THE FIRST ASCENT OF THE BIETSCHHORN FROM THE BALTSCHIEDERTHAL.

THE eighth 'Jahresbericht des Akad. Alpenklub Bern' (for the year ending October 31, 1912) contains an account of the descent of the E. arête, or, as Dr. Coolidge has it, E. spur * (*cf.* 'The Bernese Oberland,' Part II. 1910) of the Bietschhorn.

The party, Herren E. Häberli, A. and E. Scabell, left the summit at 9.30 A.M. on August 1, 1911, and followed for 2 hours the crest of the arête to a well-marked saddle or sort of shoulder at which point the arête begins to turn S. At this point it is possible to quit the arête and to turn down to the right or S., and thus gain the head of the great snow bay contained between the E. and S.E. arêtes, which latter divides the Baltschiederthal from the Bietschthal. The present party, however, at this point quitted the arête for its left or N. flank,† taking to the great shallow couloir which lies between the E. arête and the next slabby flattened arête to the N. (*cf.* 'A.J.' xxiv. 87–92 and illustration 298, and 'A.J.' xxv. 641–644). Descending at first slowly by reason of loose stones and afterwards quicker, the bergschrund was reached at 2 and the Baltschiederjoch at 4 P.M.

I am inclined to think that this expedition throws some further light on the first ascent made by the late C. T. Dent and J. Oakley Maund in 1878.

They gained the E. arête by bearing to the *left*, so must have been to the N. of it.‡ Their time from their bivouac to the E. arête was 8 hours, which, making the necessary allowances, is fairly confirmed by the times of the 1911 party, and they were on the E. arête for 3½ hours as against the 1911 party's 2 hours of descent.

A study of the illustration ('A.J.' xxiv. 298) will make the matter clear. The E. arête descends direct from the summit, and in its lower portion bends to the S. This arête is usually gained from the *left*, but the Dent-Maund party gained it, I consider, from the *right*. The illustration is not good, as what is really a very bold mountain from this Baltschieder side appears very much flattened.

There are, of course, other discrepancies in the accounts of the 1878 expedition which cannot be cleared up. I already had to point out that the topographical side of these accounts is not quite of conspicuous clearness.

I am inclined to think, therefore, that the line of ascent of the 1878 party coincided fairly well with the line of descent of 1911.

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* The 'spur' is about 4 hours long and rises over 2500 feet!

† Much the best and safest way is, however, to follow the arête much further, nearly to its foot, where the snow-wall comes close up to its crest and permits easy access to the glacier.

‡ This is well brought out in *Bernese Oberland*, Part II. p. 86, with that unerring precision which seems never to miss a single point.

The shallow couloir to the N. of the E. arête, which I had under close observation on two ascents and two descents of that arête, is not particularly steep. It was when I saw it, however, partially filled with watery snow lying in patches on slabby-looking rocks and could not have been safely followed. In the splendid summer of 1911 it was no doubt dry, and was hence followed without great difficulty.

I should think that this is about the last contribution that is likely to be made toward clearing up a rather interesting topographical point. We are indebted to the writers of the accounts of the 1878 expedition not only for the brilliance of their style, but also for the interesting work which they give us in clearing up the apparently irreconcilable details of their topography.

J. P. FARRAR.

THE BRENVA FACE OF MONT BLANC.

IT appears advisable to lay stress on the fact that it is not necessary to gain the main arête by the dotted route, 2 to 8 or 10 to 7, shown in the illustrations ('A.J.' xxvi. 203 and 433). The new edition of Kurz's 'Guide de la Chaîne du Mont Blanc,' overriding the first edition, apparently gives this dotted route, 2 to 8, as the regular approach to the main arête, nor is the 'Mont Blanc Führer' of the Ö.A.C. nearly as clear in the details as might reasonably be demanded for one of the greatest expeditions in the Alps, and which had been treated with considerable elaboration in the 26th volume of the ALPINE JOURNAL.

The illustration in the 'Führer' is much too sketchy to be of any value, and fails moreover to indicate the 'Einstieg,' of the essential importance of which my Austrian colleagues are well aware.

The sketch of the Bacino della Brenva, in the splendid monograph 'Il versante Italiano del Monte Bianco' by Signori F. Mondini, G. F. and G. B. Gugliermina, and E. Canzio ('Boll. C.A.I.' xxxv.), which every student of the Mont Blanc chain must always have at his elbow, indicates very roughly, as the authors point out, and so far as can be ascertained, Dr. Güssfeldt's and Herr Gruber's routes (cf. 'A.J.' xxvi. 172), both of which were in the part now under discussion admittedly dangerous.

The new guide-books seem however to have quite overlooked the remark ('A.J.' xxvi. 173), and the even more definite statement at the foot of p. 430 of an article by Dr. C. Wilson and myself.

'Imfeld 3330—Mieulet 3345—appears to indicate the lowest point or snout of the great buttress which terminates above in the famous "ice-arête." *The earlier ascents were made by the crest*