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THE JUNGFRAU FROM THE STEINBERG ALP.

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PASSAGE OF THE ROTHTHAL SATTEL AND ASCENT OF THE JUNGFRAU FROM LAUTERBRUNNEN. By REGINALD SOMERLED MACDONALD. Read before the Alpine Club, on May 2, 1865.

ON Thursday, the 9th of August 1864, a gloomy and moonless night, we started from Lauterbrunnen at 1.15 A.M. a party of six, with the intention of crossing, by the little-known route of the Lawinen Thor, over the formidable barrier which separates the Roththal from the valley of the Aletsch glacier. It so happened that up to that date no one, since the discovery of this pass by Messrs. Tyndall and Hawkins, had tried to force his way over the ridge which had on that occasion proved itself to be so obstinate and serious an obstacle. We had made up our minds to avail ourselves of this unpopular pass, and even to make a small *détour* in order to include it within the limits of our journey.

At the moment of which I speak some good stiff expedition was required as a tonic to raise the system of a demoralised party whose principal performances had been a series of masterly retreats from impossible obstacles, and who had been subsisting for several days on an antiphlogistic diet of hay and water among the highest chalets of the Geschenen Thal. A successful walk up the Eiger had served to cheer our despondent spirits, but the idea of the Lawinen Thor was eagerly accepted by all of us as a further and still more pleasing restorative. And so it chanced that Messrs. Leslie Stephen and Craufurd Grove, Melchior Anderegg, Jacob Anderegg, his cousin, one Johann Bischof, and I found ourselves plodding in the dark along the good and level path which leads

from Lauterbrunnen to the head of the valley. Bischof, a Lauterbrunnen man, acted during these hours of the night as local guide, carrying in virtue of his office a very large, and, need I add, a most useless lantern, which of course produced the usual confusion and loss of temper.

The history of this man's engagement with us is rather curious. Two days before the date of this expedition we had been present at a great wrestling match given on the green sward immediately in front of the upper inn on the Wengern Alp. The account of the sides sounds like a page from Anne of Geierstein. The Hasli men had chosen that day for an encounter with the men of the valley of Lauterbrunnen, the Wengern Alp being neutral ground, and we were rightly assured by our host that we had here an opportunity of seeing the very best wrestlers of Switzerland in the exercise of their art. As this kind of entertainment was quite new to us; we determined to spend an idle day as spectators of the conflict; in which, moreover, we were specially interested, as Melchior was, if we stayed, to be the chosen champion and leader of the Hasli tribe. A sheep was to be the prize, and after many inferior combatants had wrestled, the results giving the advantage slightly to the Eastern faction, Melchior and his opponent enter the ring. The latter, favourite and chosen representative of Lauterbrunnen, was a younger and a stouter man than Melchior, and had I not well known the strength of the latter, and received repeated assurances of his great skill, I should have looked upon him as overmatched. A handkerchief is now tied firmly round each of the combatant's legs, half-way between the knee and the hip. After shaking hands, they grasp each other by this artificial hold, and dropping down on his right knee, each tries to turn his adversary over on to his back. According to the laws of this kind of wrestling, the best of three falls decides the contest. In the first fall, Melchior, after a long struggle, and, as I thought, while slipping downhill, is rolled, more than thrown, on to his right shoulder, his antagonist coming down heavily on him. Though much bruised, he goes in pluckily for the second round, in which he succeeds in throwing his opponent fairly and quickly full on to his back. When the Lauterbrunnen hero, whose name I forget, rises from the grass, it is ascertained that neither man is quite fit to resume the fray. Melchior's badly-sprained shoulder is swelling fast, while the second athlete has so hurt himself in the second affair, as to render it unadvisable for him to risk another fall. The prize was consequently adjudged to be divided between the two.

As we strolled down to Lauterbrunnen in the evening, we discussed what was to be done with our half-victorious, but wholly disabled leader. He himself thought that a day of rest might restore to him the use of his injured right arm, but when after a lounge up to Mürren, it became evident that he was worse rather than better, we determined to engage a third man to accompany us over the Lawinen Thor. So a native of the valley was introduced to us named Bischof, who eventually proved himself to be a good and most cheery man, and who had, as I was told, accompanied in 1863 Messrs. Mathews and Von Fellenberg in their desperate attempt on the Silberhorn. The only fault in his character is a slight deafness, for which he strives to make up by musical proclivities, and I soon recognised him as the melodious guide, who is more than once, and always flatteringly, referred to in the pages of the 'Doldenhorn and Weisse Frau.' As in the course of our night march we passed the Stufenstein châteaux, he pointed them out to me as the night quarters of the Silberhorn party, a portion of whose route we well saw at a little later period of the day. What we did see of it was certainly not inviting, and fully corroborated Melchior's strong censure of the rocks in those parts.

As daylight increased, we found ourselves in a position whence we commanded a good view of the Roththal, and of the cliffs which we hoped to climb. The aspect of the rocks, though formidable, is not terrific, and there appears to be considerable choice of route. More than one couloir seems to promise a way to the top, while the red rocks on either side of the snow do not look impracticable. The glacier, which is considerably below us on our right, is neither steep nor difficult, or at least from this distance appears not to be so, while to our left rises a great rounded buttress, which leads up somewhere in the direction of the summit of the Jungfrau. Up to this point our way had been the same as that so well described by my friend Professor Tyndall, in the First Series of 'Vacation Tourists.' One of our party, undeterred by Mr. Tyndall's experience, suggests that less than an hour will bring us to the base of the wall of rock, and that less than three hours more will land us on the col, leaving time to carry out the discoverer's unfinished programme of climbing the Jungfrau *en route*. Melchior, however, is hardly as confident, and damps the ardour of the sanguine man by a not indirect allusion to a somewhat similar place in the Geschenen Thal, which had successfully defied our best efforts to overcome it. At the same time Stephen smiles with such evident satisfaction, that for the first time I begin to fear

that there may be formidable difficulties in the way, already appreciated by his experienced eye. -

Up to this moment we had been walking over slopes of grass or loose boulders, occasionally relieved by a few rocks, but now, striking a large moraine, we made our way parallel to the right bank of the Roththal Gletscher. Melchior had been for some moments gazing at the rocks of the Jungfrau, and suddenly turning round to his obedient 'Herrschaft,' remarked that he thought it might be possible to reach by those rocks the summit of the Jungfrau. Here was an unlooked-for disturbance of all our preconceived plans. No one dared to oppose so promising a scheme, and Melchior was forthwith entrusted with a telescope, and full powers to decide as to the course which we should adopt. While he went off a few paces from us, in order to enjoy a quiet reconnaissance, we discussed the expediency of a change in our route. One of us remarked, that if beaten back from the Jungfrau, we could at all events spend the night in the Stufenstein châteaux, and thence resume, on the next day, our way over the Lawinen Thor; that if provisions were required we might send Bischof down to Lauterbrunnen in the evening with orders to bring up, by means of local porters, what food we might want. This seemed unanswerable, and all eyes were turned in the direction of the fascinating couloir, which first had suggested to our leader the possibility of the ascent.

As this couloir forms the high road by which we ultimately reached the Sattel, and as it is, I hope, destined to be trodden by many feet, I may devote a few lines to its description. The northern wall of the Roththal is formed by a huge spur from the Jungfrau, and in the angle made by the junction of this spur with the main ridge, a great shoot of snow crawls about two-thirds of the way down the rocky slopes. This snow-shoot, or hanging glacier, or couloir, for it partakes of the nature of all three, is very wide at its upper extremity, gradually narrowing lower down, till at the base it is lost in an almost imperceptible gully. The snow, I should add, is pierced in many places by rocks, and extensively seamed by that Alpine artillery, for which plenty of ammunition never seems wanting. Whether we could reach the gully which received the tail of the couloir seemed uncertain, for a slight twist in its course concealed its commencement from us, though we saw enough to convince us that, once in the couloir, we could, in all probability, get up to a very considerable height. We believed that it must lead us up to the well-known Roththal Sattel, though our belief perhaps was more due to our wishes than to our topographical knowledge. Melchior's opinion and

report were therefore eagerly expected, and when he returned, saying that the couloir well deserved the honour of our acquaintance, no time was lost in further discussion, and with one accord, saying farewell to the Lawinen Thor, we faced to the left, and went straight towards the base of the cliffs.

From the point where the couloir terminated, some ill-conditioned rocks came down to the head of a slope of avalanche snow on which we were standing, and up these rocks it was evident that we must try to find a way. They seemed very smooth and rounded, and very steep, but on a trial, unexpected assistance was derived from a chimney which lay at the foot of the gully, which in its turn lay at the foot of the couloir. I am bound to add that nature has concealed this chimney with admirable skill, having so placed it as, from below, to deceive even the keen eye of a guide. A dashing scramble unmasked the imposture, and reaching the chimney at 7.20, we began the real work of the day. There was good climbing to be done here, as we wormed ourselves in and out of several narrow and steep funnels, which were usually filled with heaps of loose, large stones, requiring some care and some trouble, in order to avoid the risk of knocking over those at the tail of the party. On one occasion, a shout from Stephen, followed by something more than a mere shout from Grove, warned me to look back. I then discovered the latter in the excessively uncomfortable, though classical position, mythologically attributed to Atlas, the globe being represented in this instance by a large and heavy boulder, which had chosen this inopportune moment for an uncalled-for attention to the laws of gravitation, and which Grove had succeeded in checking with his shoulders ere it had rolled over more than once. He was, however, unable to do more than prop it up with his back, and thus keep it momentarily steady. Two of the guides succeeded in disengaging him from his somewhat constrained and embarrassed attitude, by the simple expedient of getting him out of the way first, and then letting the stone go. Stephen laughed long and loudly; a symptom I take it, of the deep emotion which possessed him, and for the moment completely unmanned, called Grove a duffer for getting into the way. The latter having returned thanks in a short speech, which struck us all as being eminently neat and appropriate, we resumed our climb, and at 8.10 fairly set foot on the glistening snow of the much desired couloir. We could now see more of our route than at any previous time, and it was clear that for some distance above us we should be able to get on easily and fast. A wide couloir, well lined with snow, led up for

some fifteen hundred or more feet from the spot where we stood towards the ridge where we hoped soon to stand. Towards the top, indeed, some difficult rocks showed themselves, but we trusted that even there we should be able to find some way either of turning or scaling them. So, in a lazy state of satisfaction, we took some food and smoked a pipe all round. The conversation turned on the attempt made once on a time by Ulrich Lauener and his brother Christian, to ascend the Jungfrau on this side. Nobody, however, seemed to know much about that expedition. I find that Mr. Tyndall speaks of a hut they built on that occasion, and mentions their having been foiled by bad weather. One may safely add, that unless under very different circumstances to those which we experienced, there is nothing about the way we chose to daunt such daring mountaineers as the Laueners are known to be. After half-an-hour's halt, we attacked the couloir, here some fifty or sixty feet wide. The snow was hard, and a good many steps had to be cut, for the slope was very steep, and more than once did the leaders pause to regain lost breath. Melchior, uneasy at discovering that our path might be raked at any moment by a fall of stones, hurried us along at a quick pace. One or two fragments shot past us, calling from Grove the remark that there were some chimneys which were only too well swept. I would seriously point out to future adventurers who follow our footsteps, that in these falling stones they may expect to meet their chief difficulty, and considerable risk. A deep scar in the middle of the couloir was the furrow that these unwelcome pebbles had ploughed out for the convenience of their descent.

When this dangerous moment was passed, we appeared to be close to the ridge, and I found with pleasure, on looking at my watch, that we had been less than an hour in reaching this point from our last halting place, which we had left at a quarter to nine. But the stubborn rocks, which had never entirely escaped our attention, were now close at hand. To pass under a waterfall was the baptism expected of those who would reach these rocks, and as we were hot and thirsty no one appeared much to mind this enforced immersion. The icy water cooled the brain and braced up the nerves for the long scramble that awaited us. I will not venture to attempt a description of the gymnastics which no doubt we performed. I will not repeat the American anecdotes then related by Stephen, or recount the unvarying good-humour with which Grove dropped small boulders of rock, or big lumps of ice on to his fellow-travellers' heads. Suffice it to say, that steep rocks were ere long succeeded by still steeper ones, all

alike glazed with a thin coating of ice; that our progress became slower and slower, and our remarks less frequent, and that we began to cast some wistful glances at a glacier which had just shown itself on our right, and which appeared to some of us to be the better route. I would add, that at a later period of the day we saw no reason to alter that conclusion, and I would therefore advise anyone who may in future make use of our pass to take to the glacier on the left bank of the couloir as soon as possible, and keep to it so long as it should prove to be practicable. For the rocks in which the couloir terminates above are very laborious, and occupied us nearly two hours from the moment when we left our friendly gully to the time when we got on to the edge of the snow-field which curled over the ridge from the real Roththal Sattel. The height of the different rocks can hardly have been more than three hundred or four hundred feet, and if the ice on our right were to turn out as easy as it seemed to be, one might save an hour or more at the most critical period of the expedition. However, I am not sure that we did not greet the easy snow all the more fondly as a contrast to the steep cliff which had been so long delaying us. A few more paces over the *névé*, and the Aletsch Glacier lay at our feet, the Mönch and Viescherhörner in front, while to our left, and apparently close at hand, rose the sharp summit of the Jungfrau.

We had struck the ridge a very little to the north of, and somewhat higher than the point marked in the Federal map (sheet No. 18) as 3,946 mètres in height, so that we had very nearly crossed the range over the Roththal Sattel itself. We had succeeded in making our pass in an unexpectedly short time. We had begun at 7.20 to scale the rocks at the base of the couloir, and had reached the col at 11.45, having thus occupied four hours and twenty-five minutes in the climb. I feel bound to add for the information of those members of the Club who like to hear what portion of time is spent in 'actual walking,' that from the above statement five and thirty minutes must be deducted for halts. This would tend to show that our col, though considerably higher, is far shorter than the Lawinen Thor, on the rocks of which seven hours were spent by Mr. Tyndall's party, who were, it must be remembered, faster than the average of climbers.

All these thoughts must not be supposed to have occurred to us at the moment, as we made no halt on the col, but dropping such burdens as we had been carrying, made a spirited dash at the Jungfrau. Much assisted by the fine condition of the snow, we reached the summit at half-past

twelve. Fortune favoured us with no distant view from the mist-capped peak of the 'Maiden,' and even in our happy state of self-satisfaction it was difficult to remain more than a quarter of an hour on the top. We then waded again through the deep snow down to the saddle, arriving there at 1.30. After a protracted halt at this point we plodded down the long slopes of the Aletsch, which proved to be as hot, as grand, and as unending as ever, and reached the *Æggischhorn* at 7.15, having effected the passage of the *Roththal Sattel* and the ascent of the *Jungfrau* from *Lauterbrunnen* in precisely eighteen hours.

**MOUNT ELBROUZ, AND THE ATTEMPTED ASCENT OF IT BY
A RUSSIAN EXPEDITION.** Read before the Alpine Club,
May 2, 1865. By H. B. GEORGE, M.A.

THE House of Commons is very frequently accused of neglecting its own business, when it has any, to discuss the affairs of our neighbours, and lecture foreign powers on their behaviour towards their subjects or one another. I could wish that it had carried out this self-imposed task a little more fully, and remonstrated against the wanton injury which has been inflicted on the oldest and most venerated of European sovereigns. There is, I fear I ought to say there was, an ancient monarch—crowned so long ago, that even the poet who records the ceremony cannot fix the date—who never went to war for an idea, nor seized material guarantees, nor incurred a gigantic national debt to keep up a useless army, nor imposed protective tariffs, who, in short, has never been guilty of the common regal crimes and follies; and yet this reverend prince has been deposed without a word of remonstrance. When Russia crushed the Poles, Lord Russell lectured her; when she expelled the Circassians, a chorus of denunciation was raised; when she attempted to swallow up Turkey, all Western Europe rose in arms; but she has been allowed to dethrone *Mont Blanc*, and even the Alpine Club has been silent.

The boundary line between Europe and Asia has varied considerably at different periods; in fact it may be said never to have been defined at all, until the Russians thought proper to fix a line, which was probably chosen as much to suggest that by a 'natural frontier' theory Circassia belonged to them, as from any considerations of abstract propriety. The *Oural* mountains had always been reckoned part of the frontier, and Europe had gradually been made to encroach more and more