry and his narrative dealt with different occasions at least one year apart, but in actual fact they seem to have referred to the same expedition! I may add one other point which influenced me at first: the wintry conditions and the great masses of snow which Desor⁶ found at the Grimsel on June 20th,

⁶ Édouard Desor: *Excursions et séjours dans les glaciers*, 1844, p. 573. This, Desor's first volume, will subsequently be referred to as 'Desor, I.'

1843, less than three weeks before July 8, seemed to give a good reason for the failure of any attempt which Speer might have made on that date.

Speer's project.

During the summer of 1845, Speer was living, possibly with his parents, in Interlaken, where one of the resident physicians was Dr. Gottfried Roth. It was probably whilst there that Speer's ambition to climb the 'virgin' Wetterhorn was born. Desor's second volume, in which he described his first ascent of the Rosenhorn peak—the lowest of the three Wetterhörner—was published in 1845⁷; and Speer who had certainly read Desor's narrative before he wrote his own account on August 20, 1845, may just possibly have read it and was attracted by it to the Wetterhorn before his ascent. In any case, he made wide inquiries amongst the local 'guides' at Interlaken, and he tells us that only two of these were real mountaineers. These Interlaken men were little more than couriers who would take visitors up the Faulhorn on occasion, and the two 'real' guides were probably not high mountain guides like the men at the Grimsel who had worked with Agassiz, Dollfus, and others. Speer was told that he would have to go to the Grimsel and secure his guides there. With Jonathan Michel, one of the best Interlaken men, he set out on 'Thursday, July 4.' As has been shown (see p. 182), there was no such date in 1845, and I shall give grounds later for the probability that the true date was Saturday, July 5 (see p. 192). That day he walked to Grindelwald, where he again sought information about the Wetterhorn, and was told that it had not yet been climbed. The Grindelwald men probably lied to Speer. They may not have known about Desor's conquest of the Rosenhorn on August 28, 1844—his narrative was written in French; but two of Desor's guides, Melchior Bannholzer and Johann Jaun, had conquered the Hasli Jungfrau (or 'Wetterhorn proper') three days later with the express object of planting a flag which would be visible from Grindelwald on the summit. It is difficult to believe that this was unknown in Grindelwald. Speer, having slept another night on the way, reached the Grimsel Hospice on the third day of his journey, and there he discussed his project with M. Zybach and three guides, one of whom was Johann Jaun and the others were probably Caspar Abplanalp and Melchior Bannholzer.

Gottfried Roth, the Interlaken doctor, must, of course, have heard there about Speer's project, and he determined to forestall Speer by climbing the same peak from Grindelwald before Speer could reach it from the Grimsel. Roth's motive was admittedly international rivalry, and he made his preparations so secretly that Speer did not learn about Roth's attempt until after his own return to Interlaken. It will be noted that Roth's design was to get first to the summit of the *same* peak

⁷ Édouard Desor: *Nouvelles excursions et séjours dans les glaciers*, 1845, see pp. 123–53. This, Desor's second volume will be referred to subsequently as 'Desor, II.' The *preface* to this volume is dated, '1er mai 1845.'

of the Wetterhorn selected by Speer; and in view of the controversy about what Roth actually did during his attempt to forestall Speer, the question of Speer's *original* objective (at Interlaken) is important.

Speer himself gave the facts clearly in his letter to the *Daily News*, where he said that, when at Interlaken, he had believed that the Wetterhorn proper (Hasli Jungfrau) and the Mittelhorn were both virgin. This means that Speer then knew about Desor's conquest of the Rosenhorn in 1844, but did not know that the Wetterhorn proper had been conquered by the two guides three days later; and the fact that Roth (as we shall see) also went out for the Wetterhorn proper suggests that its virginity was the common belief in Interlaken.

Then Speer added: 'But for the information received at the Grimsel [to which we shall return here], I should myself have ascended the peak of the Wetterhorn proper. It had, however, lost the prestige which attaches to all virgin summits, and I preferred therefore to scale the central peak.' Thus Speer's original objective at Interlaken was clearly the Wetterhorn proper, or Hasli Jungfrau, which must necessarily have been Roth's objective too. It may be noticed in passing that Speer's ambitions were clearly directed to *unclimbed* peaks, and that, here and elsewhere, he does not seem to have cared whether or not his chosen peak was the highest of the three—his lure was the adventure of exploration.

In his narrative, however, written soon after the event, Speer had said that 'the untrodden central or *great* peak of the Wetterhorn' (my italics) had been his long held ambition; and if we assume 'great' to mean 'highest,' this is Speer's only reference to the relative altitudes of the three Wetterhörner in his writings. It is just possible that Speer had been confused by the name 'Grosse Wetterhorn' given then and later by the local guides to the Hasli Jungfrau⁸, and by the apparently central position of the main peak in the maps of that date—the most detailed of which was still the beautiful map of J. H. Weiss, the surveyor of J. R. Meyer of Aarau, which was designed for the use of travellers and was published in 1796⁹. (This map seems to have been the basis of the crude maps reproduced by Wyss in 1816¹⁰ and Walthard in 1838¹¹, which perhaps were more readily accessible to

⁸ É. Desor: *Agassiz' und seiner Freunde, etc.*, second edition ('greatly enlarged'), 1847, see p. 532. I have not seen the first edition of this book, which was edited by Carl Vogt, who is usually named as the author. It is really a German translation of Desor's two volumes, and there is internal evidence that he himself made additions in the text. Desor had been born and educated in Germany.

⁹ *Carte d'une Partie très intéressante de la Suisse à L'Usage des Voyageurs . . . Levée et dessinée trigonométriquement et géométriquement par J. H. Weiss, aux dépens de J. R. M. [i.e. J. R. Meyer] à Arau [sic]. 1796.* My own copy was bound in Meyer's great *Atlas*, of which it did not form a part. The scale is about 1 : 117,000, or a little greater than 2 miles to 1 inch (about 1.7 miles).

¹⁰ J. R. Wyss: *Hand Atlas für Reisende in das Berner Oberland*, 1816 (also with French text, same year).

¹¹ [R. Walthard]: *Nouvelle description de L'Oberland Bernois*, 1838.

Speer.) It is, however, more likely that Speer was writing rather carelessly after the event when he wrote the words quoted above, because no accurate survey of the three individual peaks had yet been made in 1845, and nobody could have known surely which was the highest summit before Speer and his companions stood on the top of the Mittelhorn that summer.

The Mittelhorn and Rosenhorn are seen sideways in line behind the aggressively prominent Wetterhorn proper in the view from Grindelwald, and they do not look very significant. Each of the three peaks is seen separately in a different valley view from the east side of the group. It was not until 1843 that the three peaks were seen in proper display when Brunner and Desor reached the top of the Dossenhorn for the first known time, and Desor made the sketch reproduced in his first volume (1844)¹², in which he also gave the present names to the three peaks. On that occasion, Desor seems to have thought that the Rosenhorn was the highest peak of the three, and, as far as I know, the only statement (or surmise) about the relative heights of the three Wetterhörner made before the publication of Speer's narrative in 1845 was Desor's single and passing reference to the fact that he selected the Rosenhorn for his 1844 ascent because he had thought it to be the highest peak—a mistake which Desor *must* have realised when he reached its summit, but did not correct in his book of 1845¹³.

The Rosenhorn is, of course, the lowest of the three Wetterhörner, and it is about $48\frac{1}{2}$ ft. lower than its near neighbour, the Mittelhorn. According to the latest recalculations to a new horizon by the Swiss Federal Survey (1927, 1928)¹⁴, the respective altitudes of the three peaks are: Hasli Jungfrau, 3,701 m. (12,143 ft.); Mittelhorn, 3,704 m. (12,153 ft.); and Rosenhorn, 3,689.2 m. (12,104 ft.). These new and accurate determinations reduce the attitudes of the Hasli Jungfrau and Mittelhorn by 2 and 4 m. respectively, from those formerly given on the Dufour and Siegfried maps; and their difference in height is therefore only 3 m. (10 ft.) and not 5 m. (16 ft.). Thus if Desor's two guides had any interest in relative heights when they stood on the top of the Hasli Jungfrau in 1844, they would see the summit of the Mittelhorn less than 5 ft. above the level of their eyes, and with no straight horizon behind it; and they would have the same difficulty in deciding whether their peak or the Mittelhorn was the higher, as had Sir Alfred Wills ten years later, when he indeed gave the supremacy to the Hasli Jungfrau. But when Speer reached the Mittelhorn in 1845, *he* would see the Hasli Jungfrau more than 15 ft. below the level of his eyes and (as he had a clear view) below the level of a straight horizon—he could have had no doubt that the Mittelhorn was the highest of the Wetterhörner.

¹² Desor, *I*, 1844, at 610.

¹³ Desor, *II*, 1845, pp. 123–53; see p. 136. (But Hugi had had much the same view in 1828—a fact neglected by Desor, who never gave Hugi the credit which was his due.)

¹⁴ This information was kindly supplied to me by M. de Raemy of the Swiss Federal Survey at the instance of my friend M. Marcel Kurz.

We must now leave Speer with his projects at the Grimsel, and turn to Dr. Gottfried Roth's counterattack.

Fankhauser and Roth's expedition, July 7, 1845.

Dr. Gottfried Roth joined forces with Franz Fankhauser, a forester, but perhaps they remained in Interlaken until Speer had left. They certainly reached Grindelwald with Christian Michel on or before July 6, when, having engaged two other guides, Johann Bohren and Peter Bohren of Grindelwald, they went up to the Gleckstein bivouac near the site of the present hut. Their objective, as we have seen, was the Hasli Jungfrau. The question is: what *did* they reach?

Contemporary newspaper paragraphs, brought again to light not very long ago by Herr Carl Egger¹⁵, and probably supplied at the time by a Grindelwald hotel keeper (as was usual), stated that the party made a complete ascent of the [Hasli Jungfrau], which was described as the highest peak. It would seem that Fankhauser and Roth never published a narrative of their expedition—a fact of some significance if we remember the object for which it was undertaken—but they both signed a statement at Interlaken on July 16 (less than a week after Speer's return), and this was published in a Swiss newspaper¹⁶. In this, writing in the third person, they claimed to have *reached* the highest peak ('dass sie . . . die höchste Spitze der Wetterhörner erreichten'), whereas Speer *climbed* ('bestieg') a more *westerly* peak, namely the Mittelhorn. This obviously means that Roth's peak lay to the *east* of the Mittelhorn, and must therefore have been the Rosenhorn (as Dangar and Blakeney have recently noticed¹⁷), which was Desor's 'highest summit' and rises to the south-east of the other two peaks. In view of the weighty evidence that this expedition failed in its objective, there may be significance in the words which I have stressed above: You may 'reach' one of three peaks which rise from a common plateau without getting to the top, but if you 'climb' a peak, the inference is that you reach its summit.

When Speer returned to Interlaken on July 10 he heard about this expedition, and it is difficult to believe that he did not compare notes with Dr. Roth himself. In his narrative Speer states, without giving names, that Fankhauser and Roth's attempt (that is, to climb the Hasli Jungfrau) had 'proved a failure'; and he added: 'the parties [Fankhauser and Roth], having mistaken their locality, ascended a peak, the summit of which had been first reached in 1844 by the same [two] men who had so ably assisted me in the ascent just described.' This again points to the Rosenhorn. Of Speer's own two Grimsel men (Jonathan Michel does not come into this question) Jaun took part in the ascent of the Rosenhorn (he is named by Desor) and was one of the two guides who climbed the Hasli Jungfrau, Bannholzer being the

¹⁵ *Die Alpen*, 16. 263, 1940. See also *A. J.* 56. 82, 1947.

¹⁶ The *Schweizerischer Beobachter*, No. 86, July 19th, 1845; quoted here from Egger, *loc. cit.*

¹⁷ *A. J.* 58. 496, 1952.

other one ; Abplanalp was certainly not in the latter ascent, but he may have been, and probably was, one of the three (out of six) Grimsel guides who took part in the Rosenhorn ascent in 1844, but were not named in Desor's narrative. Speer evidently was led to believe that Roth had reached the top of the Rosenhorn, but in view of what is to follow here (and if Speer's information came from Roth himself), Speer may have read too much into Roth's guarded words. It should be realised that Roth (if he had indeed failed to reach any summit at all) was in a difficult and even in a somewhat ridiculous position. If his preparations may have been made very quietly, no secret was later made of his motive—to forestall Speer on the latter's original objective. Speer had won the virgin summit of his second choice, and (if Roth did not reach a summit) Speer's would-be forestaller had been completely defeated. It may be mentioned again that neither Fankhauser nor Roth seems to have published any account of what would have been a notable expedition—the first ascent from Grindelwald of any one of the Wetterhörner—even if the summit reached was only that of the Rosenhorn.

Until Herr Egger unearthed the contemporary newspaper items, it was generally accepted that Fankhauser and Roth had not reached any summit, and this view was based on the definite statements of Gottlieb Studer, a famous and careful Alpine historian of the early events which happened in his own active lifetime. The weight of Studer's conclusions depends, of course, on the reliability of his sources (or probable sources) of information, and in this case at least he had two good opportunities of getting first-hand accounts. Towards the end of August in 1845, Studer spent an uncomfortable night in the bivouac of the Eigerhöhle for an abortive attempt to climb the Mönch from the south¹⁸, and one of his guides was the same Peter Bohren who had been with Fankhauser and Roth only six or seven weeks before¹⁹. There can be little doubt that Studer got his information about that expedition at first-hand from Bohren. Studer crossed the Strahlegg pass from the Grimsel to Grindelwald with his friend 'B.' and the guides, Jakob Zybach, Castor [? Caspar] Abplanalp, and H. Bossli, about three weeks or so later in that season, the dates being September 18 and 19²⁰. He spent the night of the 19th at Grindelwald before returning home, and he had there at least an opportunity of getting more information about the Fankhauser-Roth attempt.

¹⁸ Gottlieb Studer : *Berg- und Gletscherfahrten*, vol. 2, 1863, p. 72.

¹⁹ See *Jahrbuch S.A.C.* 34, p. 203, 1899.

²⁰ I noticed the mention of this expedition in the list of Studer's climbs in the obituary published in the second edition of his *Über Eis und Schnee*, edited by Wäber and Dübi. At the instance of my friend M. I. de Bruyn, information from Studer's MS. journal about his crossing of the Strahlegg pass was obtained for me from Herr E. Schaer. One of the names given was 'Castor' Abplanalp ; but Studer had previously crossed the same pass (in 1839) with *Caspar* Abplanalp (Studer : *Topographische Mittheilungen*, 1844, p. 203) ; and if it was Caspar again in 1845, Studer must have had first-hand information from him about Speer's ascent, in addition to what he may have had at the Grimsel.

In Studer's first notice of that attempt²¹, he states that it was designed to forestall Speer, but that it was a failure ('ein misslunger Versuch'); but he adds that the party reached the main Wetterhörner ridge (i.e., watershed) 'probably between the Mittelhorn and the Hasli Jungfrau'—that is, at the gap now known as the Wettersattel between the two peaks (the italics are mine). The party then retreated, but Studer stated that he did not know why—'whether it was because of fatigue or because of local difficulties.'

In his own first edition of *Über Eis und Schnee* (1869)²², Studer reproduced much of his first notice in the original words, and again stated that the attempt was a failure; but he omitted the bit about his ignorance of the cause of the defeat, and, what is perhaps significant, he did not repeat his surmise that the point where the main ridge was reached was 'probably' the Wettersattel. When A. Wäber and Heinrich Dübi edited the second edition of *Über Eis und Schnee* (1896)²³ after Studer's death, they kept near to Studer's words in this account, but they reinserted Studer's earliest surmise about the attempt ending on the Wettersattel. It was again described as a failure.

Dübi was in correspondence with Franz Fankhauser about this expedition in 1898, and this he put at the disposal of W. A. B. Coolidge, who was at that time writing an obituary of Christian Almer. Dangar and Blakeney have also noticed this, but they have failed, I think, to give sufficient stress to the decisive outcome; for, with Fankhauser's information before him, and doubtless with other sources available, Coolidge, in the obituary, without naming the place at which the Fankhauser-Roth party turned back, stated that the attempt failed at a point 100 m. below the (unnamed) summit²⁴. Dübi also must have agreed with this final estimate of the outcome of the expedition, and it is clear that Franz Fankhauser at least made no claim that an actual summit had been reached.

Herr Egger put his trust in the various contemporary newspaper items which he unearthed, and he claimed for Fankhauser and Roth that they made the first ascent from Grindelwald of the Hasli Jungfrau on July 7, 1845—thus preceding Sir Alfred Wills by nine years. But the evidence—the climbers' own guarded words, Speer's statement (perhaps from what he understood Roth himself to have told him), Studer's account (probably based on information from Peter Bohren), Coolidge's clear statement (after reading Fankhauser's letter), and finally the apparent failure of both Fankhauser and Roth to publish a detailed narrative, or even a shorter account, of the expedition by which they hoped to snatch the victory from an unconscious rival—seems to

²¹ Gottlieb Studer: *Das Panorama von Bern*, 1850, p. 233.

²² Gottlieb Studer: *Über Eis und Schnee*, vol. 1, 1869, p. 236.

²³ The same, second edition, edited by A. Wäber and H. Dübi, vol. 1, 1896, p. 420.

²⁴ W. A. B. Coolidge: *Jahrbuch S.A.C.* 34, 1899. (See p. 203.) It will be noticed that the height at which the attempt failed was given for the first time by Coolidge, and the inference would seem to be that he got the information from Fankhauser's letter.

be decisive that whichever peak of the Wetterhörner they attempted in the event, it was not the Hasli Jungfrau, and that they failed at a point considerably below its actual summit.

I think that the following fairly represents what probably happened : The party left the Gleckstein bivouac early on July 7 with the intention of climbing the Hasli Jungfrau. It shunned the rocky slopes and snow couloirs on the west flank of the Hasli Jungfrau and Wettersattel and went too far to the south-east, thus losing its proposed direction and climbing the easier slope to the gap between the Mittelhorn and the Rosenhorn. Perhaps too much time had been wasted on the way, or some of the climbers (as Studer surmised) may have been fatigued, but in any case an attempt was made to reach the summit of the Rosenhorn. This was abandoned, and the party returned to Grindelwald.

Speer's ascent of the Mittelhorn, July 9, 1845.

When Speer reached the Grimsel with Jonathan Michel, he took counsel with M. Zybach, the landlord, and three guides. In his narrative, Speer mentions Zybach alone, and says little about the nature of the discussion ; but in his *Daily News* letter, already quoted above, he says that he learnt there that, of his two supposedly virgin summits, the Hasli Jungfrau had in fact been climbed by two of the Grimsel guides in 1844, so Speer changed his objective from that peak to the still virgin Mittelhorn. Speer then engaged Johann Jaun and Caspar Abplanalp, who presumably were two of the three guides present at the discussion, Jaun being taken as his leading guide. A curious and misleading slip in Speer's entry in the Grimsel Visitors' Book suggests that Melchior Bannholzer was the third guide present at the discussion, but he was not engaged by Speer.

Coolidge, in his valuable notes in the *Alpine Journal* on the occasion of the reprinting in it of Speer's original narrative²⁵, blames Speer for being 'in the hands' of his guides, and, in effect, for being ignorant of the route pioneered by Bannholzer and Jaun when they conquered the Hasli Jungfrau in 1844. But in the first place, even if Speer had read Desor's second volume *before* his own ascent (I think, in spite of Coolidge's opinion to the contrary, that Speer had certainly read it before he wrote his own narrative on August 20 in Paris), he might easily have overlooked Desor's very brief account of that expedition. You wade through page upon page devoted to Desor's description of his ascent of the Rosenhorn, and come thankfully to its conclusion with one final paragraph to go before the end of the chapter. That paragraph seems to deal with Desor's admiration of the views which he had of his flag on the top of the Rosenhorn from various places on his way back to the Grimsel ; but embedded in that paragraph is Desor's far too brief and inadequately detailed account of the conquest of the Hasli Jungfrau by his two guides.

In the second place, possible language difficulties should always

²⁵ W. A. B. Coolidge, in *A. J.* 17, pp. 115-122, 1894.

be taken into account in circumstances such as these. It is unlikely that Jonathan Michel could speak any other language than French in addition to his native Swiss-German. In 1855, Heathman²⁶ noted that most of the Faulhorn 'guides' could speak French, and he would have mentioned English had any of them been able to speak it. We know that Speer's leading guide, Johann Jaun 'of Meiringen' (so called to distinguish him from another contemporary guide of the same name) could not speak French, and it is probable that his only language was the Haslital variety of Swiss-German as modified by his contact with Agassiz and Desor—the latter had been born and educated in Germany. Speer himself must have been sufficiently proficient in French, but he certainly knew little or no German—he not only misspelt German proper names throughout his narrative (as Coolidge noticed), but translated the word 'klein' as 'great.' Thus in the Grimsel discussions and during his climb, Speer's contact with the Grimsel guides must have been through Michel, to whom Speer would put a question as best he could in French, when Michel would translate it into Swiss-German, receive the answer in that language, translate it into French for Speer, who would then make the best of it he could. Further, Michel was seriously affected by the altitude during the climb, and it is little wonder that Speer missed much information which would have been given to him had he been able to talk freely and directly with Jaun. He probably got little more information than the names of the mountains to which he would point, and his excellent topography, doubtless aided by a study of Desor's narrative after his climb, was in large part due to his own observation.

To return to the Grimsel discussions: there is another, and an amusing, first-hand account of them. Johann Jaun was at this time only third or fourth in the hierarchy of the Grimsel guides who had taken part in Agassiz's glacier work and in the ascents made by him and members of his party—of these guides, Johann Währen was then the chief (in succession to Jacob Leuthold) and Melchior Bannholzer seems to have been second in rank. It is probable that Speer's ascent was the first in which Jaun acted as 'leading' guide, but in later years he acted as such for Dollfus-Ausset, who persuaded him to write an account of the early expeditions in which he had taken part. This Jaun did before his death in 1860, and Dollfus published much of Jaun's account in one of the nine massive volumes of his work on glaciers²⁷. Dollfus had devoted the preceding volume (vol. 4) to narratives of mountain ascents, reprinted from various sources, and Jaun's personal account of his own exploits was so unobtrusively buried in a volume devoted to other and (to us) less interesting matters that it has been neglected. Coolidge, however, drew attention to its importance in 1910²⁸, and Farrar quoted from it in 1913²⁹; but there seems at times

²⁶ W. G. Heathman: *Switzerland in 1854-5, 1855*, footnote on p. 141.

²⁷ D. Dollfus-Ausset: *Matériaux pour l'étude des glaciers*, 9 vols., 1864-1870.

²⁸ W. A. B. Coolidge: *A. J.*, 25, 186, 1910.

²⁹ J. P. Farrar: *A. J.* 27, footnote on p. 298, 1913.

to have been a tendency to use information from Jaun's account without naming the source—as did Farrar (again) in 1916³⁰, and Herr Egger more recently in 1947³¹. Perhaps there was reason for this. Jaun's account shows him to have been a braggart, not always reliable in his statements, and sometimes untruthful; it is therefore not always convincing.

It may be added in passing that Jaun's account is the only first-hand description we have of the conquest of the Hasli Jungfrau by Bannholzer and himself in 1844. Here Jaun's account rings true, and the clear description of a steep slope of ice and snow leading up to an overhanging cornice, through which the two guides had to break a way to reach the summit, leaves no room for doubt that their peak was the Hasli Jungfrau. Jaun mentions, but without detailed description, the subsequent first crossing of the Lauteraarjoch during their return that day; and Dollfus adds in a footnote that the whole expedition took 9 hours (only) from Rosenlauri to the Pavillon Dollfus on the Unteraar glacier—a magnificent performance.

Jaun's description of Speer's expedition is disappointingly brief³². He says that: An Englishman [Speer, really a young Scot] and Jonathan Michel arrived at the Grimsel to engage guides for an ascent of the Wetterhorn 'because they had heard that it was climbed last year and was therefore possible.' He (Hans Jaun) and Kaspar Abplanalp, the 'Strahleck-Major,' were accordingly engaged. Jaun continues: 'But because I knew that Herr Agassiz wished to climb it later, and would be very sorry if any other [traveller] preceded him, I pointed out that the Wetterhorn had already been climbed, but the *Mittelhorn* had not, and that we could therefore climb a virgin peak, which pleased him [Speer] well. We slept in the Pavillon [i.e., the Pavillon Dollfus on the Unteraar glacier], and crossed the Lauteraarsattel next day and climbed the *Mittelhorn*. Then we descended to Rosenlauri by the same route which I and Bannholzer made [that is, up to the Hasli Jungfrau in 1844], and [my italics] *thus the Wetterhorn was saved for Herr Agassiz.*'

By the 'Wetterhorn,' Jaun of course means the Hasli Jungfrau peak, and his account agrees with Speer's narrative and the *Daily News* letter except in one particular. As Jaun says, Speer's original objective was certainly the Hasli Jungfrau, but Speer had chosen it, not because it had been proved to be accessible, but because he had at first believed that it was still virgin; and Jaun is then correct when he says that Speer adopted the *Mittelhorn* as his objective because of its virginity. It will be seen that Jaun contradicts himself (in a sense) when he says that Speer originally chose the Hasli Jungfrau for its proved accessibility, and then gave it up because it had already been climbed; and as for Jaun's prominent part in the discussion, and his claim to have 'saved'

³⁰ J. P. Farrar: *A. J.* 30. 298, 1916.

³¹ C. Egger: *A. J.* 56, footnote on p. 84, 1947.

³² Johann Jaun: *Ascensions, courses et séjours dans les hautes régions, par le guide Hans Jaun, 1841-60*, in Dollfus-Ausset's *Matériaux, etc.*, vol. 5, part 1, 1864, pp. 360-72.

the Hasli Jungfrau for Agassiz—he is not likely to have played a leading rôle in the talk, with Zybach in command and Bannholzer (probably) at his side.

Speer left the Grimsel with Johann Jaun ('of Meiringen'), Casper Abplanalp, and Jonathan Michel (whom he has described as 'an inhabitant of the plains') on the morning after his arrival, and with the intention of sleeping that night at the Pavillon Dollfus on the Unteraar glacier for his climb next day. Before quitting the Grimsel, Speer made the entry in the visitors' book which has already been quoted here (p. 181), and it may be remarked that his stated objective, 'the virgin summit of the Wetterhorn,' was really a good and accurate description for the Mittelhorn peak at a time when Desor's names for the three summits were not yet in general use, and the other two had been climbed. Speer's mistake (put right in his narrative) in thinking that one of his guides was Bannholzer (not Abplanalp) is easily enough explained by the language difficulty and by the probability (if not certainty) that Speer's Grimsel guides were actually engaged for him by Michel.

Another word must here be given to Speer's dates, that of the entry being 'the 8th July.' This, Speer's only exactly contemporary date, should be regarded as the most reliable one, because it would be written in proper order amongst the entries of travellers across the frequented Grimsel pass. This would make July 9 the day of Speer's actual ascent, and this date was not only given for it in at least one of the contemporary Swiss newspapers (others gave July 8), but its correctness may be inferred from Speer's own narrative. When Speer wrote his narrative, he was of course aware of Fankhauser and Roth's attempt on July 7, which he described as having been made *two* days before his own ascent; and when the two Swiss, in their only published statement, said that Speer's ascent was made one day after their own expedition, they probably just accepted the date given in many of the Swiss newspapers. There is another point to be made: in his narrative, Speer gives only two actual dates—those of his departure from, and return to, Interlaken; but he mentions his various sleeping places (followed, for instance, by 'Next day,' or words to that effect) during his tour. There is, however, no mention of a night passed between Rosenloui (where Speer slept after his climb) and Interlaken, to which he returned on 'the 10th of July.' The young British travellers in the Alps in these days were sturdy walkers, and the inference is that Speer walked from Rosenloui to Interlaken (passing through Grindelwald) on the day after his climb—an example of stamina which was even excelled in other instances at or about that time. In that case his ascent was made on July 9, and his whole tour, starting with the impossible 'Thursday, July 4,' took one day less than the stated dates given for it. It may be suggested that when Speer wrote his narrative about six weeks after the events, he had cause to remember the true date of his return to Interlaken, and calculated back for that of his departure, so giving 'Thursday, July 4' wrongly in place of 'Saturday, July 5.'

The details of Speer's climb cannot be given here, and the reader must be referred to Speer's attractive narrative³³. One or two points may however be mentioned. His party slept at the Pavillon Dollfus after leaving the Grimsel, and next morning it crossed the Lauteraarjoch—'hitherto considered impracticable,' so Speer said. Speer's passage was the first to be made by a traveller, and the first of any to be made from south to north; but the crest had been reached in that direction by Girard and Berger in 1842³⁴, and Bannholzer and Jaun had made the first crossing (from north to south) on their descent from the Hasli Jungfrau in 1844. Speer's lack of knowledge must, of course, have been due to the language difficulty mentioned before, even if his guides had not been tempted to keep silence in view of Speer's obvious craving for new exploration. Coolidge, in his notes, takes Speer to task for this unfounded claim, but there is no reason to suppose that Speer knew the facts, and every reason to believe that his claim was made honestly.

Speer's party then skirted the Rosenhorn, reached the gap between it and the Mittelhorn, and climbed to the top of the latter. Speer gives a good description of the summit view (it is curious that he gives no hint about the relative heights of the Wetterhörner peaks and the supremacy of his own summit), and it is interesting to compare this description with that given by Desor of the view from the Rosenhorn in 1844³⁵. In each of the descriptions there is mention of mountain objects not mentioned in the other, and Speer thus omits some that Desor mentioned, but adds others of his own. In other words, Speer's is evidently an honest account of what he remembered to have seen; but some of his epithets are so like those used by Desor, that I think that anybody who reads the two descriptions side by side will agree that Speer must have checked his own memory by reading Desor's description, although that he did not slavishly copy it. Coolidge, however, stated that Speer 'displays no acquaintance with Desor's books.'

In his letter to the *Daily News* in 1856, Speer mentioned that, when on the Mittelhorn, he had seen an alpenstock on the Hasli Jungfrau peak, 'which had been planted there not long before by one of my guides, I. Jann [*sic.*, an obvious printer's error], who had ascended the mountain from Rosenlauri, whither he had conducted M. Agassiz. This statement [i.e., Jaun's, that he had planted the alpenstock] was *subsequently* [my italics] corroborated by an account which I met in the *United Service Journal* [*sic.*], and in which M. Agassiz alludes to the ascent [that of Bannholzer and Jaun in 1844] in question.' This wording again shows that, at the times of his ascent and of the writing of his narrative, Speer's only information about the guides' ascent in 1844 must have come from Jaun's own lips, and that Speer must have missed Desor's brief and inconspicuous description of the ascent.

³³ S. T. Speer: see, for instance, *A.J.* 17. 107, 1894, where the reprinted narrative is followed by Coolidge's notes.

³⁴ Desor, *I*, 1844, p. 431.

³⁵ Desor, *II*, 1845, pp. 140-143.

Speer is probably wrong where he says that Jaun conducted Agassiz to Rosenlauri on the eve of his own ascent ; but other apparent inaccuracies were due to no fault of Speer's. The article in the *United Service Magazine* (February, 1846)³⁶, was a translation of the contemporary account by Adolf Vogt of the ascent of the Hasli Jungfrau by Agassiz and his friends about three weeks after Speer's own ascent ; but that Magazine did not give the author's name or the source of the article in question. There is, I think, little ground for Dangar and Blakeney's criticism that Speer here confused two different ascents.

Before he left the summit, Speer examined the proposed line of descent directly down the Rosenlauri glacier. This he described as a '*terra incognita*'—another echo from Desor, who had used the same words for the same ground in the account of his descent from the Rosenhorn in 1844, when he had gone down by the Renfen glacier instead³⁷. Bannholzer and Jaun had in fact gone up the whole length of the Rosenlauri glacier towards the Hasli Jungfrau in 1844, and Juan now led Speer down in more or less the same line. Speer's mistake, which Coolidge called 'an even more unfounded claim' than that about the Lauteraarjoch, must again have been due to his lack of information about the guides' ascent, and (in that case) to a reasonable belief that Desor's description still held good in 1845.

The Rosenlauri glacier gave serious difficulties under the flank of the Dossenhorn, as it was destined sometimes to give again in later years ; but Speer and his party reached Rosenlauri safely that evening, so ending an arduous and a very remarkable expedition which Speer had undertaken in a spirit of pure adventure. Next morning he set out from Rosenlauri for his return to Interlaken.

The History of Speer's Narrative.

The spirit of adventure and discovery, so clearly and attractively displayed in Speer's narrative, which was reprinted or paraphrased in various forms during the years which immediately followed his climb, must have impressed many boys and young men of the generation which, within a decade, established Alpine climbing (in the form of conquest) as a recognised sport at a time when the spread of railways was making the Alps more accessible to British visitors, and at much less cost than before. To that extent, the early popularity of the narrative was probably an important factor in the creation of the sport and in directing its early fashion ; but the history of the narrative itself is of interest, because it, and the mere fact of Speer's ascent, were twice forgotten and twice rediscovered before the early Climbers' Guides set Speer's ascent securely in its historical place.

Speer wrote his narrative in Paris (presumably during his journey

³⁶ Colborn's *United Service Magazine*, 1846, part I, p. 183. No author was named and no exact source was mentioned, but the article was a translation of Adolf Vogt's narrative of the expedition : *Ersteigung des Wetterhorns*, in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Augsburg, 1845, Nos. 244-6.

³⁷ Desor, *II* (1845), p. 149.

home with his parents), and dated it 'August 20.' It was first published on November 1, 1845, in the *Athenæum*, the famous weekly journal which had a very small 'private' circulation, but would be read in every Library, Club, Literary and Scientific Society, and Mechanics' Institute—all of which abounded at that time. The narrative was next translated and published in *Le Moniteur universel* of Paris on December 23, 1845 (No. 357, p. 2861), but with many mistakes, one of which was an obvious error in the date of Speer's departure from Interlaken, which was given as July 14 (in place of July 4), although the date of his return was given correctly as July 10. *The Times* then translated the French version back into English and published it fully, in two wide columns of close print, on January 17, 1846. The obvious mistake in the dates had been noticed, and was neutralised by changing that of Speer's return to 'July 20,' but it had not been noticed that July 14 was no more a 'Thursday' in 1845 than was July 4. In a letter, written from Edinburgh, which was printed in *The Times* of January 23, Speer corrected some of the many mistakes in the re-translation, but he allowed the new mistaken dates to stand. He seems to have had a weak head for dates, and with this their sad story ends (until, of course, Canon Horsley gave Speer an entirely different year).

The original *Athenæum* text was then reprinted, nearly completely, on January 24, 1846, in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* (vol. 5, p. 59), which gave it a wide 'family' circulation. At that time juvenile annuals and gift-books were extremely popular, and Speer's story appeared in them, sometimes as a condensed reprint and sometimes as a tale retold in the third person. Thus in 1847 the narrative or story was given in *The Excitement* (vol. 18: 'from a late number of the Moniteur') and in *Curiosities of Modern Travel* (from the 'Athenæum'), whilst *Glimpses of the Wonderful* (third series) contained a chapter titled 'Ascent of the Wetterhorn,' in which, however, there was very little about the mountain and Speer's name was not mentioned.

In addition to the re-telling of Speer's story, the mere fact of his ascent was kept alive in other ways during the years which elapsed before the birth of the sport. Knowledge about what had or had not been done on the mountains was necessarily more or less accidental in the early days before the appearance of regular mountaineering journals (of which the *Alpine Journal* was the pioneer in 1863), of Travellers' Handbooks written for climbers (as was Ball's *Alpine Guide*, 1863-1907), or of detailed Climbing Guides (the first of which in our language was Conway's *Zermatt Pocket Book*, 1881). In the absence of such technical sources, a traveller's information was likely to be derived from entries noticed in hotel visitors' books, from narratives chanced upon in various publications, and from hearsay. But there was one valuable and readily accessible source of information which, in the early days, anticipated to some extent the later technical sources—Murray's *Handbook for the use of Travellers in Switzerland*, the first edition of which was published in 1838. In its early editions, the *Handbook* increasingly gave information, and sometimes detailed

first-hand accounts, of new or unusual Alpine expeditions, especially in the cases of glacier passes. New mountain ascents (but rarely more than the mere fact) were noticed in 'Murray,' and Speer's ascent of the 'Wetterhorn' was included for the first time in the third issue of the third edition, in 1846.

Another mention of Speer's ascent was likely to be widely and continuously noticed in the years just before the birth of the sport and during its establishment. This was in the *Handbook* which Robert Burford issued for visitors to his panorama of the *Bernese Alps* for which he had himself made the detailed sketches from the Faulhorn with the help of a camera obscura in 1852. Burford was then exhibiting three different panoramas at the same time in Leicester Square, and each of these was usually replaced by a new one after it had been shown for twelve months. But his *Bernese Alps* panorama proved to be so popular that Burford kept it on exhibition for so long as seven years—from 1852 to 1858.

Then, on the very eve of the sport's birth, a remarkable work, *The Alps*, by the Reverend Charles Williams, was published in parts during 1853 and as a complete book early in 1854. This was in great part only a compilation, but its remarkable feature was the prominence given to mountain ascents and the crossings of high glacier passes. These were described in detail with long quotations or paraphrased accounts from original sources, and to that extent the book was the first of its kind to appear in this country. A long account of Speer's ascent, given from his narrative in the third person, had the distinction of a chapter to itself, and with that, Speer's story was kept alive up to the very dawn of the sport.

When Sir Alfred Wills climbed the Hasli Jungfrau from Grindelwald in 1854, he knew of Speer's ascent, but seemingly only from 'Murray,' where Speer's exact peak was not given. Not long after this, almost complete oblivion overtook Speer and his ascent. This was probably due to the editor of Murray's *Handbook*. Speer's ascent had been mentioned in each edition from the third (1846, its third issue) to the sixth (1854); but for some unaccountable reason it was omitted in the seventh edition (1856), in which its place was given to a notice of Wills' ascent in 1854. It was not until 1879 that mention of Speer's ascent was again made in the sixteenth edition of 'Murray,' which made accurate mention of the first ascents of the three separate Wetterhörner peaks. John Ball, in his well-known *Alpine Guide*, which was a general guidebook for climbing traveller's rather than a specialised Climbers' Guide, did not mention Speer's ascent of the Mittelhorn in his account of the Wetterhörner ascents in any of the seven editions of the *Central Alps* volume which appeared between 1864 (first edition) and 1882 (seventh).

It was therefore not surprising that Speer began to be forgotten by British climbers soon after 1856, although Studer, who of course must have known the story of Roth's unsuccessful rivalry and Speer's victory from first-hand sources at Grindelwald and the Grimsel in 1845

(see p. 187 here), gave full credit to Speer in the first edition of *Über Eis und Schnee* (1869). Then W. H. D. Adams re-discovered Speer's narrative and he included a long and detailed account of Speer's ascent in his anonymous compilation, *Alpine Adventure*, which was published in 1878 and appeared in two later editions under the title, *Alpine Climbing* (1881 and 1882). Adams did not mention the source of the story, but his book was named as the source of a brief account of Speer's ascent which was included (probably by D. W. Freshfield after the author's death) in William Longman's *Modern Mountaineering* in 1878. This work, which was the first systematic history of Alpine climbing to appear in our language, was issued in parts as an appendix to vol. 8 of the *Alpine Journal*. As it was never separately published as a book, Longman's work, and the account of Speer's Mittlehorn ascent, appear again to have been forgotten.

In any case, when, in 1893, Henry Cockburn re-discovered Speer's narrative in the *Athenæum*, and it was reprinted verbatim, and with valuable notes by Coolidge, next year in the *Alpine Journal*, the narrative was hailed as an important new discovery; and thereafter Speer's ascent won its proper place, and permanent recognition, in the Climbers' Guides of Conway and Coolidge, and in standard climbing histories.

Agassiz's ascent of the Hasli Jungfrau, July 31, 1845.

Agassiz's friends had planned an ascent of the Hasli Jungfrau for him as a sort of farewell gift before he went to America; and it was to this that Jaun referred when he claimed that he had 'saved' the Wetterhorn for Herr Agassiz from Speer (see p. 191).

Accordingly, Agassiz, Bovet, and Adolf Vogt left the Grimsel with Johann Währen, Melchior Bannholzer, and Johann Jaun ('of Meiringen') on July 29, 1845, about three weeks after Speer's conquest of the Mittelhorn. Next day they reached the Lauteraarjoch, on which they bivouacked. On the following day, July 31, they traversed to the Wettersattel, from which they made the second ascent of the Hasli Jungfrau (the first by travellers), and thereafter returned in their tracks over the Lauteraarjoch to the Pavillon Dollfus.

Adolf Vogt at once published a long narrative of this ascent in an Augsburg newspaper³⁸. In this there was merely a passing reference to the previous ascent of the same peak by Bannholzer and Jaun, and Speer's crossing of the Lauteraarjoch and ascent of the Mittelhorn, of which Vogt must have been fully aware, were not mentioned at all. Thus Vogt's narrative tended to stress the pioneer quality of Agassiz's remarkable expedition.

The second ascent of the Hasli Jungfrau by Agassiz might easily have become as famous as de Saussure's third ascent of Mont Blanc, and it might have played the same important part (through Vogt's narrative) in the history of its peak and in mountaineering. This was

³⁸ Adolf Vogt: *Ersteigung des Wetterhorns*, in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Augsburg, 1845, Nos. 244-6.

not the case. Vogt's narrative was translated in a British journal³⁹, as we have seen ; but with that exception, the narrative, and the mere fact of this ascent, seem to have been completely forgotten for many years, and then to have been forgotten again. There was a mere reference to the ascent in the second and enlarged edition of the German version of Desor's two volumes which was published as late as 1847⁴⁰; but Studer did not mention the ascent in his *Panorama von Bern* (1850)—an omission which is difficult to understand in view of his passage through the Grimsel about seven weeks after the event. John Ball, however, did mention the ascent of Agassiz, Bovet, and Vogt in the first edition of his *Alpine Guide* (1864)⁴¹, but he gave its year as 1843 and stated that Bannholzer and Jaun's ascent was made one year *later*; and he added that 'doubt existed whether the summit reached on those occasions was not the middle, or highest peak.'

Then, in 1864 also, Dollfus-Ausset reprinted Vogt's narrative in the fourth volume of his massive work⁴²; but it was so deeply buried there that Studer, in the first volume of *Über Eis und Schnee* (1869) again completely ignored the ascent of Agassiz and his friends⁴³. That ascent was however mentioned in the fourteenth edition of Murray's *Handbook* (1871), but the peak climbed was given as the Mittelhorn without qualification.

The part of Longman's *History of Mountaineering* edited by D. W. Freshfield after Longman's death (1878)⁴⁴, contained a long and correct account of the Agassiz expedition. The source of this was given as the reprint of Vogt's narrative by Dollfus-Ausset, with the remark: 'This narrative, owing to the circumstances of its publication, was long unknown in England, and has escaped the attention even of Herr G. Studer.' In 1883, Studer published a supplemental volume (the fourth) of *Über Eis und Schnee*, in which he at last did full justice to the ascent, which had been so long neglected in Switzerland; and Vogt's narrative was again reprinted in that country in 1892⁴⁵.

J. Brunner's ascents from Rosenlauri.

There is a gap of nine years in the recognised history of the Wetterhörner between the events of 1845 and the attempt, virtually successful, of Eardley Blackwell to climb the Hasli Jungfrau from Grindelwald in June, 1854. But too much attention has perhaps been given to what happened, or did not happen, at the popular tourist centre of Grindelwald;

³⁹ Colburn's *United Service Magazine*, 1846, part 1, p. 183 (February).

⁴⁰ [É. Desor]: *Agassiz' und seiner Freunde, etc.*, second edition (greatly enlarged), 1847, edited by Carl Vogt. There is internal evidence that Desor made additions to the German text.

⁴¹ John Ball: the *Alpine Guide*, part 2, *The Central Alps*, 1864, p. 119.

⁴² Dollfus-Ausset: *Matériaux, etc.*, vol. 4, 1864, p. 416.

⁴³ Gottlieb Studer: *Über Eis und Schnee*, vol. 1, 1869.

⁴⁴ William Longman: *History of Mountaineering*, published as an appendix with the separate parts of *A.J.* 8., 1877-8. The relevant part was written by D. W. Freshfield, in part from Longman's notes, after the death of the latter.

⁴⁵ *Jahrbuch S.A.C.* 27. 388-94, 1892.

and what may have happened on the other side of the mountain at Rosenlauri, then a quiet place of passage, has been neglected.

It was evidently known at Grindelwald in 1854 that ascents of the Wetterhörner had been made from the other side, for Sir Alfred Wills, writing in 1856 of his own ascent two years before, said⁴⁶: 'the Rosenhorn and the Mittelhorn . . . have several times been attained; in fact, they present no extraordinary difficulty, especially from the side of the glacier of Gaulti.' Wills' words, 'several times,' perhaps suggest more than the now recognized ascents of these two peaks before he wrote them; and it may be of interest to draw attention here to a traveller's passing reference which has hitherto been overlooked.

Sir John Forbes, an accurate observer and a reliable recorder who is not to be confused with Professor J. D. Forbes, spent one night at Rosenlauri during his travels in 1848⁴⁷. Of his landlord there he wrote: 'Mr. Brunner is a fine robust young man, well acquainted with the mountains in his double capacity of chamois hunter and botanist. He has more than once ascended the Wetterhorn, and, in conjunction with some of his scientific friends, has given distinctive names to the different peaks.'

From what we know of him, there is every likelihood that J. Brunner did make these ascents. He was, as Forbes said, a botanist; and, before 1843, he had made a big collection of Alpine plants, for which he had searched the mountains on both sides of his own valley, including the Engelhörner. But Brunner was also an enterprising mountaineer for its own sake, and one of his projects was the discovery of a high glacier pass between Rosenlauri and the Grimsel by way of the Rosenlauri glacier. A high pass from the head of the Rosenlauri glacier in one direction or another was not a new idea. Hugi had tried unsuccessfully to make one to the Grimsel on August 13, 1828, when he reached the Urbachsattel and saw the Wetterhörner, which he thought to be 'easily climbable'—his intention to return immediately and attempt the ascent was frustrated by bad weather⁴⁸.

On hearing of Brunner's project, Desor⁴⁹ went to Rosenlauri in 1843 with the guide, Johann Währen, to volunteer for Brunner's expedition. The attempt to force a way up the Rosenlauri glacier failed, but Brunner and Desor, having returned a little way and then having gone up to the Urbachsattel, next made the first known ascent of the Dossenhorn. Brunner plays a very small part in Desor's narrative, in which he is described almost as a 'passenger,' and not as a serious mountaineer—he looks for plants in the Urbachsattel, and what holds his attention

⁴⁶ Sir Alfred Wills: *Wanderings, etc.*, 1856, footnote on p. 271. Heathman had said much the same thing in 1855 (*Switzerland, etc.* 1855, footnote on p. 132).

⁴⁷ Sir John Forbes: *A Physician's Holiday*, 1849, pp. 207-8. There were two later editions of this, then popular, book in 1850 and 1852. The description of Zermatt in it was a chief factor in attracting British visitors to that part of the Alps in the early 1850's.

⁴⁸ F. J. Hugi: *Naturhistorische Alpenreise*, 1830, pp. 137, 144.

⁴⁹ Desor, *I*, 1844, pp. 604-13. In an appendix, Desor gives a long list of Alpine plants collected by Brunner.

on the Dossenhorn is the bird's-eye view of his own roof, whilst Desor is occupied with the important matter of topography. This seems to have been Desor's first high excursion in that corner of the Bernese Oberland, with which Brunner was of course familiar, and it may be strongly suspected that Desor's names for the three Wetterhörner peaks were derived from Brunner, who apparently said something about this to Sir John Forbes.

There were chamois hunters at Rosenloui in the 1840's, but no high mountain guides like those at the Grimsel⁵⁰, and the ascents of the Rosenhorn and the Mittelhorn would be within the capacity of Brunner and a local man after the ground between Rosenloui and the peaks had been broken by Bannholzer and Jaun in 1844 and by Speer's descent in 1845. The ascent of the Hasli Jungfrau from Rosenloui would be a different matter which called for a more experienced guide ; but there seems to be good reason to accept Brunner's claim, to Sir John Forbes, that he had ' more than once ascended ' what were probably the Rosenhorn and the Mittelhorn.

⁵⁰ Rosenloui men at that time would conduct tourists up the Faulhorn and thence down to Grindelwald.

From what we know of him, there is every likelihood that J. Brunner did make these ascents. He was, as Forbes said, a botanist; and before 1844, he had made a big collection of Alpine plants, for which he had searched the mountains on both sides of his own valley, including the Wetterhörner. But Brunner was also an enterprising mountaineer for his own sake, and one of his projects was the discovery of a high glacier pass between Rosenloui and the Grimsel by way of the Rosenloui glacier. A high pass from the head of the Rosenloui glacier in one direction or another was not a new idea. Hugi had tried unsuccessfully to make one to the Grimsel on August 17, 1825, when he reached the Utschachtel and saw the Wetterhörner, which he thought to be ' easily climbable '—his intention to return immediately and attempt the ascent was frustrated by bad weather.

On hearing of Brunner's project, Desor⁵¹ went to Rosenloui in 1843 with the guide, Johann Wäber, to volunteer for Brunner's expedition. The attempt to force a way up the Rosenloui glacier failed, but Brunner and Desor having started a little way and then having gone up to the Utschachtel, next made the first known ascent of the Dossenhorn. Brunner plays a very small part in Desor's narrative, in which he is described almost as a ' passenger ', and not as a serious mountaineer—he looks for plants in the Utschachtel, and what holds his attention

⁵¹ Sir Alfred W. : *Wanderings, etc.*, 1856, footnote on p. 272. Heilman had said much the same thing in 1852 (*Die Wetterhörner*, etc., footnote on p. 123).

⁵² Sir John Forbes : *A Physician's Memoirs*, 1850, pp. 207-8. There were two later editions of this, then popular, book in 1850 and 1852. The description of Desor in it was a chief factor in attracting British visitors to that part of the Alps in the early 1850's.

⁵³ H. J. Hugi : *Naturhistorische Alpenreise*, 1830, pp. 117, 144.

⁵⁴ Desor, J. : 1844, pp. 604-17. In an appendix, Desor gives a long list of Alpine plants collected by Brunner.