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.

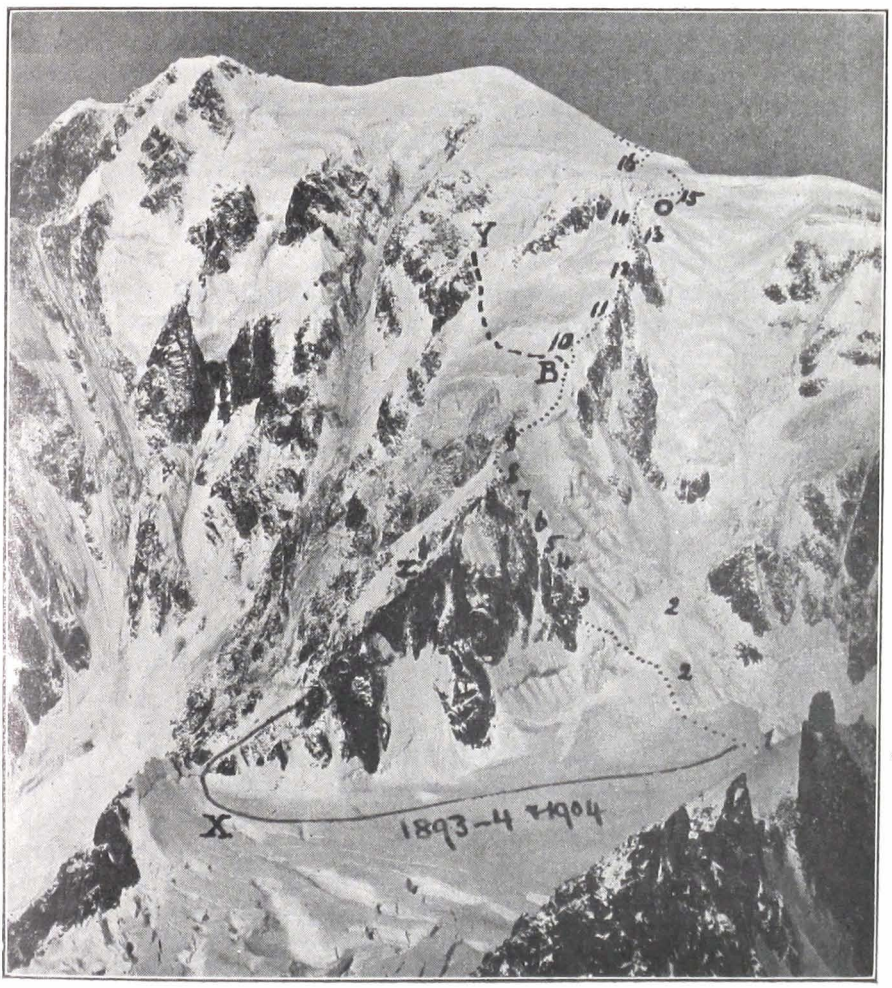
The illustration in the 'Führer' is much too sketchy to be of any value, and fails moreover to indicate the 'Einstieg,' of the essential importance of which my Austrian colleagues are well aware.

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*

of this buttress which was gained at a snow saddle * about 150 mètres higher than the snout and which is shown vertically below Mont Blanc de Courmayeur on the plate facing p. 203. Later parties have left the glacier further N. and climbed by a subsidiary ridge (3 to 8 on plate facing p. 203 and now reproduced) to the arête.'



In that article it is further stated (p. 431): 'The readings show a difference of 419 m. between the snow saddle *where the ascent of the buttress commenced* * and the ice-arête and of 552 m. between the ice-arête and the point where the frontier ridge was struck. This would give a height of 3479 m. (11,411 feet) to the snow saddle and of 3898 m. (12,785 feet) to the ice-arête.'

* The italics are mine.

In the same article the top of lateral rib (No. 8 on Plate facing p. 203) is estimated to be 12,650 feet.

The guideless ascents of this stupendous face by the Mummery-Collie-Hastings party in 1894 (cf. 'A.J.' xvii. 537 seq., and 'A.J.' xxvi. 174), and by the Wilson-Wicks-Bradby party ten years later (cf. 'A.J.' xxvi. 175 and 264 seq.), rank high among the great expeditions of the Alps.

Dr. Wilson in the footnote ('A.J.' xxvi. 266) has indicated that his party gained the main arête at or about the snow saddle above referred to, and I have lately had the advantage of carefully comparing the point with Professor Norman Collie.

The accompanying sketch accordingly shows where my party of 1893 (cf. 'A.J.' xxvi. 173), the party of 1894, and the party of 1904 struck the arête, and I add for the sake of record the following note by Dr. Collie:

'Enclosed is a rough sketch [a tracing from the present plate] of where we went with Mummery.

'We left the glacier above X, and then went straight up to 8 quite easy climbing, rocks and snow. We then went on to B and turned to the left, and tried to cut up the steep ice-slopes, finally getting to Y, when we turned back and spent the night at Z below 8.

'Next morning we went up to B, then straight on; it was at O that we had all the difficulty—the glacier above had moved so far forward that the ice cliffs were almost overhanging the frightfully steep ice gullies that went down to the Brenva Glacier. We got to the sky line above the hump.'

My own party in 1893 left the bivouac on the rock island in the Brenva Glacier at 3 A.M. on July 26, halted for 10 min. when in full view of the main arête, and reached the snow saddle* at 6 A.M. From this point we had some heavy step-cutting† before we reached the famous ice arête. We crossed this to the plateau just beyond it, reached at 9.45 (45 min. halts *en route*). By the *new* approach ('A.J.' xxvi. 203, Nos. 2 to 9) it apparently took to the same point 5 hrs. in a year (1911) when conditions were certainly much more favourable than in 1893 which, as well as crampons, I think discount to a considerable extent the sole advantage of 1 hr. 45 min. which the new approach then shows over the older one. The older approach, however, lands you on the arête by a safe route in 3 hrs. against over 4½ hrs. which the new and, in part, hazardous approach requires to gain a higher point on the same arête. This older approach to the main arête is perfectly easy and absolutely safe, and was adopted in observance of the sound rule that it is well to take to your arête as early as possible.

* My notebook of 1893 contains a pencil sketch of the route with the 'snow saddle' marked.

† We wore no crampons in 1893. Daniel and I first took to them in 1897. They might have saved or shortened the step-cutting in places.

The line is also so very obvious that I am at a loss to explain why the later parties struck out another line instead of following it.

I have here confined myself to the question of the best approach to the arête, but above the sharp ice arête, when once out on the great ice-slopes, any party of climbers is always, and more particularly when held back by long step-cutting, exposed to ice falling from the séracs high up on the left. Fortunately, in most years these séracs are more of the nature of a vertical square-topped ice-wall, so that the risk, though ever present, can by a thoroughly trained and well-led party of mountaineers be accepted with a reasonable amount of justification. I think however that the unfortunate fatality of last year, which happened not on the approach to the arête but after the face had been gained, was a pure accident which might have happened anywhere to any party always bound to accept with its eyes open certain inherent risks of mountaineering. I do not think it need have been foreseen or that it is one of the inherent dangers of this route.

My apology for this somewhat lengthy note is that it is the duty of a society like ours to study closely the lessons of safety so as to shape our future course accordingly.

J. P. FARRAR.

THE ALPINE CLUB EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS, 1914.

OWING to the exhibition of the late Dr. Wilson's sketches and water-colours taking place in the Hall of the Club in December last, the Annual Exhibition of Photographs was postponed until May of this year.

Possibly it was the wet summer of 1913, or it may have been the contrast provoked by some of Mr. Ponting's wonderful Antarctic pictures, but the fact remains that the exhibits of members and their friends on this occasion seemed somewhat below the average.

We think, too, that the Club, as a whole, scarcely gives Mr. Spencer that support to which he is entitled. That there should be twelve lady exhibitors is very gratifying, but that only some forty odd members of the Club should consider it worth while to send in exhibits out of a membership of over 700 is surely disappointing.

In many instances the photographs would have benefited by being enlarged to a greater size; in a few cases the subjects were scarcely worthy of being reproduced on so large a scale.

The framing and mounting had also provided pitfalls for some of the exhibitors. This is perhaps not the place to discuss the advantages or objections of framing close up or with a margin, but generally speaking, where the subject matter of a print is not