An Ascent of the Weisshorn from Zinal; and Some Notes on Winter Climbing.

By THEODORE CORNISH.

(Read before the Alpine Club, May 6, 1890.)

MY feeling of satisfaction at being elected a member of the Alpine Club was soon damped by a communication received from my friend the secretary, couched, I may almost say, in terms of menace; and reminding me that membership of the Club entailed not only privileges but responsibilities, and sternly demanding of me a paper, to be read at the Club meeting in May, on my ascent of the Weisshorn last summer. Remonstrances were useless, I felt, to such a stern mentor as the secretary, and with much fear and trembling I began to prepare for my task. A second letter from the same authority, while it brought some balm, rather increased my apprehensions. I was told by him, who must be obeyed, that I must not only be instructive (save the mark!) but also amusing. In despair I turned to a faithful friend who had accompanied me, as a non-combatant, on this my first summer season in the Alps, and asked his advice. He boldly offered to write the paper himself. No doubt he would have been highly instructive and infinitely amusing; but unfortunately he had never even seen the Weisshorn, except from the valleys of Randa and the smooth slopes opposite Zinal; and therefore I felt bound to courteously decline this kind but unavailing offer. His second suggestion was that I should study and incorporate in my paper the thrilling descriptions contained in the 'Tramp Abroad,' but on searching this new and revised Baedeker I found that its fascinating pages did not include any reference to the subject of my paper; so that plagiarism from that quarter was out of the question. I had, therefore, now nothing to do but desperately to set to my task and hope that the members of the Club who condescended to hear me would be indulgent to my weak efforts and remember the straits in which I was placed. I, however, inwardly resolved that never again must I venture up a first-class peak, especially by anything but a well-trodden path, and except in company with a type-writer, a professor of descriptive letterpress, and a photographer. If it were my fate or privilege, by whichever name you may call it, to be called upon to read a paper again, my list of passes

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should contain nothing more hazardous than the Stalden Joch, and my peaks nothing more thrilling or noticeable than the Riffelberg! However, as I have said, I found some balm in my second instructions from headquarters; namely, the permission to incorporate in my paper some account of my Alpine wanderings, under a winter sky, in the Bernese Oberland. In this I felt that I gained two advantages. First, with the exception of the untiring late editor of the 'Alpine Journal' and one or two others, I had no rivals in this field, and therefore could claim to speak with some special knowledge of mountaineering in winter; and, secondly, and as a corollary from the first, I might perhaps safely indulge, should I so wish it, in wild and thrilling descriptions of the Alps in winter without fear of contradiction, and might proudly disdain any heckling that might come after from those who had never been fortunate enough to know the glories of the topmost Alps in January. The incredulous might disbelieve, but they could not contradict what did not fall within their experience. With these few observations in passing, wrung from one on whom an unsought honour has been thrust, I must pass to the more direct subject of my paper, 'An Ascent of the Weisshorn from the Zinal side.'

Now, I know from personal observation and the many letters I have received on the subject that the Weisshorn has a special charm and attraction for Alpinists. I am quite aware, as of course you all are, that to the general public, and especially to the lady portion of that public, it has no such charm. You go up, or are pulled up, as the case may be, the Matterhorn, and, to the school-girl mind at least, you are a hero for ever. You plough along the weary slopes up Mont Blanc, and spend a fortune, *en route*, at the Grands Mulets, and you are at once exalted far above ordinary men, and need never lack a patient and admiring listener. But the charms of the Weisshorn are for the initiated only, and it has been from a knowledge of this fact that I am led to believe that some account of the way up it, if not entirely over new ground and a virgin ascent, yet by a route only once or twice at the outside ever successfully attempted, may have some interest for my professional hearers. The route from Zinal has, as I have said, been but once or twice successfully attempted; but I know that it has always been the dream of climbers, and only bad weather, or other unavoidable cause, has led to its abandonment. Otherwise, I should now not boast the proud title of having been the

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third to accomplish it, and my patient hearers would in that case have been spared my paper. *Dîs aliter visum.* An attack on the Weisshorn from this point was one item in a rather formidable programme drawn out for my first summer season by a too kind Alpine friend. Another project, the Dent Blanche from the same side, had to be abandoned, owing to the quantity of snow on the rocks. On the next day, after an ascent of the Rothhorn from the Mountet hut—a climb which, during the last two hours on the rocks, has, to my mind, few equals, and during which we had anxiously prospected the Weisshorn, and especially its south-western ridge, where I expected to make an assault—we started from Zinal, on a glorious hot afternoon early in August, to essay our big peak. Our party consisted of Ulrich Almer as leading guide, his brother Hans as second guide, and myself. A porter also, with one of the best telescopes I have ever seen, accompanied us as far as the châlet on the Arpitetta Alp, where we were to spend the night. I shall never forget that châlet! Cows, pigs, mules, every kind of living creature, besides peasants, seemed to make their habitation in that one small hut, and the smells were something unbearable. However, we had to put up with all this, as I felt we were too heated to sleep out in the open air; but it was a bad preparation for a big climb. I hardly slept a wink, and was quite glad to be roused up for breakfast at two o'clock. I ought to have mentioned that you get delicious milk at the châlet, to make up for its other nameless terrors. There had been a brilliant starry night and cloudless sky, and everything had pointed to a fine day. Well for us, as I now think, that it was so. If we had been belated by bad weather, or any such cause, on our ascent, it would have gone hard with us. I know that some persons believe that there is nothing difficult or dangerous, and that it is only the vanity of the narrator, or some fond delusion fanned into flame by constant repetition of his adventures, that lends its horrors to his expedition. This may or may not be the case. At any rate, in representing this route up the Weisshorn as a both difficult and dangerous climb I am endeavouring to confine myself strictly to the impressions formed on the spot, deeply imprinted in my mind at the time, and confirmed by comparison with other peaks ascended later on; so that if hereafter some one should make a similar ascent, and call in question its supposed dangers, all I can say is that I conscientiously believe it to be a very dangerous business, and

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that human judgment is at best only fallible. The first hour we proceeded by lantern light, apparently along the slopes of the Arpitetta, till we arrived at some loose shingly or shaly moraine heaps. Having traversed these with little trouble, we got on to the glacier, and luckily found the snow bridges firm enough across the many crevasses. My impression is that later in the day these would have been impassable. After traversing the glacier we arrived at a rather nasty bergschrund between the glacier and the rocks. (I am speaking from memory and not from notes, as I unfortunately took none at the time, not being in the least aware of the real importance of the climb or of its dangerous nature.) This we crossed with considerable difficulty, which brought into play Almer's great qualities as a guide. I must here mention, as I ought to have mentioned before, that we had abandoned the idea of forcing a way up the S.W. arête, and had determined, after a careful survey of the western face through a telescope, to make an ascent in that direction.

Arrived on the rocks, our work was at once cut out for us, and though it was fine it was bitterly cold, and it was unpleasant work. Those rocks gave us some tremendous collar work. They ran in a kind of ridge up towards the centre of the west face, trending from S.W. to N. I don't remember that they were much covered by snow, but the rocks themselves were exceedingly difficult, and not only that, but they afforded a constant source of danger from their brittle nature. I never saw such rotten and friable rocks; but it takes some time to realise this, and only constant and stern warnings from Almer prevented my trusting to them like ordinary rock. We had the greatest difficulty in circumventing this ridge; we had to use all kinds of artifices, standing on one another's shoulders, helping the first man to plant himself, and then the last man to join us, when we had surmounted some particularly nasty bit. It was slow and toilsome work. We had calculated on reaching the top at 12 o'clock, perhaps earlier, and here we were contending with this hateful ridge and laboriously struggling on, with only the easiest part of our work accomplished, and it was already 9 o'clock! At the end of the rocky ridge there was a short snow arête striking away towards a columnar pile of rocks in about the centre of the face, surmounted by a cairn of stones. This afforded no great difficulty, owing to the good condition of the snow, and at the cairn, where we rested, we found a letter left by

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some guides who had ventured thus far in the preceding summer, in vain search after the body of the Austrian, Herr Winkler, who had madly ventured on the mountain alone. Here we took a fairly long rest and refreshment, and from here onwards for another 6 hrs. came the really difficult and dangerous part of our ascent, bad though the rest had been. Up steep snow slopes hung at an almost impossible angle; liable, as we saw, but luckily did not experience, to be raked by falling stones, under certain circumstances a very likely and pressing danger; compelled to traverse these precipitous slopes when the ice or névé became too hard to make a vertical ascent; these traverses often having to be effected where smooth and crumbling slabs of rock dovetailed into the snow; when the rock itself was impossible, cutting precarious steps in the thin layer of glazed ice that covered its surface—steps so shallow and resting on such weak foundation that the third man nearly broke them down, and I feel sure a heavier party than ourselves could not have passed them in safety. I am not nervous, and do not know what it is to be giddy, but this was perilous enough to satisfy the veriest glutton on climbing. I have vivid recollections of the rocks themselves, and of our attempts to get over them—bare smooth slabs, frightfully steep, horribly crumbly—and I can well recollect one place where Ulrich got into difficulties. Hans tried to get past me to help him. I myself was in a position of most insecure tenure, and we all seemed to be slipping together. Below us a great abyss, above us rocks which refused a foot- or hand-hold. Once, I don't mind confessing, I thought it was all over with us, and it was a most curious sensation. How we righted ourselves in our perilous position I cannot well remember, but at last we got on, and rested about an hour below the top, under some rocks. I can't help saying that those are the only occasions when I feel any qualms, when your guide stands in front of you apparently on nothing, with his back to the precipice, ministering to your wants. We were all very much exhausted at this point. My legs had got very cramped standing in the steps, when we were occasionally nonplussed while trying a traverse; and the rocks themselves had strained all our energies. From the shelter of these rocks we struck off to make the N. arête at no great distance from the summit, and, experiencing no further difficulty, as far as my memory serves me, we reached the actual summit at 4 o'clock P.M., 13 hrs. from the start.

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Right glad we were to be at the top and to have crowned our labours with success. It was late; nearly half-past four. Returning by the same route was out of the question; the guides said it was 'too dangerous'; they would not go the same way again for a thousand pounds. It was too risky; we could not face those rocks again, and the snow part would certainly have altered for the worse. So we gave this idea up, and it was, I feel sure, a wise determination. We therefore decided to make for Randa in the Zermatt valley, and we accomplished this with ridiculous ease; a party had lately been up the arête on the Randa side, so we found steps ready cut, and we had not the least difficulty with the rocks. We almost raced down, and, taking one long rest, we got down to Randa by 10 o'clock, the last 2 hrs. being spent in stumbling along those never-ending 'paths' which intersect the slope below the Weisshorn hut, and which so baffle the traveller in the darkness. The whole descent was tiring, but I saw nothing on the Randa side of the Weisshorn in the least approaching in difficulty or danger to that western face. After our experiences of the latter, the other dwindled into nothing.

When we reached Randa we had been out for nineteen hours of hard toil, not unaccompanied, as I have said, by danger; but some soup and a warm bath soon restored me, and I felt as fresh as a lark the next morning. Standing on the steps of the hotel the next morning, being wonderfully arrayed in a check shirt and enormous Gladstone collar belonging to some one connected with the hotel, I got into conversation with a young lady who had been absent from England for two years, and was evidently much astonished at the style of collar apparently in fashion there, till I reassured her on the point and acknowledged its origin. On hearing of our traverse of the Weisshorn she flattered me very much, by going into ecstasies at fate having at last permitted her to see a real mountaineer in the flesh. She had often heard of one, she had often read of one, but she had never seen a real live specimen before!

We got back to Zinal next day by the Besioch Pass, which is interesting, and the Col de Diablons, which, under a burning sun, is the most intensely trying glacier walk I have ever been. On looking back on our climb of the Weisshorn on the west face, which I have tried, however feebly, to bring before you, one or two observations will not perhaps be out of place. Our success was due, I think, to three main causes.

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First, we had a lovely day, not much wind, but that wind cold enough to keep the snow in good condition. Almer laid great stress on this latter point. In bad weather or with the snow in bad condition, I feel that an ascent on this side would be practically impossible and exceedingly dangerous. There are quite enough dangers in fine weather.

Secondly, I had the good fortune to possess splendid guides. Difficulties such as we that day experienced simply proved opportunities for testing and drawing forth Ulrich's magnificent qualities, his ready judgment and unfailing skill, combined, as it so rarely is, with that important quality on a long expedition, unfailing good temper. Also, Hans has great strength, together with other qualifications, and these stood us in good stead on several important occasions. Theirs is all the credit of the climb. I was merely learning a lesson from good masters of art.

Thirdly, we were a light party. Both Ulrich and myself are small and slight, only Hans being at all big. This proved, I think, our safety and ensured our success.

Finally, whether I have unconsciously magnified the dangers or not, I think it must be evident that it is an expedition of some moment, and I think it is too dangerous ever to become a regular route, and I certainly cannot recommend it. And *lastly* (to use a preacher's licence), whether our route for the last six hours of the ascent was new, or perhaps merely a variation on one of the routes previously taken, I am unable to say. If I had taken accurate notes it might have been different. At the time both the Almers and myself were under the strong impression that we were making an untrodden path.

I have been asked what kind of view we got from the top. It was a splendid one, but as I reminded my inquirer, a view from a summit is the same from whichever side you make the ascent; so that it is not necessary to climb from Zinal to get a view which is attained with much less fatigue and peril from Randa. With regard to the danger of the rocks on the west face, I was soon in a position to compare them with other rocks, notably those on the Italian side of the Matterhorn. These, in a passage we made a few days later, we found very difficult; but I never felt conscious of any real danger, as they were good and firm. Taking another illustration from the Matterhorn to show how the difficulty of ascents or descents differs with the weather or the state of the snow, I may mention that we took nearly eight hours to get down to the Italian hut from the summit, owing to the

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state of the snow, though the ascent by this route, I believe, under different conditions, might only involve four or five hours.

As an illustration also of the difficulty of making out by what exact route you have ascended a mountain, unless you take careful notes at the time, and have this object especially in view, I may mention our ascent of the Dent Blanche the same season. At the time we did not know that we had not been up the ordinary route, by the Blatten rocks (though we were puzzled by not experiencing any difficulty on any point such as might answer to these rocks); but, on comparing notes afterwards, I am much mistaken if the route which we adopted, and by which so many followed in our footsteps, was not in the main features the same route as that discovered so many years previously by Mr. Frederick Gardiner. I merely mention these points to show how easily mistaken one may be as to a route when one is simply intent on the climbing, and how widely circumstances vary conditions. Who, a few years ago, would have believed me if I had said that we had found the Dent Blanche one of the easiest and shortest of our expeditions, and that we had sat on the summit an hour smoking our pipes and revelling in the sunshine?

I now come to the second part of my paper, 'Mountaineering in Winter.' I am afraid I have already trespassed heavily on your patience, and have not left as much time as it deserves for this subject. It has a great fascination for me, and I think this feeling is shared by those who are acquainted with the Alps in winter.

I well remember how I was first inspired to try winter climbing in Switzerland. Some winters ago I used to spend a few days in January each year pottering about on the hills in the Lake District. On one such occasion I climbed Helvellyn, which was then deep in snow, and was surprised by a mist on the top. I was rather proud of my achievement, and had, I believe, written a thrilling account of my exploit for a local paper. On the last of these occasions I was electrified by the news, recorded in a London paper, that Mrs. Jackson had succeeded in crossing the Jungfrau. This at once fired me to try other scenes for my winter work. My resolution was still further confirmed by a charming account which appeared in the pages of the 'Guardian' of the delights of the social life enjoyed by the writer during a short winter sojourn at the hospitable

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'Bear,' at Grindelwald. So the January of 1889 found me comfortably settled in those pleasant winter quarters, and I expect many a succeeding January will find me haunting the same spot. Those who only know Grindelwald in the summer have little knowledge of its charms in winter.

Those who have been there under a winter sky will readily recall to their minds the cheery welcome on arrival, after an exhilarating sleigh-drive from Interlaken, the ceaseless attentions of those princes of hospitality the Bosses, the indescribable appearance of that great hall in the winter-house, with its famous log-fire, the social afternoon teas amid a strange surrounding of dogs (big and little), boots, gaiters, ice-axes, alpenstocks, photographic apparatus, and what not; chess in one corner, whist in another, kindly sociability everywhere; the quiet pipe enjoyed without reproof, and an air of sweet negligence all round. This is a picture that must not be omitted in any description of mountaineering in winter.

Nor is mountaineering the only attraction held out there. I have seen grave members of the Alpine Club playing wild games of hockey on the ice, to the intense delight of the villagers. Last winter also there was skating for those who would on a sheet of ice which, I am bound to confess, realised to my mind more than anything else my idea of an inclined plane; and space and time alone forbid me to enlarge on that most fascinating of all pursuits, tobogganing. At Grindelwald it is not reduced to a science as it is at S. Moritz, but everyone goes according to his own sweet will, and, like Mazeppa, urges on his swift career, regardless of the consequences! Nor would it be in place here to describe what the summer visitor cannot realise—the vision of the whole place under a carpet of snow, and those marvellous pinnacles of icicles on the Lauterbrunnen road. But I have digressed. I said that the January of 1889 found me arrived at Grindelwald intent on climbing. To the general mind, at any rate at that period, a winter in these parts suggested nameless terrors. Many people, I really believe (I am bound to say that I myself at one time shared the delusion), laboured under the idea that in the shadow of the Bernese Alps in winter the inhabitants hibernated like dormice, only to reappear with the summer sun. This is the only way in which I can reconcile the warnings I received before starting, as though I were about to plunge into some Siberian region. I left England amid grave remonstrances and anxious partings, and yet a week later,

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while England was sunk under fog and mist, we in this supposed Arctic zone were strolling up the Faulhorn under a brilliant sun and clear sky, all too hot, as we found it. I should mention that the winter of 1889 was an exceptional one in this one respect. No snow fell till late in January. This was how it came to pass that on our first ascent, that of the 'Schreckhorn,' we were enabled to follow the summer route as far as the Schwarzegg hut, and were enabled to do so without much difficulty. As a rule the walk up to the huts forms a far too prominent feature in winter climbing, as we found to our cost in getting up to the 'Bergli' in the succeeding winter. This alone constitutes an important difference from summer climbing.

Never shall I forget that New Year's night at the Schwarzegg. The hut was nearly full of driven snow; it was icy cold; and there we sat shivering, shaking, bundled up in the few wraps we possessed, devouring our New Year's dinner. Those who only know the huts in summer, comfortless though they may then be, have little notion of the discomforts in winter. However, the next morning, after a sleepless night, amid the roars of constant avalanches, after struggling into our half-frozen boots and gaiters, and hastily swallowing some hot tea, we prepared to start. Our party consisted of a friend and myself, the two Almers, and Jossi, who had come as porter to the hut, and insisted upon accompanying us to the top. We started at 3 o'clock, and for the first 3 hrs. or so over the snow-slopes we had to go by lantern-light, as there was no moon. This constitutes another serious difficulty of winter ascents, namely, the shortness of the days. I am not going to describe our route exactly, though I believe it differs somewhat from that adopted in the summer. In going up a great snow couloir we were unpleasantly reminded of unseen dangers by two snow avalanches at no great distance off. The next day another party had one, I believe, in still more dangerous proximity. The cold all this while was intense, and that great bugbear to winter climbers, frost-bite, seemed at times inevitable. In my case, however, I think it was effectually staved off by watching the vigorous measures which the guides adopted with my friend. I concealed my feelings, and, like the late Lord Derby, 'I preferred the gout'! A little later on we were rewarded for our toil by the most magnificent sunrise I ever beheld. We could not see the sun, which was on the other side of our mountain, but gradually our numbed limbs and weary frames were in-

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spirited, as peak after peak, clearly cut and snow-clad, was bathed in the rich pink hues of the unfolding morn. With renewed energies we pressed on till we were just below the saddle, and after getting successfully past some difficult rocks we made a halt for rest and refreshment. Hitherto, though the cold had been intense, there had been no wind, or we had not felt it. Our serious difficulties were now to begin. On reaching the saddle or ridge leading up to the final rocks, we found ourselves swept by a terrific wind and blinding snow, blown up from the great snow-slope on the other side. The arête was hard snow or ice, and necessitated a great deal of step-cutting; this in the face of the wind and snow, and with the thermometer, I suppose, down to zero! My heart sank, and I thought we must give up our cherished peak. However, owing to the manly conduct of the guides we managed to press on, and after a long struggle we at last made the final rock ridge leading to the summit. Arrived there, we just wrote our names on a card, 'as a guarantee of good faith,' and lingered a minute and a half enjoying, as best our numbed faculties would permit us, the glorious view. The valleys were all a rolling sea of fog; the peaks, however, like giant islands, stood out grand and sharply cut above this sea. Ah, those winter views! There is nothing like them. Our descent at first down the arête was extremely hazardous, as descents, I think, always are, especially when attended, as in this case, by a cutting wind and blinding snow. However, arrived on the saddle, we had thenceforth no great difficulties, and our journey back to the hut was only remarkable, I think, for the unorthodox way in which my friend and myself descended the rocks, causing sad havoc to our garments. We took 9 hrs. to the summit, and 6 hrs. for the descent. Arrived at the hut, we found another party there to share our scanty supply of rugs, and to climb in our footsteps next day. Undaunted by our 15 hrs. of hard work, Ulrich and I essayed to get down the glacier and return to Grindelwald that night; but the fates were not propitious; it was dark and windy; our lanterns went out; we were constantly chasing after our hats, which blew off; and, finally, a fall into a crevasse convinced us that discretion was the better part of valour, and we returned discomfited to our friends and the hut.

After this ascent of the Schreckhorn, which I now felt justified in familiarly calling the 'Shreck,' our next expedition was the 'Wetterhorn.' This I did without my friend, but with the same faithful guides. Our chief difficulty, I

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think, was getting up to the hut (the Gleckstein) on the first day. It took us 8 hrs. of continuous toil, not unaccompanied by danger. After signalling our safe arrival by rockets from the hut, we slept there fairly comfortably, though the wet was trickling from the hut roof all night, and as Jossi slept with his mouth open he probably got more than his share. We had intended to start early so as to do the Mittelhorn as well, but the elements were unpropitious, and we only started at 9 o'clock, under the strong impression that we should have to turn back, as there had been a fall of snow in the early morning, and there was a good deal of mist about. Luckily, however, our forebodings were not verified, and, following the summer route, though experiencing severe cold at times, we made the summit of the Wetterhorn by 2 o'clock, 5 hrs. only from the start, and, finding it unexpectedly warm there, we were enabled to rest for 20 mins. on its razor-like summit. We were back at the hut about 5.30, and after cleaning up we determined to use the parish lantern, which was fortunately shining, and after a very quick but somewhat risky descent we were in the warm hall of the hospitable 'Bear,' receiving a hearty and cheery welcome, at 9 o'clock. A further project, the ascent of the Eiger, had for this year to be abandoned, as the weather had broken, and we had to content ourselves with tobogganing.

Encouraged by my success in 1889, the January of 1890 again found me out in Grindelwald, bent on fresh conquests. But the scene had somewhat changed. Heavy snowfalls in December had made the conditions rather different from the previous year, and a week's 'Föhn' wind made mountaineering at first impossible. So soft was the snow that it took us 8 hrs. to get up the Faulhorn, which we had done the previous year in a little over three. Everything comes, however, to the man who waits—even mountains—and on January 6 our patience was rewarded by a change of weather, the precursor of as brilliant a week, I should think, in point of weather, as was ever seen at Grindelwald in winter. Still, cold, sunny weather—just the conditions most desired for climbing; and we made good use of it. We had several objects in view at starting: if possible, the Eiger from the Bergli side; failing this, the Jungfrau and the Gross Viescherhorn. The first, on nearer inspection from the hut, we found, to our intense disappointment, just impossible from that side; but we succeeded in our attempts on the Jungfrau and the Viescherhorn. Owing to the soft state of

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the snow, we found the first day's walk up to the Bergli, adopting the route by the Zäsenberg, a most toilsome business, and we took 10 hrs. over it. The hut itself was very damp, and our stove-fire melted the frozen roof, so we passed a wet and comfortless night.

Starting at 4 o'clock the next morning, by the light of a glorious moon, our feet were several times nearly frost-bitten, especially when we got into a long tract of soft powdery snow below the Mönch Joch. Ploughing through this was irritating work, but we reached the Roththal Sattel in about 6 hrs., without any mishap, and another two hours' hard step-cutting on the hard snow slope saw us on the summit of the Jungfrau. It was a glorious day, very little wind, and the view was superb. The valleys were clear of mist, the mountains to the furthest distance wonderfully clean cut against the sky, and the familiar peaks around the Zermatt district seemed at our feet. After a prolonged halt to enjoy the view we descended to the Sattel and made our way back to the hut, after an absence of 14 hrs. The next morning the guides overslept themselves, and we did not start for the Viescherhorn till the late hour of 8 o'clock. We had magnificent weather, and, working round till we got to the western snow arête, our climb was pleasant and uneventful. We stuck to it very hard and reached the summit in a little over 4 hrs.: our only difficulty being with the arête, which necessitated much step-cutting. We stayed on the top a full hour enjoying our lunch and the well-earned pipe, and revelling in such a view as would reward twenty such climbs. This, remember, was on January 8: about 3 hrs. found us again at the hut, but we did not reach Grindelwald itself till past 10 o'clock that evening, the descent in the dark, and the crossing of the glacier proving most toilsome and wearying. This closes my record of winter climbs, and while thanking you for the patience with which you have listened to me, I will end my paper, already, I fear, too long, with a few observations on the results which my experience of winter mountaineering seems to suggest. In the first place, I think the actual climbing is often easier than in the summer. There is as a rule more snow, and this would render some of the rocks more feasible—I mean by their being covered over. The air is exhilarating, and you gladly miss the often extreme and enervating heat of summer. Also, if that be an advantage, you have everything your own way, and there is no crowding out, or, what I deprecate most, racing. Without further particularising, I feel sure

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there are many advantages, besides the superiority of the views gained, on the side of the winter mountaineer. But it would be affectation to deny that a winter climb involves very serious drawbacks. First and foremost, an almost insuperable objection arises in the increased, the enormously increased, chance of frostbite. I am obliged, rather reluctantly, to testify to the force of this objection. Secondly, as of course you know as well as I do, the days, the time wherein you can work with safety, are in winter terribly short. If any hitch arose or any accident delayed a party, one trembles to think of the possible consequences. The rocks too, where they are bare, are of course very much glazed with ice, and this means slow progress. The huts are indescribably uncomfortable. If you think the game worth the candle you must be prepared for all this, and you must go thickly clad. '*Nudus ara, sere nudus*' may do for agriculture, but it is not a wise maxim for winter climbing. Above all, take plenty of gloves.

In conclusion, when fresh from an ascent I feel inclined to preach caution and dissuade from mountaineering in winter; but it has a charm of its own; distance of time and space throw a glamour over its difficulties and dangers; one is apt to ignore or try to forget them, and, after all I have said, I do not feel at all sure that the winter of 1891 will not see me again disregarding my own croakings and again essaying some Oberland peak.

Leaves from the Diary of the late Mr. A. T. Malkin.

1856.

Zermatt and Saas, with Reminiscences of former Visits.

August 19. *Monday.*—Visp was wonderfully knocked about by the earthquake last year; half the houses are more or less damaged, and the church is evidently the worse, but, like the Phœnix or an old coat, it is reviving—better than new. Indeed, throughout the country much improvement and activity are visible, and the click of the mason's hammer is heard everywhere. . . .

At St. Nicolas there is now a comfortable little inn . . . .

To good walkers bound down the Valais from Zermatt I recommend a lofty and laborious pass [Jung pass, about 9,843 feet], north of the great Weisshorn group, direct from St. Nicolas to Tourtemagne. The first climb up the

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