

was staying at the Rosenlauri Hotel. A very fine view of the Engelhörner, which shows up my peak well, was painted by Mr. Colin Phillip, and hangs in the Committee Room of the Alpine Club. We reached Rosenlauri at 4 P.M., pretty tired and much abraded as to knees, elbows, and shoulders, and in the evening high revels were held; the proprietors of the hotel insisted on standing our party a champagne supper. Next day, the week being up, my friends Rudi and Peter departed for Bex, while my wife and I, after consultation, resolved on adding the traverse of the Schwartzhorn and the Schilthorn from the S.E. to our modest 'ohne Führer' programme.

SOME EXPEDITIONS FROM FERPÈCLE.

By W. C. COMPTON.

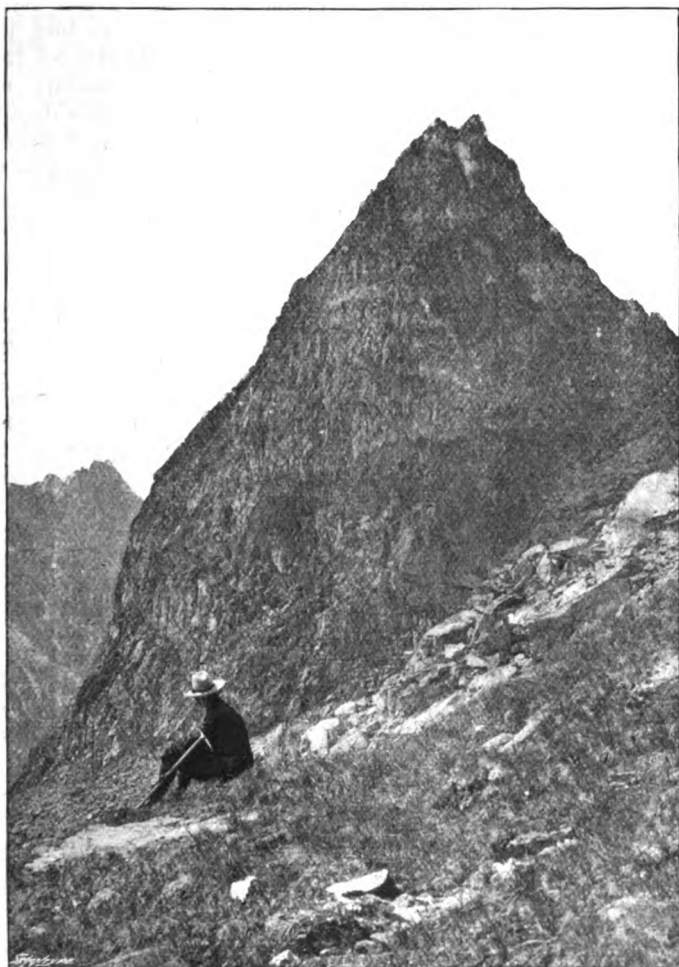
IN a season such as the ever memorable summer of 1898 a fortnight or so may well be spent at the homely little inn at Ferpècle, which appears to have undergone little or no change from the hands of the modern reformer since it first replaced a yet humbler cot some twenty odd years ago. None the worse, perhaps, for that. The rooms assigned to two guests are certainly larger than a first-class railway compartment, even though you have to procure what nails you can and knock them into the wooden walls, because the builders of the compartment have forgotten to provide a rack to carry light articles.

The fare, if homely, is at least good, and the welcome and attention of Madame Crétaz and her family none the less pleasant for being simple.

But it is with Ferpècle as a climbing centre that these pages are concerned. Strange to say, last summer brought few climbers to this valley. Up to the last week of August, or thereabouts (though there were several botanists and occasional climbers), no party came to stay for the purpose of climbing except those who took part in the expeditions here to be chronicled, and who should remain nameless but for the rule of the 'Journal'—no doubt a wise one—that names and dates must be furnished. Our party consisted then of Mr. H. T. Rhoades, Mr. Valentine-Richards and the writer, with Emmanuel Kalbermatten and Siegfried Burgener, both of the Saas valley, as guides; and the ground was new to us all.

For an off-day or a preliminary training scramble the attention of visitors at Ferpècle may with advantage be

drawn to the Maya de Bricolla,* the ascent of which by the east arête (from the col to the right in the photograph)



[A. V. Valentur-Richards Photo.
MAYA DE BRICOLLA.

has not apparently been previously recorded. The first who seems to have attempted it was Mr. Nicholson, of Kew, with

* (2,865 m.) Swiss Government map (not marked on S. A. C. map).

local guides, who reached the top in so high a wind that they had little inclination to linger long enough for the erection of a cairn. A few days later it was ascended by our party, with Siegfried Burgener as leader. Two of us had prospected the route the previous day by ascending the col from the S. (from which side the view shown was taken), and descending by the steeper north side to Ferpècle. We decided to make the ascent by the latter, and started the following morning at 9, too late to avoid the sun on the ascent to the col. From this to the summit the sky-line afforded some very excellent practice on good granite, for 35 min., the last few feet being fairly difficult. After leaving two conspicuous cairns, we descended the easy slope on the west side.

This ascent was made on August 11: that by Mr. Nicholson on the 8th of the same month. In some respects the Maya may be regarded as a Riffelhorn to Ferpècle.

The ascent of the Grand Cornier by the S. arête, or S.W. face and S. arête, is a climb only second to that of the Dent Blanche, to which it bears some resemblance. Only let it not be thought, as we thought on August 11 (but not so on the 13th), that it may be used as a training walk prior to an attack on the Dent Blanche—merely because it falls short by 1,300 ft. of the height of the latter. Also let anyone who wishes to make this very fine expedition dispense with the local guides. The reason for this caveat shall presently be shown.

After a little practice on the Maya (described above), we decided to start the next morning (August 12) for a rather bigger day, as we supposed, for which, as the mountain was wholly unknown to any of us, we thought it best to secure the services of a local guide—who shall be nameless—to supplement our excellent young comrade from Saas. The route followed was much the same as that of Mr. Coolidge.* Our local guide was good on snow, and did the step-cutting up the steep W. face of the ridge above the Bricolla glacier well and fast—making good steps in view (as we began to suspect) of our return. We had started with somewhat hazy ideas on this subject. At least one of us had a notion of a return by the N.W. arête, which leads to the Pointe de Bricolla (3,663 m.), and so down to the Bricolla Alp by the Col de la Pointe de Bricolla. There does not appear to be any record of this, though it was not easy to see what were the impossibilities our local guide dwelt upon with much emphasis later on. This, however, remains for further investigation.

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xiii. p. 409.

It will be an excursion full of interest to attack the peak by way of the Col de la Pointe de Bricolla. The fact that Mr. Coolidge returned by the S. arête in spite of a difficulty he mentions both in the Ferpècle visitors' book and in the 'Alpine Journal' (*l.c.*), should go some way to support the contention of our guide, that a descent by the N.W. arête was out of the question. Part, however, of this route—and that probably the most difficult—is described, by Mr. Wethered,* who met with considerable difficulties owing to the state of the snow. Taking the ascent from the north side (over the Pigne de l'Allée and Moiry glacier) the party 'diverged to the left (sic) on approaching the snow slope which leads to the rock arête connecting the summit of the Grand Cornier with the Pointe de Bricolla.' The arête was easy at first, but soon 'the rocks became so jagged as to be quite impracticable, and we were driven over to the southern face. This was very bad to climb on account of the snow.' Returning to the arête near the top they found it quite easy, and were soon rewarded by the discovery of Mr. Whymper's card. From this it would appear that the ascent from the Col under favourable conditions should not present any insuperable difficulties.

When we reached the rocks of the S. arête in our ascent it was soon evident that we should make better progress with Siegfried as leader. Accordingly the order was reversed, and we proceeded with some rapidity—more rapidity, indeed, than we all of us appreciated, to judge by the difficulty we found in lightening our supply of provisions. It soon became unpleasantly evident that we were in for a bigger job than was justified by our condition after one short day's scramble. However, but for a certain dryness of the throat which had to do substitute for an appetite, we took no harm; and time was of no particular consequence. If late for dinner at 7 (we had started at 2.25 A.M.), could we not rely on the unfailing good nature of Mme. Crétaz? The rocks of the arête, which we followed in the strictest sense, furnish at least as good practice as those of the Dent Blanche, and are thoroughly sound. Within a very short distance, however, of the summit we came to the awkward place mentioned by Mr. Coolidge,† but not further alluded to in the 'Climbers'

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. ix. pp. 106, 239; vol. xvii. p. 365.

† A sketch is shown in Whymper's *Scrambles*. In the new edition of Ball climbers are recommended to 'keep along the W. base of the teeth,' and this seems to be the course Mr. Coolidge adopted in descending. No doubt we might have done the same.

Guide' than in the general description of the arête as a 'very jagged and difficult crest.' Our experience led us to the opinion that the 'Climbers' Guide' might with advantage draw attention to the special difficulty of this point in the ascent. We believed, when the climb was proposed, that there was nothing in it beyond a good morning walk. We certainly supposed our local guide would be familiar with the route. But in both these respects we found, later on, we were mistaken. On reaching a point close to the summit, which appeared to be about 80 ft. above us, and at a distance, across a gap, of perhaps 200 yards, our guide (who was at the lower end of the rope, as stated) suddenly declared it was impossible to go any further. If we did, we could not retrace our steps, and descent by any other route was equally out of the question! On being pressed for an explanation he gave the surprising reply that there was no descent besides the way we had come, excepting that by the E. arête leading to Mountet, and this would be dangerous in the afternoon owing to avalanches,* whilst return by the way we were now ascending would only be possible if we left a fixed rope at a point just beyond us. This was surely an occasion on which an ecclesiastic might ask a layman to offer an appropriate remark. And without any such special invitation remarks were freely offered that might not seem wholly inappropriate to those whose studies of the vernacular had led them to form an acquaintance with the more forcible forms of expression. It was even suggested that our guide was deficient in one of the cardinal virtues of which his fraternity are usually conspicuous examples. What was to be done? Though we had an extra length of rope which might have been fixed for our return, it was evident that the only one of the party supposed to have been over the ground was dead against venturing to the top. And it is an axiom that will hardly be impugned, that if you take a guide, he must be obeyed when he lays down the law on his own ground. (We did not yet know that he had never made the ascent before.) It was consequently decided to give up the satisfaction usually attached to a climb when the actual summit has been gained. And we retraced our steps in a silence unbroken by anything but the rumblings that are familiar after a storm; but at intervals these were to be heard behind us (near the top end of the rope), even long after we had regained the foot of the ridge.

* Mr. Valentine-Richards, to whom I am indebted for many details, reminds me that subsequent examination led to the conclusion that there would have been nothing to fear from avalanches.

Times (very slow): Start 2.25 A.M., reached arête 8.20 ($\frac{1}{2}$ hr. halt), level arête 45 min.; highest point reached about 11.10; altercation till 11.35. The actual arête took 3 hrs. to climb, including halts, $2\frac{3}{4}$ to return; Ferpèche Inn 7 P.M.

In reviewing this expedition, a few observations may be of interest to future visitors at Ferpèche.

(1) Do not regard the Grand Cornier as an easy walk for an off day. (2) Make sure of your guide's experience and competence. (3) Provide yourself with an extra length of rope. With these postulates the climb may be regarded as a first-class expedition. It will be further evident that the attempt by the arête from the Pointe de Bricolla, if made, should be tried as an ascent, and not as a return route: for the other alternative would prove too long in case of failure.

[The ascent by the W. face, though the usual route, is not here considered.]

Another excursion, part of which appeared to be new when we made it, is the traverse of the Petite Dent de Veisivi (3,189 m.=10,463 ft.), shown to the left of the Maya in the photograph. This climb has associations now of a tragic kind. For the first to make the entire traverse (from the Col de Zarmine) was the late Mr. F. Aston Binns,* and it was in attempting to reach the summit from the Arolla side that the terrible accident befell the Hopkinson family nine days after our expedition.

The climb itself is, however, a most interesting one. Our party started from Ferpèche at 5 A.M. on August 17, and, after a slight loss of time in the wood that clothes the lower slopes, where there is no track of any use, reached the couloir that comes down from the Col de Zarmine and the Glacier de Biegnette, and crossing this, proceeded in an upward direction towards the north-east ridge which forms the sky-line (right) from Ferpèche and faces Sepey. Leaving the axes at the foot of a sheer cliff that rears itself towards a remarkable tower below the highest point (which appeared, when seen from above, to be surmounted by a cairn) we attacked the rocks to the right, and made the best of our way diagonally across some rather awkward 'slabs' under the above-mentioned tower, till we reached the north-east ridge (8.45) at a well-marked notch. It might have been better to strike the ridge lower down, and so avoid the traverse, which, though not really difficult, was the least satisfactory part of the day's work. For $\frac{3}{4}$ hr. from the time we took to the ridge we

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xviii. p. 246.

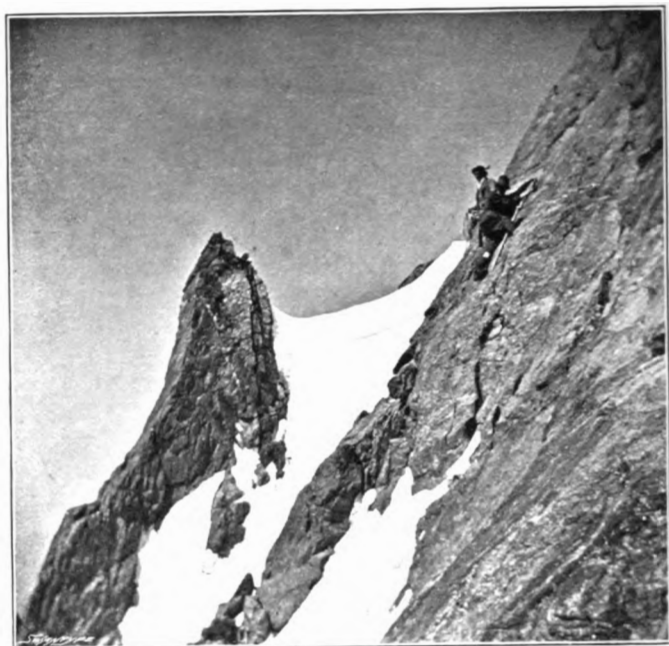
went straight up excellent rocks which bore no trace of having been climbed before, reaching the summit at 9.30; here $1\frac{1}{4}$ hr. soon passed in the enjoyment of a view unsaddened by any of the tragic associations so soon to attach themselves to the spot.

The descent along the arête, with the red tooth that has at present refused to be traversed—it actually overhangs at the top towards the S., and though we had an extra rope in view of it, we decided to leave the south face of it alone—and the remarkable ‘window’ and chimney below it which afford a descent to the gap at its foot, have been alluded to already in the account published in vol. xviii. (*l.c.*). We did not descend from the Col by the glacier (having no axes), but found the best way we could down very steep grassy ledges, and a yet steeper stone couloir to the foot of the E. face, where we regained our axes, 1 hr. after leaving the ridge. The party consisted of A. V. Valentine Richards and the writer, with Emmanuel Kalbermatten and Siegfried Burgener.

Readers of Alpine literature have learnt from the late Mr. Mummery the threefold process by which every mountain is said to degenerate. Till 1862 the Dent Blanche was ranked amongst ‘inaccessible peaks.’ For many years afterwards it was looked on as one of ‘the most difficult climbs in the Alps.’ Thus Mr. Whymper, in his ‘Scrambles,’ * says, ‘It is tolerably certain that the Dent Blanche is a mountain of exceptional difficulty.’ It is true he had attacked it, as was then usual (if a very few ascents can be regarded as having established any usage), by the S.W. face, which is now avoided, and in a blinding storm, the ascent and descent of the last 2,400 ft. taking together eleven hours. But the year 1898 has gone a long way towards reducing the climb, if not to ‘an easy day for a lady,’ yet one presenting no serious difficulty, though it must at present be a long day, as there is no hut in the vicinity of the mountain on either side, except the Mountet Cabane, and by the east face or arête† the ascents are not likely to become common. The new Bertol hut, erected in 1897—when the S. A. C. found the Hörnli base of the Matterhorn an unsatisfactory site for their new hut, owing to the waywardness of Italian smugglers and the inability of the Zermatt section to undertake the responsibility of looking after it—though perhaps affording some slight advantages

* P. 261 (new ed.). See also Mr. Coolidge’s interesting summary of the early ascents, *Alpine Journal*, vol. xv. p. 64 *sqq.*

† *Alpine Journal*, vol. vii. p. 427, vol. xi. p. 119.



W. C. Compton, photo

Swan Electric Engraving Co.

DENT BLANCHE.
Traverse of Gendarme



W. C. Compton, photo.

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DENT BLANCHE.
From Maja de Hicolla.

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for ascending the Dent Blanche, is yet so far from the actual peak that it will not be likely to be much used for any purpose but the Dents des Bouquetins. So climbers from Zermatt are fain to make the best of a *gîte* on the Schönbühl glacier, while those from Ferpèche can choose between the comforts of the little inn above alluded to and the discomforts of the Alpe Bricolla huts, which are only a bare two hours higher up, and look little better than a poor apology for a pigstye. Consequently our caravan started from the former at 1.15 A.M. on August 15, a day that is commonly a field day for climbers without guides, as these when at home are usually wanted by the padre. When out of that good man's reach, however, they find mountaineering possessed perhaps of some of the attractions commonly assigned to stolen fruit of other kinds. And neither the duties of our guides nor the state of the weather, which was all that the most dyspeptic grumbler could desire, had anything to do with the fact that we were lost on the mountain at about 2 A.M. that morning. These are expeditions for which the services of a guide are most indispensable in the first stage, when the lantern fails to light up the track among boulders, and a false path, followed for a short distance, may cause considerable loss of time. The year before we had such an experience in the Lilla valley, leading from Cogne to the Tour du Grand St. Pierre. This year it was at the foot of the Maya de Bricolla that we missed our way through not turning up to the left from the moraine. However hardly half an hour was lost, and we reached the glacier about as soon as the daylight allowed us to take to it comfortably. From this point (2,808 m.) it is possible to follow the W. arête,* which is said to be difficult at one point, 'owing to great smooth slabs of rock,' but easier higher up. Or, again, the S.W. face may be ascended, straight up. Or the upper glacier, N. of a well marked rib of rock, may be followed to the ridge near the point 3,912, whence later in the day we saw traces of a party who had (probably) descended by this route. The objections to a route which might save considerable time would seem to be the possible difficulty from the bergschrund, and the chance of avalanches from the S.W. face, which rises immediately above. The usual course is to ascend the glacier with a gradual trend towards the S.E., as if bound for the Col d'Hérens, till the rib called Roc Noir (3,456 m.) is reached, which runs down in a N.W. direction from

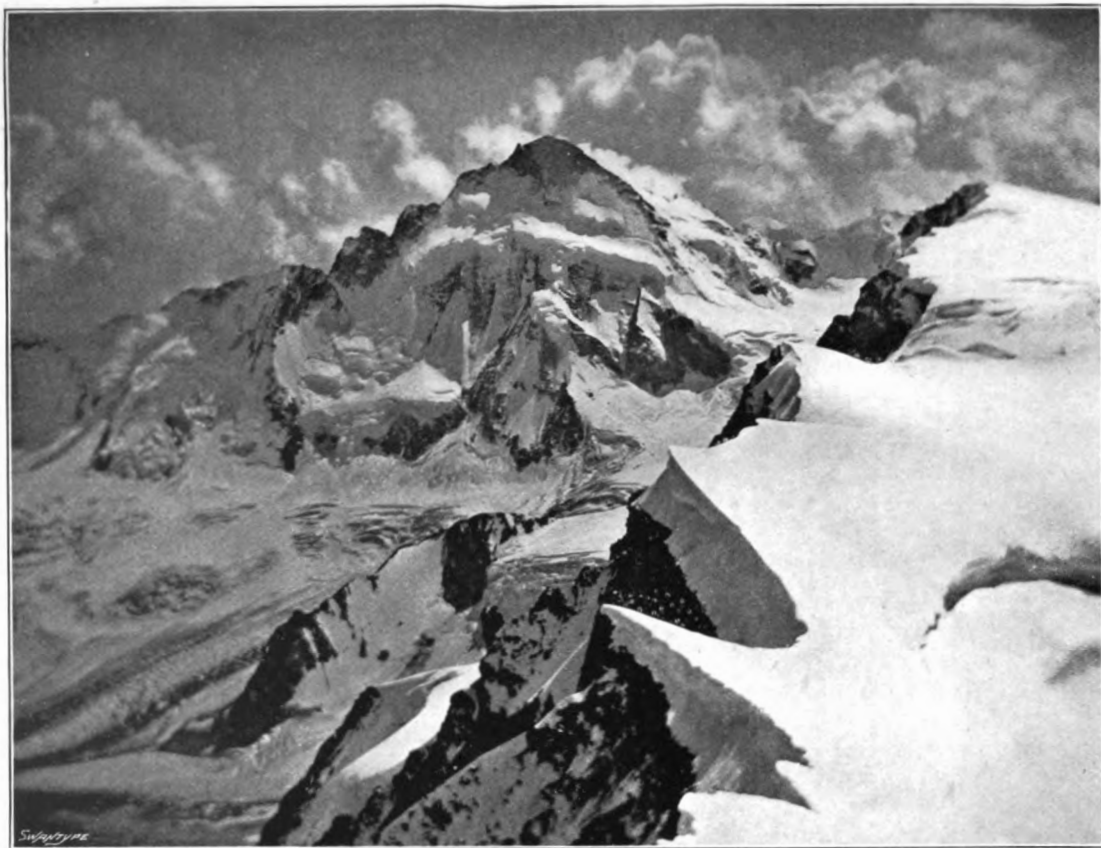
* 'Climbers' Guide;' *Alpine Journal*, vol. xii. p. 122, where the descent by this W. arête is recorded, but without details.

the point 3,714 of the Wandfluh ridge. From this rib we could see several caravans ahead of us, standing out against the sky. They had climbed from the *gîte* at Schönbühl, and so had the advantage of a nearer starting-point. Our time from Ferpèche to the main S. ridge (3,729 m.) was six hours, including halts. This was not fast. Our training was still capable of an improvement, which was to show itself a few days later on the N.W. arête of the Gabelhorn, where we found that condition, plus the fear of bad weather (which happily proved groundless), enabled us to improve by an hour on the times in the 'Climbers' Guide.'* On reaching the Wandfluh we met the sun, which was not ungrateful at 7.15, and in another half-hour were past the point marked 3,912, which is conspicuous in the view from the Maya as the white shoulder to the right of the peak.

Our route—the one now usually followed—keeps wholly on the ridge, *i.e.* the sky-line in the view from the Maya, with the exception of a traverse on the left (W. face) of the first or great gendarme—which was photographed on the descent—and the traverse of the second tower, on the right (E. face). The details are admirably shown in the very fine view taken by Signor Vittorio Sella (No. 275) from the side of the M. Miné ridge.

By 8 o'clock we had reached the first patch of rock at the beginning of the arête, and here we halted for a well earned but very light repast. The view is one of the grandest in the Alps. As we sit with our backs to the work that still lies before us we face the Dent d'Hérens, which rises to the left of the Wandfluh (see full plate), a truly noble mountain when viewed from this point, and a mountain not often seen to such advantage, as it coyly hides itself from the eyes of all but those who will woo it by climbing. Next to it towards the E., with the morning sun on the E. face of the Zmutt ridge, rises the grim form of the Matterhorn, presenting on the sky line left and right the ridges followed in the usual traverse. Beyond this again are the Monte Rosa and Mischabel groups, the latter behind the Zinal peaks, the nearest of which is the Gabelhorn. On our right the view reaches over an endless vista of peaks crowned by Mont Blanc, and in the foreground the Za and ridge of the Veisivi. But half an hour is soon

* Does not the same useful book give an unnecessarily long time for the ascent of this mountain by the E. face? It was done on August 22, 1893, from bergschrund to summit, in 1 hr. 25 min. The 'Climbers' Guide' gives 2½-3 hrs.



W. C. Compton, photo.

DENT D'HÉRENS, from DENT BLANCHE.

Swan Electric Engraving Co.

gone, and we have two hours of good climbing before we can reach the summit. The traverse of the first gendarme might still present very considerable difficulties if the rocks were iced. In such weather as that of last summer one had no compunction in asking the other detachment of our party* to 'hang on a minute' for a snap. On reaching the snow on the far side we ascend by a steep flight of steps in ice to the ridge, and soon encounter the second gendarme. This appears to be negotiated sometimes by climbing over it, more often, perhaps, by traversing either by the W. or E. face. The latter, which we followed, is described by Mr. O. G. Jones† as 'a rickety crawling traverse,' and we found it the only part of the climb that was not perfectly sound. The very rotten state of the rocks directly the arête is left suggests the possible wisdom of keeping to the sky line, or preferring the W. face, which has been described as 'the most interesting bit of the whole climb.'‡ But of course at the time we had not at hand a cyclopædia of all the previous climbers' experience, and, as on the Grand Cornier, we had to take the best advice that was available, viz. to do as we were told. After the second gendarme the route follows the ridge, which here and there recalls the Rothhorn (N. arête), though not so sharp on the whole, until the final snow slope is reached, which terminated on this occasion in an exceedingly narrow level knife edge, the cornice having disappeared in the last few days. On this knife edge we could sit and kick our heels over the Mountet, as it seemed, but, as it was 10.30 when we gained the summit, our regard for Madame Crétaz recalled us soon to a sense of our duty, and we began to retrace our steps by the way we came. It cannot be said that we hurried down, however. The memoranda show the following record: Top, 10.30; foot of rocks, 2 (halt of 50 min.); off arête (*i.e.* 3,714 m.), 3.20; Ferpèche, 7.15. Thus the expedition took 18 hours, inclusive of halts of all kinds. A racing party in good training could have done it, no doubt, in three hours less under such favourable conditions; for there was nothing of the 'grim giantess arming herself with terrors' of an early description.§ We had no wind, no blinding snow, no ice on the rocks, but an icicle here and there to be snatched out of the crannied wall to slake the thirst that

* For the pure rock-work we had divided ourselves into two parties—three and two.

† *Alpine Journal*, vol. xvi. p. 401. This was in April.

‡ *Two Seasons in Switzerland*.

§ *Alpine Journal*, vol. ii. p. 293.

was the result of insufficient training and a climb under a sun that even at an elevation of 14,000 ft. was more suggestive of the Soudan than the Arctic circle. How we longed for the wide-brimmed hat that was lying at our last halting place, discarded because at 8 A.M. the sun's power had not made itself felt and the morning air was keen! Why had we been so considerate of the backs of our guides when we cut down overnight the number of bottles to go with us? What evil genius had put it into our hearts to toil up and down a hill the very approach to which had taken six weary hours? But happily such vain regrets soon melt away and are replaced by a dissolving view in which only the glow of pure enjoyment is seen. The thirsty rocks are covered over with lotus, which no loss of appetite, like the doom of Tantalus, withdraws from our grasp; the yawning bergschrund is but the smile of the genius of the mountain; and as from our fire-side,

When young and old in circle
Around the firebrands close,

we gaze upon the scenes of our summer scrambles, we begin to build new castles in the air, and the greetings of our trusty comrades stimulate our thoughts of Alps and Dolomites, of Caucasus and Himalaya; and who knows but that in another summer we three may meet again, and find some fresh worlds to conquer before the electric tram or funicular has brought within reach of the Bath-chair invalid the heights once known as '*infames frigoribus Alpes*'?

SIR MARTIN CONWAY'S ASCENTS IN SOUTH AMERICA.

SIR MARTIN CONWAY has returned to England, after completing his South American journey. As already announced in these pages he made the complete ascent of Illimani, and reached a point about 200 ft. below the highest snow crest of Sorata. The final slope would, under ordinary circumstances, present no particular difficulty; but on the day of Sir M. Conway's ascent the snow lying on it was in an exceptionally loose condition, and as a great schrund opened at its foot the risk involved in climbing it was considered unjustifiable. The approach of the rainy season prevented any second attempt. The ascent of Aconcagua was greatly facilitated by Mr. FitzGerald's previous explorations, which had led not only to the discovery of the best route, but also imbued the people of the locality with the idea that the peak was accessible, and even with a desire to