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The Ascent of the Dom from Saas.

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THE first ascent of the Dom from Saas was made, as is doubtless well known, by the Rev. C. Taylor, Mr. R. Pendlebury, and Mr. G. S. Foster in 1874.* They slept in the 'Egg Fluh' and gained the summit from the Nadeljoch, this pass having been crossed for the first time in 1869 by our President (Mr. Horace Walker) and Mr. George S. Foster.†

In 1875 Messrs. Alfred D. Puckle and Walter B. Puckle made a second route to the Dom from the Egg Fluh by following the Nadeljoch route for a time, and then striking across under the ridge which connects the Nadeljoch with the Dom, to the eastern rock buttress, running straight up from the left arm of the Fée glacier to the summit.‡

In 1885, after a winter during which exceptionally little snow had fallen, I found myself at Saas, and struck again, as I had often been before, by the grandeur of this face, at that time quite free from snow and ice, decided to attempt a direct attack on the Dom from the Fée glacier. Accordingly late in the afternoon of August 19 that year I started with Gabriel Taugwalder, of Zermatt, and Xavier Imseng, of Saas Fée, as guides, up the left arm of the Fée glacier to the foot of the great rock-wall. A few feet above the glacier we found a break in the rocks sufficient to form a gîte. There was no shelter from the wind except that afforded by the wall itself, but there was abundance of room for us to

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. vii. p. 105. † *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 365.
‡ *Ibid.* vol. vii. p. 324.

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lie down, and for a fire. In fact, it was a wide ledge of rock and *not* a hole.

The night was fortunately fine but cold, and was got through fairly well. We kept ourselves tolerably warm, partly by means of a fire and chiefly by frequent and copious libations of a thin soup, which was kept running all night, made from a leg of mutton bone. It was not strong; it was not salt, but it was *hot*. Having heard on all sides that falling stones and ice usually enlivened all expeditions in the Mischabel range undertaken on the Saas side, we decided to start early.

At 1 A.M. on the 20th we substituted tea for the soup, and made an early breakfast. We were ready to start at 2 A.M., and for two hours we climbed slowly by lantern light and contrived to get some warmth into our limbs by sunrise. With daylight we were in a position to see what sort of work lay before us. The rock looked, and indeed is, formidable; but so far as we could judge it was perfectly firm, and there were no indications visible of fallen stones or ice.

The rock, though steep and in places difficult, was not dangerous, and so we climbed straight up, not deviating more than a few feet to the right or left, without encountering any serious difficulty, to a notch about 300 feet below the summit. At this point our progress was barred by an inverted pyramid of stones perched on the face. This could not be turned, and it was obviously necessary to pass over with caution. Accordingly Gabriel went over first with about 60 feet of rope that he might 'prospect.' Imseng was roped next, and was on one side of the pyramid, while I was last and lower down on the other side of the stones.

When the rope was tight between Gabriel and Imseng the latter began to move. Instead of crawling in a loving manner over the group, he thoughtlessly made a spring, seized a large boulder-shaped stone, which he pulled upon himself, and then, turning head over heels backwards, freed himself from the stone and regained his foothold, the rope being 'ganz fest.' The stone then bounded over to the right towards me. I managed to avoid a direct collision, but one end caught me on the mouth and jaw, removing, as the dentists say, two teeth, and then as the stone rebounded to the left, the opposite end struck the palm of my left hand, gashed up the flesh, and then sped its way down to the glacier below.

Taugwalder, being 60 feet above us, could not see what was going on, but Imseng's gymnastic feat soon tightened

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the rope, which the former prudently held firmly, fearing that the mass of stones was moving downwards. As a matter of fact the whole group was so disturbed that it did commence slowly to move, but as I had taken the precaution to throw a length of rope over the top and round the pyramid, Gabriel's firm hold and mine enabled us to arrest any further motion.

Imseng got off with some trifling damage to his face and head, and the loss of hat and axe. He and I then crept tenderly over the stones, picked up Gabriel, and repaired damages. The remaining part of the climb had to be done slowly, because as the rock was steep both of my hands had to be used, and the slighest extra pressure on the left hand sent the blood spurting out of the wound and alarmed the guides much. Moreover we had to take shelter from some stones thrown down from the summit by a joyful party* which had ascended the peak from Randa. In about three quarters of an hour from our last halt we gained the summit, composed, not as usual, of hard snow, but of three rock slabs projecting directly over the face. There was no cornice. Time from gîte, 8¾ hours, including halts and 2 hours slow going by lantern light. Following the tracks of the party referred to, we descended to Randa by the usual route.

The ascent by the Messrs. Puckle was undertaken shortly after a heavy fall of snow, and they had to beware of falling stones and ice. They struck the face at some point very high up, and in passing under the ridge connecting the Nadeljoch with the Dom, they would be exposed in bad or doubtful weather to falling stones and ice. I think the variation described in this paper is less dangerous than the route taken by them, but obviously it should not be attempted unless the greater part of the wall is free from snow and ice.

By starting early from Saas Fée there seems no reason why the Dom should not be crossed within the compass of a moderately long day, and the inconvenience of a bivouac on the rock avoided. Gabriel Taugwalder led with great judgment and boldness, and Xavier Imseng, though young and impulsive, displayed both courage and coolness.

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* See *Report of Proceedings*, p. 170.

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