

THE FÜHRERBUCH OF 'YOUNG' PETER TAUGWALDER

By D. F. O. DANGAR

IT is well known that Whymper had some harsh things to say about the behaviour of the Taugwalders after the Matterhorn disaster of 1865. 'Old' Peter's career was adversely affected as a result of the accident, but it was quite otherwise with 'young' Peter. He was last man on the rope during the descent, and the whisperings and insinuations of evil tongues in the Zermatt valley did not affect him. Within a few weeks of the accident he was employed by members of the Alpine Club, and had a long and distinguished career.

His Führerbuch shows him as having had a wide experience of the Alps, and contains records of expeditions ranging from Mont Blanc to the Gross Glockner; a striking feature of the book is the number of entries by distinguished foreign mountaineers; Melchior Ulrich, François Thioly, Sigismund Porges, and Maurice de Déchy amongst others all pay tribute to his powers.

'Young' Peter was born on November 12, 1843; his first serious expedition probably took place on August 13, 1859, when with his father and another guide he went up Monte Rosa with F. Wathen and W. Hooper. His employers were well satisfied with him, and wrote in the Riffel hotel visitors' book—'We especially recommend to favourable notice the young lad of 15, who bids fair to rise to rapid success as a guide, if we may judge from the extraordinary development of the guide's qualities in him at so tender an age.'¹

His Führerbuch was issued in 1859; the first expedition recorded in it took place in July 1860, when he accompanied his father and two British climbers to the summit of the Cima di Jazzi. In September the same year he ascended Monte Rosa with Samuel Brandram, A.C., and the Chamonix guide Jean Carrier. 'Though so very young Pierre is exceedingly strong and active. He is also very intelligent and civil, and I strongly recommend him. He will certainly turn out a first-rate guide and a worthy companion and successor of his father.'

In his early years he frequently went as porter or second guide with his father, and most of his employers prophesied a successful future. Coutts Trotter and Sedley Taylor, with whom he crossed the Weisstor in 1861, described him as 'an active mountaineer and a most good natured, cheerful fellow; he promises to turn out a capital guide.'

In July 1862 he and his father were engaged by T. S. Kennedy—'one of the most brilliant climbers of his generation'—for an attempt on the Dent Blanche. The expedition was not a happy one.

'Old' Peter lost his nerve as a result of his foot slipping, and although Kennedy took over the lead, refused to continue. The son naturally

¹ *A. J.* 31. 322. The expedition is not recorded in the Führerbuch.

sided with his father, and the first attempt to climb the Dent Blanche thus ended in a dismal failure.²

In 1863 there are records of expeditions with W. H. Hawker, J. Sowerby, and W. G. Adams, all early members of the Alpine Club, and on August 17 a brief entry by John Birkbeck, junr., 'Pierre Taugwald junr. has accompanied me to the top of the Weisshorn. I think him strong and likely to make a very good guide.' This was an early ascent of the Weisshorn, probably the fifth. Birkbeck's other guide was Franz (Weisshorn) Biner.

An incomplete entry for late 1863 or early 1864 is evidence of at least one missing page, and for 1865 there are no entries between June 26 and August 13, this last over three well-known signatures, 'E. N. Buxton, A.C., F. Craufurd Grove, A.C., R. S. Macdonald, A.C.' Taugwalder found himself at Chamonix without an employer and was engaged as porter by Buxton's party. It was unfortunate that at this moment Jean-Baptiste Croz returned from Zermatt, deeply distressed at the loss of his brother. He spread wild stories against those who had survived the Matterhorn disaster, with the consequence that Buxton's guides, J.-P. Cachat and Michel Payot, declined to set out if Taugwalder was in the party. so they were paid off and allowed to go home. Taugwalder was despatched with orders to bring back Jakob Anderegg, who was awaiting Macdonald's arrival at Zermatt, and when they returned the other two guides were given an opportunity to change their decision. Cachat availed himself of this chance, but Payot declined to start. The party made the first descent of the Dôme du Goûter to the Dôme glacier, an expedition which was 'both difficult and laborious. Taugwalder did all he was called on to do with zeal, cheerfulness, and alacrity.' This was the first occasion on which he and Jakob Anderegg were associated. Ten years later they were again together taking part in another new, and more arduous, expedition.

September found Peter busy with members of the Alpine Club. The Weisstor and Monte Rosa with Stafford Still; the Dom with Robert Fowler ('he gave me every satisfaction; he is very good both on rocks and ice and is a very intelligent young man'), and two days later another ascent of the Dom with T. Ll. M. Browne and his brother.

In 1866, F. Thioly, who made the first traverse of the Matterhorn from Switzerland to Italy, ascended the Dom with two companions under Peter's leadership, and in August Peter and his father took Messrs. Lester and Hall to the summit of Mont Blanc. 'Young' Peter led and 'as far as my experience goes, is as good a young guide as can be found.' This seems to have been his father's first ascent of Mont Blanc.

Father and son were again together in September in an attempt on Monte Rosa with S. Brannan, and also 'reached the summit of the Little Matterhorn by a new path on the Swiss side facing Zermatt.' They finished the season by another ascent of Mont Blanc with two

² Less than a week later, Kennedy and W. Wigram made the first ascent with J.-B. Croz and J. Kronig.



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ASCENT OF MONT BLANC, SEPTEMBER 13-14, 1866.
PETER TAUGWALDER JR. PETER TAUGWALDER SR.
DUDLEY P. AND JOHN WILKINSON

[To face p. 440.]

Americans, John and Dudley Wilkinson. This was the first American ascent of the mountain in which Swiss guides took part.

In 1867 there were ascents of the Lyskamm with Geo. Edward Foster, A.C., and of the 'Petit Mont Cervin by an entirely new route' with C. E. and F. M. Haig.

An entry signed Stafford F. Still and E. W. Ruck is reproduced in full (dated August 28, 1867). 'Pierre Taugwalder accompanied us as guide to the top of the Breithorn and from the Bell Alp to the Eggischhorn and the Grimsel, from there he went with us as guide over the Strahleck Pass when through the stupidity of a local guide, after we had passed the summit we lost our way and were obliged to sleep under the rocks; the mistake, however, was no fault whatever of Taugwalder's, for if it had not been for him we should probably never have arrived at Grindelwald as there was a thick mist and snow was falling.'

An account of this episode can be found in *A. J.* 4, 39. The local guide was one Muhlermann of Lauterbrunnen, who stated that he had been over the pass three times. The party took thirty-six hours from the Grimsel to Grindelwald. Leslie Stephen in an editorial footnote expressed 'his own satisfaction in the praise given to young Taugwalder, whom, notwithstanding what has been said in respect of the catastrophe on the Matterhorn, he remembers as an able, willing and pleasant guide.'

In July, 1868, Professor Melchior Ulrich and two friends were taken over the Alphubel Pass. Ulrich, then in his sixty-seventh year, was one of the most prominent of the early Swiss pioneers of the Alps and has been described as 'the most indefatigable early explorer of the glacier regions of the Zermatt valley.'

The same year, Taugwalder accompanied S. F. Still and E. W. Ruck on a tour in the Eastern Alps and the Engadine, their ascents including the Dachstein, Gross Glockner, Ortler and Piz Bernina. They also effected a new pass from the Stelvio to St. Antonio. 'On all these occasions, we found him a most efficient and careful guide and throughout a pleasant and agreeable companion and always willing to make himself useful.'

His main expeditions in 1869 were with R. B. Heathcote. The entry, with somewhat irregular spelling, mentions ascents of the 'Aiguille Verte, Les Grandes Jorasses, Aiguille de Midi, Jungfrau, Tashorn, Nadlegrat, and Zumstein spitz.' The expedition described as 'Nadlegrat' was, in fact, the first ascent of the Hohberghorn. In addition to Taugwalder, Heathcote had Peter Perren and Franz (Weisshorn) Biner.

In 1870 there were two ascents of Mont Blanc; with E. W. Ruck, the Jungfrau and Finsteraarhorn amongst other ascents. The following year, an entry by Frank Walker, who was accompanied by Miss Lucy Walker, mentions an ascent of Castor and passages of the Felikjoch and Schwarztor.

An entry in September bears the signatures of Lord Queensberry, brother of Lord Francis Douglas, and the Hon. E. Ellis. They spent a

week at Zermatt, and with Taugwalder and his father crossed the Théodule, returning to Zermatt by the Fürggenjoch. It is interesting to find 'old' Peter still at Zermatt in 1871; he eventually went to America, where he lived for some years, and returning to Zermatt he died at the Schwartzsee Inn in 1888.

In 1872 'young' Peter and Jos. M. Perren led two Americans, Messrs. Morse and Colgate, to the summit of Mont Blanc and Peter 'fully sustained his reputation as one of the best guides in Switzerland. . . . We have noticed that Taugwauld (*sic*) is well-known and highly respected among the rival fraternity of guides here, and during the ascent to-day, at every critical point, our Chamonix friends yielded him the privilege of leading the way.' The Americans had a Frenchman with three Chamonix guides as companions.

In the course of that summer Peter came back to the Matterhorn for the first time since the accident; he returned in most distinguished company. On July 24-25 he traversed the mountain from Zermatt to Breuil with the Pendlebury brothers, Charles Taylor, Ferdinand Imseng and Gabriel Spechtenhauser, fresh from their magnificent first ascent of the East face of Monte Rosa. The Führerbuch records that 'he proved thoroughly efficient in all respects. He is a very safe and careful guide and we are glad to express our complete satisfaction with his performance.' Elsewhere Taylor has written of this ascent—'under his lead things went as well as could be desired. He showed a little anxiety before beginning the descent, but was soon reassured when he found that the last man, Gaber, was to be trusted.'³

In August there were ascents of Monte Rosa with D. Diamantidi, A.C., and A. S. Bicknell, A.C., and he also led the latter up Mont Blanc. The Weisshorn was ascended under bad conditions with H. Wakeham Purkis—'found the arête very stiff where we first struck it, it taking 20 minutes to cut 30 steps.' With S. F. Still he ascended Weisshorn, Jungfrau, and Finsteraarhorn.

Next year Taugwalder ascended the Matterhorn on July 30 with the well-known Hungarian climber, Maurice de Déchy, 'through fresh snow with a heavy wind blowing. I found him a most efficient and careful guide; showed himself a very steady man in overcoming the difficulties, the rocks from the shoulder being all covered with ice and fresh snow.' de Déchy's other guide was Jean-Antoine Carrel who thus, for the first time, found himself upon the mountain with a survivor of the party that had so narrowly deprived him of the honour of the first ascent. A few days later de Déchy and Taugwalder went up the Dent Blanche. The next entry records an ascent of the Matterhorn by the distinguished French mountaineer Albert Millot and his wife. This took place on July 18-19, 1874. Here again Taugwalder found himself in good company, for the other guides were Melchior Anderegg and Andreas Maurer.

Three successive entries are signed by F. Pratt Barlow, covering the years 1873-74. In August, 1873, he and Taugwalder, with S. F. Still,

³ *A. J.* 6. 243.

climbed the Jungfrau from the Wengern Alp, Lyskamm, Obergabelhorn, and Matterhorn. 'We were particularly struck by the care and ability he displayed when on this last peak, which was in a state of exceptional difficulty from a heavy fall of snow.' Barlow and Taugwalder then crossed the Col de Valpelline, reaching Aosta in one day from Zermatt. With Laurent Lanier they made two attempts on Mont Blanc from the glacier de Miage, 'but both of these were frustrated by the villainous weather we encountered when close to the summit.' More successes were gained in 1874, including the Eigerjoch and Jungfrau-joch, a traverse of the Rothorn and the first ascent of Monte Rosa from the Grenzsattel. Barlow's entry concludes: 'My experience of him this year confirms the opinion often before expressed, that he is a first-rate workman both on ice and rocks.'

In September Taugwalder was with Leslie Stephen and F. W. Gibbs, taking them over the Col d'Hérens, Col de Bertol and Col Collon. 'We were thoroughly satisfied with him as a strong and good tempered guide with considerable knowledge of this district.' Stephen was probably on his way to Courmayeur, from where he visited the scene of the fatal accident on the Brouillard glacier which caused the deaths of J. A. G. Marshall and Johann Fischer.

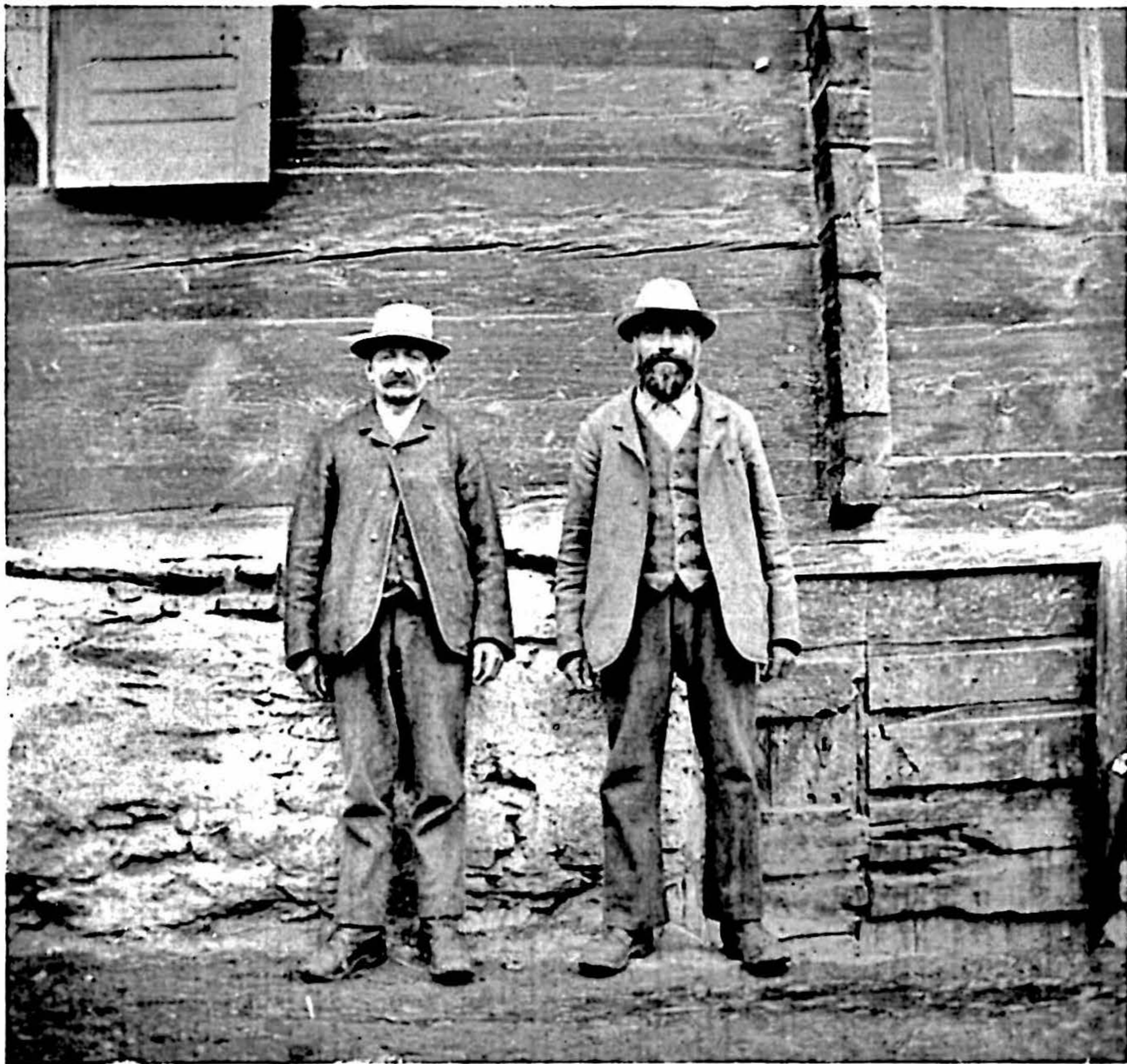
The following year, 1875, there were ascents of the Rothorn with A. Cust and C. Taylor, and a few days later with W. Leaf and J. H. Pratt, all four members of the Alpine Club. Taugwalder then had a three weeks' engagement with Barlow and Still, the illustrious Jakob Anderegg being the other guide, during which they ascended the Tödi and Piz Roseg and made the first ascent of the Disgrazia by the South-east arête. He must now have been at the height of his powers and had perforce to lead for most of the ascent of the Disgrazia as Jakob was far from well, still suffering from the effects of an illness of the previous year. The expedition made a great impression on the whole party. 'Both guides expressed their decided opinion that no arête in the Alps with which they were acquainted could compare in stiffness with the one which I have attempted to describe.'⁴

Later, Barlow went up the Dent Blanche with him, and made two attempts on the Aiguille Verte from the Argentièrè glacier. Further information about these attempts would be interesting for Christian Almer is said to have taken part in them.⁵

They are not mentioned in Almer's Führerbuch which records that from mid-June until the end of July, and for the first three weeks of September, he was with Coolidge, and for the whole of August with F. T. Wethered. Both attempts failed owing to the insecure state of the snow. In Taugwalder's Führerbuch Barlow wrote: 'He has now been with me so many years that I am competent to express the opinion which I hold, that there is no better workman in the Alps, either on rocks or ice, and that he is always willing to undertake any amount of hard work.'

⁴ F. T. Pratt Barlow, in *A. J.* 8. 29,

⁵ *A. J.* 8. 289.



Photo, K. H. MacDermott.]

**PETER TAUGWALDER, — BLUMENTAL,
ZERMATT 1897.**

The following year Taugwalder was with Sigismund Porges and led him up the Grand Paradis and over Mont Blanc. In 1877, with that brilliant climber William Penhall, he did the Rothorn, Obergabelhorn, Dent Blanche, Matterhorn, and Mont Blanc. 'On each occasion he walked very well and I was perfectly satisfied with him.'

A. S. Bicknell, in an entry dated August, 1878, wrote that—'during three seasons he has been my chief guide in ascents of many of the most difficult mountains, and I think he well deserves all the praise accorded him in this book.'

September found him with W. O. Moseley, ascending the Breithorn, and Monte Rosa from the Lysjoch. They also crossed the Triftjoch and Col Durand. Moseley perished on the Matterhorn in August 1879, through his own insistence on unroping before the completion of the descent.

A crossing of the Col d'Hérens with D. Diamantidi and his son was followed by an ascent of the Matterhorn on September 15, with Dr. Minnigerode—'Ich bin mit seiner Führung ausgezeichnet zufrieden und kann ihn bestens empfehlen.'

R. von Lendenfeld of Graz, the well-known Austrian climber, records an ascent of the Matterhorn in July, 1879. Then follows an entry by W. W. Richmond Powell, dated August 13, 1879: 'Peter Taugwalder has acted as guide to me on the Rothorn, the Rympfischhorn, Matterhorn, Unter Gabelhorn and Alphubel. The ascent of the latter was made by a new route from the Weingarten Glacier straight up the western face. The rocks were in places decidedly difficult and were rendered more so owing to their being glazed with ice. Taugwalder led admirably on this, as on all other occasions, and I have pleasure in adding my testimony to his skill as a first-rate guide.' Though Powell considered the expedition afforded an excellent rock climb and was well worthy of repetition, the remarks in '*Guide des Alpes Valaisannes*' (1952 edition) sound a different note: 'cet itinéraire est exposé aux chutes de pierres et de corniches. Il n'est pas recommandable et n'a jamais été refait.'

Henry Backhouse, A.C., with whom he ascended Rothorn, Weisshorn, and Matterhorn (in less than a week) in July 1880, could 'strongly recommend him as a first rate guide.'

The final entry is dated July 1, 1883, and records an ascent of the Cima di Jazzi and a crossing of the Théodule. This cannot have been the close of Peter's climbing career for he is said to have ascended the Matterhorn 125 times, but we have no information about his later years. If a second Führerbuch was issued and should ever come to light, it might reveal much of interest.

'Young' Peter Taugwalder, last survivor of the Matterhorn accident of 1865, died at Zermatt in his eightieth year on March 10, 1923. A brief reference to his death in the *Alpine Journal* summarises his career with the remark that 'he lived to become the great master on the Swiss side of the fatal mountain and an able and careful mountaineer.'