Russian Government for having recognised that it is not to the advantage of a great and civilised State to put obstacles in the way of the pursuit and progress of geographical knowledge; that, on the contrary, such a policy would be unworthy of a wise and philosophical and liberal-minded statesman.'

A Day and Night on the Nesthorn.

By WM. T. KIRKPATRICK.

WE—that is, R. P. Hope and myself—usually begin our mountain season by making straight for some fairly comfortable hut, with provisions for about a week, so as to do two or three days' training in good air and fine surroundings, and if possible get in one or two longer expeditions during the latter part of the time.

In 1905 we selected the Ober Aletsch hut, and reached the Bel Alp at 11 P.M. on a beautiful moonlight night. The walk thither was very different from one I remember in the early morning, and we came to the conclusion that moonlight is very preferable to sun on that toilsome path. We spent a lazy forenoon chatting on the terrace, and mentioned the fact that we had intentions on the Nesthorn. To our surprise this seemed to create quite a stir, and we learnt that though this mountain vies with the Aletschhorn as the best snow-climb in the district, besides affording one of the finest views in the Alps, only about two ascents are made from the Bel Alp each season.

Clementz Ruppen heard of our intentions. 'They won't get up,' he said to a common friend. 'We should not have got up the bergschrund two days ago but that we had a six-foot man in the party; only don't tell them.' Our friend of course promptly told us, and although we both fell short of the required stature by several inches we only smiled and said nothing, as we had no notion of trying to construct a living bridge over that particular bergschrund.

The previous year Hope had been at the Ober Aletsch hut, and strolling about on the glacier had been struck by the fine buttress which forms the N.W. arête of the Nesthorn. In prospecting it he crossed the bergschrund and climbed up some few hundred feet, till thirst, prudence, and slabs together counselled a retreat to *glacies firma*. On returning to the Bel Alp he did not give a very accurate account of what he had been doing, but reserved it for me; and our principal object in visiting the Ober Aletsch hut in 1905 was to try

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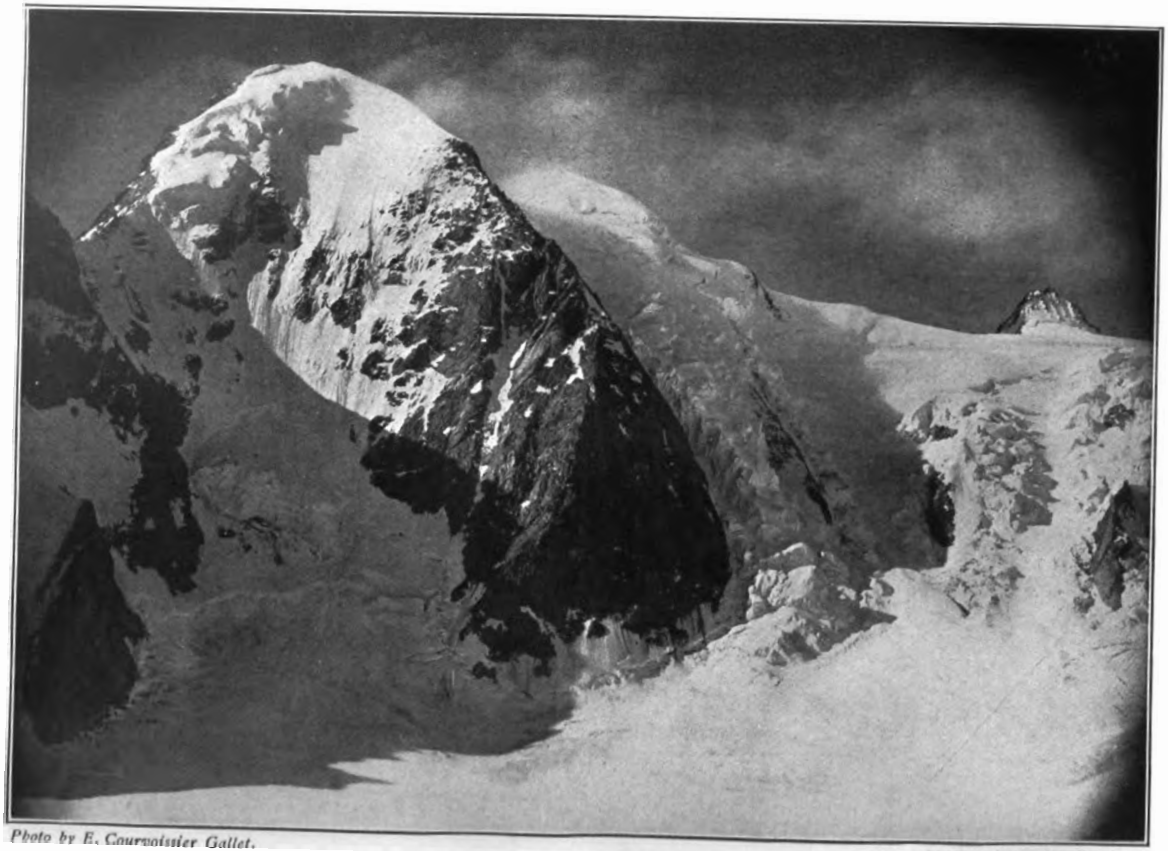


Photo by E. Courvoisier Gallet. *Swan Electric Engraving Co. Ltd.*

NESTHORN, FROM THE NORTH.

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to make a new route up the mountain by what he thought would be a fairly short (!) but interesting rock-climb.

After a hearty lunch we loaded up two porters and started for the hut, burdened only with our axes and almost regretting that we had not added them to the porters' packs. Descending the corkscrew path we saw a long black line on the Aletsch glacier, and our telescope revealed the fact that it represented the energetic ones of the Bel Alp returning from their daily promenade to five o'clock tea. On reaching the hut we sent the porters back, and, as there were no other occupants, I should probably have slept the clock round, after the through journey from London, if Hope's appetite had not become aggressively troublesome at about 8 A.M., when he awoke me with the question, 'Will you have eggs and bacon or fish for breakfast?'

Each season usually sees some new addition to our *menu*. The previous year it consisted of plum pudding, sausages, and shortbread, all of which obtained a place on our permanent list. This year we tried a large tin of Wiltshire bacon, and I need hardly say the good old dish of eggs and bacon proved no less acceptable in a hut than it does on the daily breakfast table at home. We also tried a small packet of compressed onions, which, on being soaked, expanded to an enormous extent. They were added to various dishes and pronounced excellent, but—well, I am not quite sure that they were sufficiently cooked, or possibly the expanding process had not been quite completed when we ate them. After breakfast we considered the respective attractions of the Fusshörner and of a walk on the glacier, but lazily decided in favour of the latter. Our steps naturally turned in the direction of the Nesthorn, and after lunching at a glacier table we carefully examined our arête.

The N.W. arête, as may be seen in the photograph, is rock, except for the last 400 ft. or so, and at its base consists of a broad face of rock, the westerly edge of which is overhung by séracs. The northerly edge, leading down to the lowest rocks, was the only possible line of attack, and we endeavoured to trace a route over or round the slabs which had frightened Hope the year before. We thought we could negotiate them, but above these slabs the arête consisted of others ten times worse, and we decided to try a gully,* which seemed likely to go, hoping that any loose stones in the snow patches higher up

* This gully was not the well-marked one, full of snow, but another seen more to the right in the photograph.

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would stay where they were. Above the gully we thought we should be able to regain the arête and follow it without much difficulty. As we were out for a short day we had brought extra provisions with us, which we deposited under a rock for future use either on the Nesthorn or on the Beichgrat.

Shortly before we left the hut in the morning two innocent-looking country maidens, almost children, arrived with a picnic basket, having adopted this unusual method of keeping the Feast of the Assumption. Oddly enough their attempt at lighting a wood fire was hopeless. We therefore lit it for them (with our wood), for which they expressed their gratitude, and we left them apparently enjoying their simple holiday. When we returned to the hut the girls had departed to the valley; so had our store of butter, milk, and cream. This was too much. . . . Our careful catering was ruined at one fell blow. No more scrambled eggs! Dry bread and jam for breakfast! Cocoa without milk! Stewed prunes without whipped cream! Starvation stared us in the face; gloom and despair reigned in the hut.

When we had partially recovered our composure we discussed the situation, and Hope suggested that if the next day were fine we should climb one of the Fusshörner; that if it were very wet we should stay where we were; and that if it were betwixt and between he should go down to the Bel Alp and replace our missing stores. Unluckily for him the fates proved adverse, but he kept to his bargain and in a drizzling mist went down to the Bel Alp, where, though he failed to trace the culprits, he made good our loss. That night it rained harder than ever, and not till the following afternoon did it clear sufficiently for us to take some exercise by making a much needed path down the steep moraine to the glacier. The path served our turn, but no doubt, as we were told by a guide would be the case, the first heavy rain completely obliterated it. The next day, August 18, we were at last rewarded by a clear sky, and though a thick mist rolled up from the valley, and surrounded the hut, we thought fine weather was assured. After so much rain it occurred to us that the first fine day would very likely attract some of our friends from the Bel Alp, and, lest they should consider our provisions as treasure-trove, we left a note to say that we were going for the Nesthorn and returning to the hut, and started at 4.30 A.M. On reaching our *cache* we found that the rain of the two preceding days, instead of descending vertically, as all well-conducted rain should do, had driven under the stone and considerably damaged our bread and

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biscuits. Surveying our arête once more we concluded that there was no real difficulty, and attacked it by crossing the bergschrund to the lowest rocks. The easy way up these rocks could only be reached by a long ice traverse, but we shirked the step-cutting and had a troublesome little bit of rock-climbing in consequence. Then came some easy rocks, and we found ourselves really on the crest of the arête, which we followed till we came to the first slabs. Hope had not found them hard, but we thought it would probably save time if we took to the gully on our left at once instead of higher up, as we had intended. Before turning into it we stopped for second breakfast, and started again at 9.45.

The gully was decidedly steep, while the rocks were loose and rotten and thickly plastered with fresh snow. For the first pitch we managed to get up the right wall of the gully, keeping out of the actual trough, and though an occasional clatter made us take such cover as we could nothing worse than a few bits of ice came down. The next pitch we regarded with some anxiety, as it seemed the only possible way through the bad slabs. The gully at this point becomes very narrow and steep, and is composed of several V-shaped grooves, while the apparently good holds were without exception rotten and descended one after the other to the glacier. At first there was nothing for it but to struggle up with a knee in each groove. Then the wall of the gully gave some help and the difficulty was surmounted. Owing to the quantity of fresh snow the climbing continued to be difficult, and finally the gully ended in a great slab. Here we traversed to our left, climbed up a rib, and followed it for about 200 ft. Difficulties, however, in the shape of further slabs appeared, and for the first and only time during the day we retraced our steps and descended for about 100 ft. This brought us to the upper edge of the big slab, and, walking delicately, we managed to get across. We then had ten minutes' easy going, and regained the arête, which we kept till the next *mauvais pas*.

This was a vast slab, just at the apex of the terminal face, buried in snow, which was sufficiently firm to give us a footing; but the idea that we might have to descend it when the snow was soft, and search for holds which might not exist, was by no means pleasant. We were horrified to find that it was now 2 o'clock, and, as there was a good resting-place in a notch on the arête, we halted an hour for lunch and deliberation. With the aid of our telescope we examined the couloirs which form the ordinary way up and down the mountain, and were relieved at being able to trace a route through one

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of them, for the descent of which, at any rate, a six-foot man was not indispensable. The hour was late, but we thought we should soon be able to avoid all further difficulties by traversing on the north side of the arête. Anything seemed better than descending by the way we had come up, and we were also anxious to finish the climb; so we decided to go on. We followed the arête, and soon reached a difficult little chimney, not very steep, however, and quite safe, as a slip would only have brought us to the starting point; but holds there were none. Immediately above it came a small split in the arête. Standing on the lower edge of this gash we stepped across, and, obtaining a painful handhold by putting one's hand into a crack and clenching it, we reached, not, as we expected, the top of a little tower, but a small platform just below it, and separated from it by another slab. This it was possible to climb, but the leader shirked it and got round by a minute ledge only large enough for his toes, handholds being again absent. This was one of several places where we had to increase our length of rope from 40 to 80 ft., and send up the rucksacs one by one, and then the axes—an operation which, being repeated at intervals during the day, accounted for considerable loss of time. Having thus reached the first knob on the arête, we saw what was ahead—a prospect by no means encouraging. The easy arête which we had expected was not there, but instead a horrid tower, evidently the first of a series, while the slabs on our right were only equalled by those on our left. Again a council of war took place, and again we decided to go on.

The climbing continued difficult, but it is beyond me to describe every pitch in detail. Indeed, I am often amazed at the power of memory (? aided by imagination) which enables many rock-climbers to recall almost every foot- and hand-hold on a peak. At last the traverse on the north side which we had seen from below became possible, and we descended on that face; but what from the glacier below appeared a nice snow slope was merely a coating of soft fresh snow on a smooth, unbroken slab. By scraping a little the leader discovered a crack, and followed it on and up for about 15 ft., when it came to an end. Further scraping on all sides as far as he could reach showed no break in the smooth surface, and he had to retreat. Another cast revealed a crack some 6 ft. lower down, and this led horizontally across the slab for about 20 ft., when it also ended. A small vertical crack, however, ran upwards, and for the first 8 or 9 ft. all went well, when the leader, with bleeding fingers, discovered that

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the crack terminated. With his hands spread over the smooth and frozen slab he moved upwards till his right foot occupied the highest available hold in the crack, but the good handhold at the top of the slab was still just out of reach. Then, after a pause, he happily found a small knob for the left foot a little higher up, and a short struggle landed him safely above the slab, whither, with a lightened heart, the second man quickly followed. We were soon on the arête again and reached the foot of the next tower without difficulty. A traverse on our left was possible, but the tower seemed climbable, and, feeling sure that it was the last, the leader went up a short steep pitch and disappeared to the full length of the rope, returning in a moment to announce that we were clear of rocks and had only snow between us and the summit. This joyful intelligence came none too soon, as the sun had long since set and it was getting dark. In fact by the time we had finished a hasty biscuit and a bit of chocolate, to which we felt we were entitled now that we had left all difficulties behind us, there was barely light enough to show the crest of the snow arête disappearing into the darkness above. Putting on our crampons we climbed doggedly up the crest, and as soon as the slope eased off on our right we took to it, and in a moment the crest of the arête had vanished in the darkness. A few minutes more and we had reached a place where the lie of the ground led us to think we were just below the top. We struck upwards, and the leader, after fumbling about for some time in the dark, declared that he had found it. The second man followed, and, as the ground fell away in all directions, he confirmed this good report. Time, 9.10 P.M. About two minutes exhausted the view—stars above, the lights of Brigue below—but, best of all, signs of the rising moon on the horizon. Turning our backs on it we started down, keeping the west arête, as we imagined, on our left. Suddenly we discovered that the snow ended sharply on our right. Being rather puzzled, and fearing a cornice, we decided to wait for the moon and utilise the time for a hot supper, which we sorely needed, and never did we more thoroughly appreciate the advantage of carrying the necessary apparatus. As a gentle breeze was blowing from the north we dug a hole in the snow for shelter; and when we sat down we found that our clothes, wet from the snowy rocks, were frozen stiff about the knees; but a jorum of steaming chocolate, made with melted snow, put new life into us.

By 10.30 the moon was well up and showed a series of

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magnificent peaks glistening in its brilliant light, while the valleys below were still wrapped in darkness. Putting out our lantern we moved on. We now saw that the ridge on our right was the true snow arête, while that on our left was a line of flat-topped rocks jutting out below it. We followed them and, with their assistance, made good progress, traversing the tops of occasional couloirs which cut across our route, and there the snow, which covered ice, just held. We considered that here, as well as on the path to the Bel Alp, moonlight was better than sun, as, if our descent had been at the ordinary time of day we should have had to cut innumerable steps through soft snow. Then a deeper gully than usual appeared through the rocks, but unfortunately it was in shadow. It might have been easier to ascend to the snow arête and follow it down, but we suspected that there might be a steep pitch, which proved to be the case. A few steps in the shadow showed that the sides of the gully were steeper and the snow more rotten than we had yet found them. So the rope was let out to its full length of 80 ft. and the leader disappeared in the darkness, kicking his way down, face to the slope, with hands and axe well driven in. The first rope's length brought him to fairly sound snow, the next to a rock island, and the third to the other side of the gully, and without further event we gained the Gredetsch Joch about midnight and felt that another stage was done.

The way was now clear, as we had seen it all from our luncheon place. 'From the col descend to the first crevasse. Turn it by going left and the next by going right; then left, and a long traverse to the head of the most northerly couloir.' Such were our notes, and we duly followed them, though the long traverse was very wearisome, as it was all on a steepish slope, and the crust broke through at almost every step. By daylight we should have followed an easier but more intricate route; but we knew the one we had chosen would lead us to the head of the couloir below a big crevasse which stretched across it. As soon as we were well in the great couloir we plunged straight down, often up to our knees in the fresh snow, and only hoping that the slight crust on top would be sufficient to keep the slope together. The first obstacle was a vast chasm stretching right across our route. Guided by our reconnaissance we went to our extreme right, where we knew the only bridge lay, close under the séracs. Step by step we felt for firm footing in the soft snow which covered the narrow bridge, and, safely over, again plunged down the centre of the couloir. Five minutes

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more and another huge chasm drove us again to the extreme right, and we knew that the crossing of the next crevasse, far away to our left, would be the crux of the descent. The route lay along a tongue of ice, which crossed in a slanting direction to the opposite side. At first it was broad and sound, but as it approached the further bank it gradually deteriorated, and the last ten feet appeared broken up and to consist of little more than soft snow, and for the first time during the descent we thought we might have to wait till daylight. As a last resort the leader advanced as far as he dared, and measured with his eye the distance across to the further bank of the crevasse.

It is one thing to spring lightly over a crevasse in bright sunshine, with hard ice on each side, but to face the same leap after nearly twenty-four hours' continuous work, with a bad take-off and only the doubtful light of a waning moon, was a very different matter. However it seemed safer than trusting to the snow. The leader cut a step, gathered up the slack rope, took a jump, and landed safely amid feeble cheers. A few seconds later we stood together and congratulated each other that our troubles were now ended. Only four more crevasses remained to be turned, on the right and left alternately. Soon the last was behind us, and we bore to our right, rejoicing that no more formidable obstacle than glacier streams lay between us and the hut.

There was nothing to vary the monotony of the final trudge home but an occasional splash into a hole and muttered exclamation, till, a short distance from the hut, we heard the sound of voices coming from the other side of a pile of boulders, and realised that the end of our expedition coincided with the starting of another. A few minutes later we met a member of the Club and his guides on the crest of the moraine, and were much distressed to find that he had diverged from his intended ascent of the Aletschhorn to look for us. It had never occurred to us that the note we had left at the hut might lead to a search expedition, as we fully expected that the climb would be a short one and that we should be back early. Even when night came and found us near the top of the mountain we had not thought of our absence causing any worry, as we had so often been benighted before that we considered a twenty-four hours' expedition a not unusual incident in an Alpine season. Happily the party had not lost much time and were able to resume their intended ascent.

We reached the hut at 5 A.M., 24½ hours after our start and refreshed ourselves, one with cold water externally,

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the other with hot bovril internally. We then turned in for a long sleep; but before ten o'clock the occupant of the upper berth found himself wide awake, and wondering how he was to satisfy the pangs of hunger without disturbing his tired friend below; but a slight movement revealed the fact that the tired friend was trying to solve the same problem, and we were soon busily engaged over our morning meal.

A night out in the Alps is always a doubtful pleasure, but we both of us felt that we were repaid on this occasion by the novel experience of climbing continuously from sunrise to sunset, and then during the twilight and moonlight till the sun appeared again. There was a strange fascination in tramping almost mechanically throughout the night over snow-fields shining in bright moonlight, with the surrounding peaks standing up almost as clearly as by day; but above all we felt that we were repaid by having planned and completed a really good expedition. Our times were of course abnormally long, and ever since we have been haunted by the fear that some enterprising party, like the unknown one which descended from the Col du Géant to Courmayeur in fifty-six minutes,* may complete our expedition in perhaps eight or nine hours. If so, I would beg them of their charity to remember that there is always some uncertainty about a new route, and that being our first climb of the season, our condition, like that of the rocks, could hardly have been worse.

SOME BYWAYS IN SOUTH TYROL.

By A. J. BUTLER.

On Wednesday, July 18 of last year, my son and I found ourselves at Unsere Liebe Frau, in the Schnalser Thal (I entirely refuse to write Tal, in the parsimonious modern fashion). For three days, save for a short digression to the Weisskugel (the summit of which, alas! only the younger member of the party reached, while the elder, overdone by a long and hot valley walk on the previous day, sat about among rocks and snow and reflected what a much less fine day he had had on that peak some twenty years before), we had been tossed about on the surging flood of North German tourists who nowadays seem to be let loose on what once was 'the sacred land Tyrol.' Every school-marm from the Elbe to the Oder, all the *petite bourgeoisie* of every town in Stettin, Pomerania, and the rest of those favoured regions seemed to be there. Armed with 7-foot poles they flowed in a steady stream over the Hoch Joch; they fed every two or three hours; while feeding they talked

* See *Climbers' Guide*, "Chain of Mont Blanc," p. 77.

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