lover of the mountains who does not find fresh beauties each day that he looks at them.

To put these feelings into words is, I find, a very difficult task. The whole gamut of Alpine expression has long since been played through by those fortunate individuals who led the way in mountaineering; they certainly left but scanty pastures for the imaginations of the later generations of climbers to feed upon. Unless they wandered further afield these latter have for the most part been reduced to giving somewhat flamboyant descriptions of the 'new route'—that inevitable outcome of the exhaustion of the supply of virgin peaks—though these descriptions had at least the charm of novelty in their details. Or, by way of variety, they sought after new sensations by essaying the ascent of the great peaks in winter, when it might be expected that the conditions would be of a different character to those in summer. Such is, no doubt, the case; but the winter climber in his narrative is handicapped in so far that, although he has had certain difficulties to contend with, they have often not been of the kind which lend themselves to the picturesque embellishment of a mountaineering story. Owing to the limited duration of daylight at his disposal he is as a rule obliged to choose one of the easier, or at any rate well-known routes up his peak; and, if prudent, he will make his venture with a reasonable probability of fine weather. Hurricanes and snow storms encountered on a mountain ridge are, no doubt, effective touches in a climber's picture, but they are negative advantages which the winter climber will do well to avoid.

The foregoing is, I fear, an elaborate excuse for what will probably appear to you to be a 'very plain tale from the hills.' It is, however, some time since there has been a paper on winter climbing, and this, combined with the fact that my ascent of the Dom was the first, and has been, I believe, up to now the only ascent in midwinter, must be my excuse for claiming your indulgence this evening. We chose the Dom merely because it seemed one of the most feasible of the great peaks round Zermatt which had not been already climbed in midwinter, and, as a matter of fact, we did not expect to nor did we meet with any difficulties of the gymnastic kind. Overhanging rock towers, smooth slabby faces and their kindred play no part in this story.

I paid my first winter visit to the Alps at the commencement of 1893, my attention having been drawn by a note by Mr. Dent in the 'Alpine Journal' to Zermatt, with which place I then made my first acquaintance, as previously I had avoided it

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in summer. One day, in the second week of January, Christian Jossi, the well-known Grindelwald guide, met me at Lausanne, and the next day saw us crawling along the Rhone valley to Visp. The journey in winter along that valley is an experience of leisurely locomotion. One of our contemporary writers—I do not remember which—once said that the railway is the road to hell. If that be the case I am sure that the good folk of the Rhone valley may congratulate themselves that, from no fault of their own, they will take a very long while to get there. We had a delightful journey up the Zermatt valley, which, with its glistening snow-clad slopes and glittering fringes of icicles, was a veritable revelation to me. I found the Monte Rosa Hotel at Zermatt in the sole possession of an Italian artist who spent his day in the composition of marvellous symphonies in blue and white, and of Mr. Woolley, who returned just before dinner after a successful ascent of the Rympfischorn. His success fired me with enthusiasm to follow his example. Jossi wished for nothing better, and we fixed on the Wellenkuppe as a suitable peak to begin with for a comparative novice, as I then was, with but one season's climbing to my score. I engaged Adolf Schaller to accompany us. He developed the programme by proposing that we should afterwards try the Dom, which he thought would go if the weather did not change. I agreed to everything, and, like most novices, thought that saying was doing. A week later I was wiser and sadder, for our efforts that winter were doomed to ignominious failure.

Very foolishly I decided to start for the Wellenkuppe from Zermatt instead of going up to sleep at the Trift, and on January 19, at a quarter to one in the morning, we sallied forth from the Monte Rosa with every prospect of perfect weather, although the cold was a little too intense for comfort. We made a bad beginning, taking as much as four hours to reach the Trift Hotel, owing to the depth of the snow in the gorge. The Arctic temperature did not permit of more than a few minutes' rest, and we went on for two more hours until we reached the big rock halfway up the moraine which sweeps round from the end of the Gabelhorn glacier. Here we made a halt for our first breakfast, of which a few details will give some idea of the difficulties of a meal on the mountain in winter. The wine had, as we feared, long since frozen. A bottle of cold tea, on being taken out of the rücksack pocket, astonished us by bursting with a loud report and shivering into atoms. I then triumphantly produced a patent spirit kettle which I had insisted on bringing, and requested the

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guides to make some tea. A quarter of an hour passed without a sign of it, so I meekly remarked that the water took a deuce of a time to boil, which only drew forth the angry reply from Schaller, 'Der verdammte Spiritus will gar nicht anzünden.' And ignite it would not, in spite of gentle persuasion in the shape of burning paper, candles, &c., underneath to warm it. We had finally to give it up, and proceeded on our weary tramp with the comforting reflection that we had, at any rate, nothing to drink. The snow had been gradually increasing in depth all the way up, and we were soon wading through the powdery stuff above our knees. From the end of the moraine we threaded our way through some séracs at the right-hand side of the Gabelhorn glacier to snow-covered rocks, which led us up the broad tongue of snow on the rock buttress between the Trift and Gabelhorn glaciers, so conspicuous in the views of the Wellenkuppe from the opposite side of the Zermatt valley. We plunged up the snowfield, finally halting at the very base of the peak itself at 1.30, twelve hours and three-quarters since leaving Zermatt, during which time I can without exaggeration assert that we scarcely even touched a rock. I was by this time heartily sick of the unending snow, and threw myself on my back, mentally cursing a taste which had led me to take up climbing as a pastime, and bewailing our want of foresight in not having shortened the climb by sleeping overnight at the Trift, thereby ensuring our chance of reaching the summit in good time. Under the circumstances I thought that a few judicious questions would not be out of place before proceeding any further. I ascertained from Schaller that we had at least three hours' work, probably more, before we could reach the summit, as it was not likely that we should find the rocks very easy. As there were at the most from three and a half to four hours of daylight left, this obviously meant a night out, perhaps on the rocks. We had nothing to drink, and the provisions in their frozen state were uneatable, so far as I was concerned. In spite of brilliant sunshine the cold had been most intense all day and showed no signs of diminishing. I looked lovingly at my toes, which seemed quite comfortable where they were, and I suggested that we should turn back. Neither Jossi nor Schaller would give an opinion, which I thought a bad sign, so I settled the question by giving a decisive order to retreat; wisely, I think, as that night proved to be the severest of an unusually severe spell of frost, the thermometer in Zermatt registering as much as 21° below zero centigrade. The next day the weather

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changed, and a snowfall, lasting for two days, put an end to any idea of ascending the Dom during the remainder of my stay that winter.

In January 1894 I again turned my footsteps towards Zermatt, but without definite plans for climbing any of the great peaks, for my experience on the Wellenkuppe had somewhat disenchanted me with the joys of winter climbing. Jossi again met me at Lausanne, and, in almost his first words, asked me if I was not going to try the Dom this time, but I declined to make any rash promises; but when, on my arrival at Zermatt, Schaller waylaid me at the hotel door with precisely the same question, adding that the Dom was now in a favourable condition for the attempt, I began to suspect that I was the victim of a deep-laid plot, and that I should have very little peace unless I made an effort to retrieve our failure of the previous winter. I was now not altogether averse to the idea, and consented to start for the Dom hut a few days later, if the weather remained fine.

The weather did not prove false, and on Friday, January 12, two sleighs jingled down to Randa, conveying, in addition to ourselves, a friend who was to accompany us as far as the hut with Schaller's brother. The walk up to the hut presented nothing worthy of notice beyond a huge avalanche, which had fallen from the end of the Festi Glacier, completely filling the bed of the Randaierbach for some distance. The hut we found in excellent order. The wind had evidently kept the exterior free from snow; nor had any snow penetrated to the interior. The usual hut programme was carried out, and at about nine I turned in, with grave doubts as to the success of the next day's enterprise, for some ominous grey clouds had been gradually gathering round the opposite peaks. But on getting up at 3.30 the next morning all misgivings were dispelled, as the unwelcome visitors had vanished, and there seemed every probability of a magnificent day. An hour later we filed out of the hut, casting final glances of envy at our slumbering companions, who had made themselves aggressively comfortable by the addition of our discarded blankets. Our troubles began soon after leaving the hut, as the snow was very deep and powdery both on the moraine and on the Festi Glacier, making our progress decidedly slow. We also experienced quite unexpected difficulty in getting through the small icefall some little way up the glacier. The crevasses were still very wide, and were not filled with snow, and the ice appeared to be in an extraordinarily rotten condition. I remember feeling intensely uncomfortable when,

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while we were standing on one of the séracs, we heard two tremendous thuds of falling ice, apparently just beneath us, and each time the sérac we were on shook very perceptibly. Schaller remarked that he had never before seen the glacier in that condition, and that it was most extraordinary that it should be so in winter, and as his conversation, all the while we were threading our way through the crevasses, was profusely ornamented by such words as 'verdammt,' and 'Teufel,' I am inclined to think that he meant what he said. At this point I contributed to the day's amusement. Schaller had cut across a sloping sérac to the rocks on the right bank, and I prepared to follow. The evil spirits of the mountain were evidently at work, for I saw by the dim light of the lantern what appeared to be an unusually fine specimen of the soup plate, but on placing my foot on the spot it was met by a smooth glassy surface, and I shot down into the crevasse, the lantern choosing this moment to go out suddenly. Schaller and Jossi shouted with laughter, and thought the whole thing very funny; but it is perhaps needless to say that I utterly failed to see the point of the joke. Indeed, I am not sure that I am acting wisely in relating the incident to-night. A kind friend in the Club has supplied me with a couplet on the subject which runs thus:

A man must be an ass
Who falls in a crevasse.

Or perhaps it might suggest the lines from Gay's 'Fables'—

Fools, to talking ever prone,
Are sure to make their follies known.

At the point where we quitted the glacier I believe that the usual plan is to keep close to its edge. This was not advisable in our case, owing to the depth of the snow, and we took a course considerably higher up the rocks, where we hoped to find the snow less deep, following the tracks of some chamois which had apparently just preceded us. Hard work as we had found the going so far, it was mere child's play to what we went through for the next two hours. The slope was somewhat steep, and the snow in the same execrable powdery condition. At each step we sank in up to the waist, occasionally almost disappearing into unseen holes between the rocks. Schaller's vocabulary of florid adjectives became still more elaborate, and had this time a well-sustained accompaniment in another tongue. The chamois, too, which had evidently doubled back on to the ridge above, caused us

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much annoyance by sending down showers of stones, for which we were obliged to keep a sharp look-out in case any came our way. Day broke during this portion of the climb, and I was only too glad of the excuse to stop for a few minutes to lose myself in silent delight at the gorgeous spectacle presented by the incomparable snow cone of the Weisshorn, now bathed in the crimson glories of a winter sunrise. At 9.30 we took a well-earned rest at the foot of the little gully leading up to the Festijoch. We spied our friends the chamois, a small herd of five, on the ridge, watching us with the utmost curiosity, no doubt wondering who could be foolish enough to intrude on their winter solitude. We had been terribly slow to this point, having taken quite double the time needed in summer. This was not encouraging, but it was too early to give way to doubts of our ultimate success, of which we should be better able to form an opinion further on. We mounted quickly to the Festijoch, and in about 1½ hr. ascended without much trouble by snow and rocks to the foot of the N.W. ridge, by which we had decided to make the ascent. From here we saw that this was evidently the only available route on this side. The N. face, which is usually covered by a snow-slope running up from the Hohberg Glacier, by which the summit is sometimes reached in summer, was now an imposing sheet of blue ice, which also ran up the side of the ridge, actually covering it at two places for some distance, there joining a similar sheet of bare ice sweeping up the other side from the Festi Glacier. The wind had evidently been at work on the lower part of the ridge, which was almost entirely swept clear of snow, and looked, as far as we could tell, in fairly good order. We were at all events relieved to think that we had done with deep snow for a time. The day had fortunately settled down into one of cloudless stillness, for which we could not feel too thankful, as the intensity of the cold began to make itself felt when we were once on the ridge. The latter we found more difficult, or perhaps I should say less easy than we had anticipated. Though the rocks were not glazed over the cracks between were filled up with hard ice, necessitating a considerable amount of step-cutting and caution in our movements. At the foot of the first ice slope I rested while Schaller and Jossi cut steps up it as far as the length of the rope permitted. A meal was attempted; but anything nastier than our provisions cannot be imagined. Flakes of ice had formed in the grain of the meat, and a white coating of frost enveloped everything. The wine in the

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bottles was a crystallised mass; but by a lucky chance Schaller had brought a Dauphiné skin filled with wine, which had not frozen at all, thereby demonstrating one virtue of the wine skin. I now made the unpleasant discovery that one of my feet had lost all sensation. The mere idea of frostbite induced a state of violent activity, and after ten or fifteen minutes of agitated football with the surrounding boulders I was rewarded by the welcome but extremely painful relief of restored circulation. Schaller was by this time ready to go on, and we negotiated the ice slope very comfortably, Jossi having occupied his time in cutting the most delightful little niches for the hand to facilitate our descent.

The day was creeping on and we were well into the afternoon, though we still had a good bit to do. As you are, no doubt, aware, the snow cone which forms the summit is not visible from the lower portion of the ridge, and on the state of that last slope depended now to a great extent the successful issue of our venture. If it was of snow in good condition, the climb was practically accomplished, but if we found ice in its place we should probably have to put up with defeat a second time, unless we were prepared to brave the Arctic severity of a January night on that most exposed ridge, a contingency not to be lightly risked, especially after the warning I had already received. I ought, perhaps, to explain that step-cutting in winter, owing to the excessive hardness of the ice, is a very much more arduous, lengthy, and difficult task than in summer. It was necessary also to make very deep steps, so that the descent might be effected as quickly as possible, for it was certain that in any case we should not reach the top until late in the afternoon. I began to feel a deep depression at the thought that, after all, we might not complete the ascent, and for some unaccountable reason all sorts of superstitious thoughts crowded into my mind to explain the possible failure. We had started on a Friday. We were doing the actual climb on the 13th of the month. The year was '94, which numerals added made 13; and, finally, as I could not think of any more accommodating figures, my age was 31, which inverted also represented the fateful number. As may be supposed I kept these sinister thoughts to myself, and determined that this time no suggestion of retreat should come from me. We crept slowly on, and in due course reached and cut up the second ice slope, and at length stood in what Schaller called the 'Gabel,' from which the summit is at last visible. Schaller glanced upwards and shouted joyfully, 'Wir haben es

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gemacht.' Jossi 'jödelled,' which is a sure sign that things are going right. The last slope was of snow, in apparently perfect order, and the remainder of the ascent would be plain sailing. We almost ran up, and at 3.5 we stepped on to the summit with more shouts from Schaller and jödels from Jossi, who at once set to work to lighten their burden of provisions. My appetite, as usual, had preferred to remain behind at the hut, so I turned my back on such materialism and gave myself up to the somewhat melancholy charm of the silent scene; to quote Shelley—

> A scene
> Where musing solitude might love to lift
> Her soul above this sphere of earthliness;
> Where silence undisturbed might watch alone,
> So cold, so bright, so still.

In the case of a paper on a climb in the Alps it seems to have become the rule to omit any mention of the view, probably for the excellent reason that it has been already described *ad nauseam*; but I feel that I cannot pass over the winter view from the Dom in absolute silence. It has been asserted that winter views from mountain-tops are flat and monotonous, and suffer from a lack of atmosphere; but surely the persons who make such statements must be wanting in æsthetic perception. It is true that there is a certain lack of variety of colours. Green is almost entirely absent from the picture, but that is fully compensated by a marvellous gradation of blues and yellows in the lights and shades of the snow, which quite redeem the winter landscape from the charges of flatness and monotony.

Nor on that January afternoon was there any lack of atmosphere. The Italian plains lay basking in a soft transparent haze of shimmering sunlight, and all around the most distant peaks stood out with absolute clearness, preserving at the same time the impression of graduating distance, so necessary to picturesque effect in a panorama. This was possibly due to the lateness of the hour at which we were on the summit; or was it perhaps that I looked at the scene through the softening halo of an elated imagination?

Although there was but the merest breath of wind, and we were bathed in brilliant sunshine, the cold was most intense; the temperature must have been many degrees below freezing point. Consequently at half-past three I was quite ready when Schaller suggested that we should begin the descent, as it was important that we should reach the Festijoch before darkness closed in. We raced down the ridge as fast as cir-

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Sydney Spencer, Photo. Swan Electric Engraving Co.

The Weisshorn from the Dom Hut.

January 11th 1898.

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cumstances permitted, now reaping the benefit of the liberal step-cutting, just reaching the desired point as the last glimmer of daylight disappeared. The lantern was brought into requisition for about an hour until the moon rose, after which the rest of the journey to the hut was accomplished by brilliant moonshine. The rocks from the Festijoch to the glacier were, if anything, more exasperating than on the ascent, but we were quickly over the glacier and down the moraine, reaching the hut at 8.30, exactly sixteen hours since the start. This time is, I know, terribly slow, but I doubt whether it could have been shortened very much, as during the whole climb we only rested twice on the ascent, again on the summit, and not once coming down. The deep powdery snow on the lower portion of the mountain, and the unexpected amount of step-cutting on the ridge were no doubt chiefly accountable for our slow times. I think I may say that the day was on the whole a favourable one for the ascent, as the weather could not have been more perfect, and the difficulties were merely such as to delay our progress, and could not be called really serious, although altogether the climb was an infinitely bigger undertaking than it appears to be in summer, when it is not an expedition which would attract the Alpine gymnast. As we had intended in any case to spend the second night at the hut, our first thought on reaching it was to give the people at Randa a signal which we had arranged in the event of our safe return. In the exuberance of our spirits we lighted no less than eight bonfires simultaneously, and then went into the hut to a well-earned supper and bed.

Our expedition had rather a comic finale. Schaller left the hut early the next morning, as he wished to attend Mass at Randa, leaving us to follow at our leisure later on. When we reached Randa Schaller met us with the news that a telegram had been received from the Monte Rosa Hotel saying that the Zermatt villagers wished to know whether I should like music to celebrate our return. 'Good heavens! On no account should I like it,' said I; 'and, Schaller, see that no demonstration of any kind is made, especially as I do not consider that the occasion is such as to warrant it.'

In blissful ignorance of the people I was dealing with I thought the matter was done with, and settled myself in the sleigh to enjoy the drive up to Zermatt. Alas! we had no sooner appeared in the square in front of the Monte Rosa, where the villagers had assembled, than the village band struck up an air which sounded suspiciously like a Zermattised version of a certain music-hall classic, known as 'Ta-

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ra-ra-boom-de-ay.' I am afraid I used bad language and disappeared at once into the hotel, where I was thankful to find that none of my companions were at home to laugh at my reception.

I ought, I suppose—not that I feel any special qualification for doing so—to conclude with a few remarks on winter climbing. It cannot be said to have become very general, and I think the shortness of the day and the great risk of frostbite will always be a serious barrier to its attaining real popularity. The conditions of the mountain have to be considered much more carefully than in summer; also it is essential to start with a reasonable chance of fine weather, which is of importance even on more modest expeditions. This we found to our cost, when we lost our way crossing the Gemmi one January in a blinding snow storm with a Föhn wind; and so probably another party also found recently, after spending the night in a snow storm on the rocks of a certain minor Oberland peak. As a rule, however, winter weather in the Alps is more settled and less subject to sudden changes than in summer. The most fatiguing part of the climb will generally be found to be on the lower slopes, where the snow is almost always in the powdery state. The air is, of course, very invigorating, and you have not to endure the discomforts of excessive heat, as is frequently the case in summer, although, for my own part, I find excessive cold the harder of the two to bear. It is not necessary to dwell on such matters as provisions and clothing, which depend so entirely on the personal requirements of the climber; but too great a stress cannot be laid on the importance of the proper protection of the feet from frostbite. I have been told that rubber snow-boots, made with an extra thick sole nailed in the usual way, have proved very successful for winter work. The discomforts and drawbacks of winter climbing are easy enough to enumerate, which makes it all the more difficult to say wherein lies its charm. I am inclined to think that, beyond the novelty of the conditions, there is nothing more than the curious fascination which climbing exercises at all times over its devotees, who will often go through untold hardships for what is apparently a very slight reward. Added to this there is, perhaps, the small joy of feeling that you are possibly the only human beings standing on that day on the topmost pinnacle of one of Nature's cathedrals, and, after all, how many of us are proof against even such small joys? The winters most suitable for climbing are, without doubt, those in which the snowfall has been but moderate. After

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one such as that in the latter part of January last, when the mountain-sides were continually swept by the dangerous 'Staub' avalanches, climbing may be said to be quite impracticable. Such a winter is, however, exceptional, and at Zermatt in ordinary seasons there is very little danger, and a certain amount of climbing could generally, I think, be counted on. The smaller peaks, such as the Mettelhorn, the Ober Rothhorn, and the Hörnli, are fairly easy, though fatiguing, and most of the great peaks on the eastern side of the valley would probably be practicable. Those on the western side, with one or two exceptions, such as the Wellenkuppe, will, I fancy, always be very formidable undertakings. Still, as Mr. Dent once said, 'impossible' is a word which now finds no place in the Alpine dictionary, and it is difficult to fix a limit to the powers of some climbers. Should any one be tempted to try the winter ascent of such peaks as the Obergabelhorn or the Dent Blanche, he will do well to take every possible precaution against frostbite, and to remember, if only for the sake of his toes, that 'discretion is the better part of valour.'

The Ascent of Aconcagua and Tupungata.

THE following telegrams from a member of Mr. FitzGerald's party appeared in the 'Daily Chronicle' of February 17 and April 16, and are here printed with the permission of the Editor:—

'Mendoza: February 15.

'Mr. Vines, accompanied by a porter, has succeeded in emulating Zurbriggen's feat in reaching the summit of Aconcagua. Mr. FitzGerald was again doomed to disappointment, being compelled to turn back after reaching an altitude of 20,000 ft. This was his sixth gallant but unsuccessful attempt to reach the summit, and fell short by 3,000 ft. of what he accomplished a month ago.

'The expedition, before making its final attempt to scale Aconcagua, camped for fourteen days at an altitude of 19,000 ft.

'Mr. Vines reports that the summit of the mountain is porphyritic, and that there is no existent trace of it having a volcanic origin. The barometer at the top fell 12 in., and the thermometer to 7° F. An hour was spent on the summit.

'On reaching the top the weather was fortunately fine, and

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