

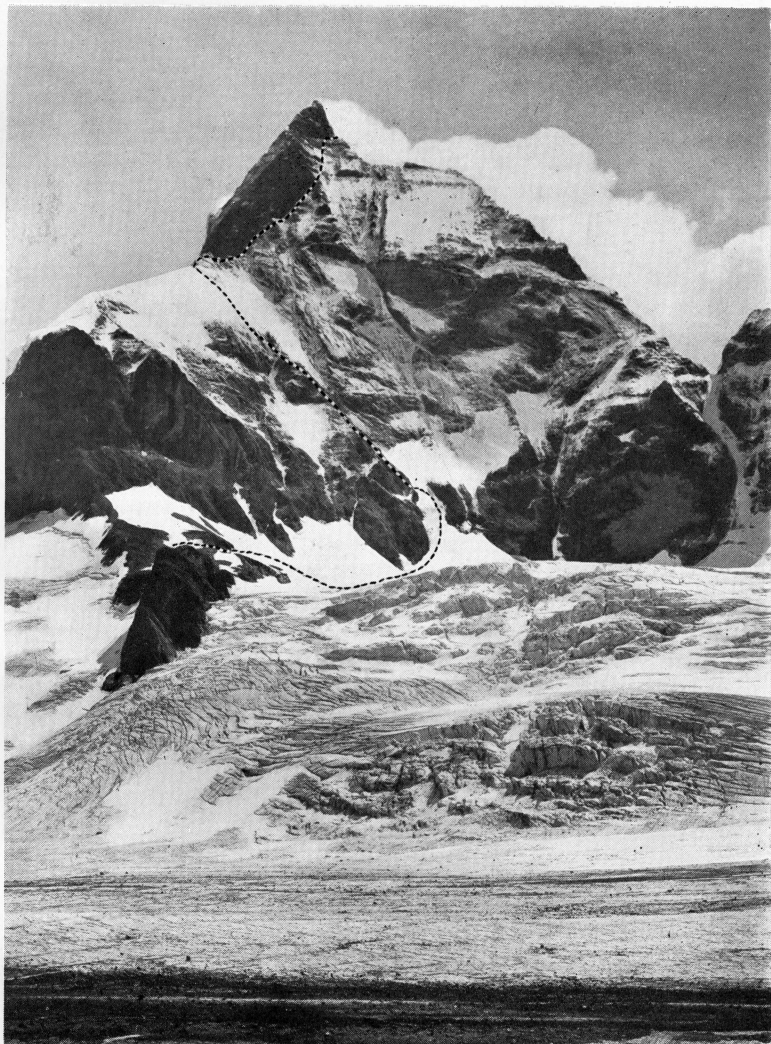
flesh-pot of Steirmark. Graz is a fascinating old town with an imposing castle set on a hill, and from here we found our way to the tiny village of Hazendorf and were entertained by the Doctor with true Austrian hospitality. He has a most amazing garden with over 6000 different species of plants in it, and here we luxuriated for four days, when we had to return to England.

In this very short visit we were able to do only a very little actual climbing, but I saw enough of the country to realise its charm and mountaineering possibilities. The actual ascents are not difficult, but there is a great deal to do, and for anyone who is on the look-out for new country and not too exacting work it is ideal. The people are most friendly, and German passes everywhere, but no one knows a word of English. Klagenfurt is, I think, the best centre, as from there a network of railways takes you comparatively near to all the principal climbs. We found the hotels clean and good and the food excellent, while for the Alpine botanist the whole region is full of the greatest interest.

A LONG DAY ON THE MATTERHORN.

By L. S. AMERY.

THE Matterhorn has a fascination all of its own, not merely for the tourist who gets hauled up it by two stout guides and never wants to climb again, but also for every true mountaineer. It is youth's first great ambition; in middle age it is still a register of reasonable fitness; an avowed last ascent is a confession that the time has come for half days, easy passes, and a closer study of Alpine flora. I was twenty when I first went over it to Breuil with Elias Furrer, and watched my contemporary Josef Pollinger starting down the first descent of the Z'Mutt arête with Mathias Zurbriggen and Miss Bristow. Josef and I have planned a jubilee ascent for 1944, but I have some misgivings as to its fulfilment. If I do manage it I have no doubt that Captain Farrar, who did the first ascent and descent of the Z'Mutt that same day, will be there too! A dozen years later I went up the Z'Mutt side with Heinrich Burgener. Rock and climber were in perfect condition, and we were up in four and a half hours from our *gîte*, the equivalent I suppose of six hours or so from Schönbühl. The indescribable beauty and awe of the moonlit landscape from our sleeping place, Dent d'Hérens and Dent



TIEFENMATTEN FACE OF MATTERHORN.

Blanche gleaming high above the Tiefenmatten abyss, the delight of the climb itself, the glory of a cloudless view of the Alps from end to end almost—these things made a day that lived in memory, and asked for repetition. But for many years the opportunity was not to come, and it was not till the other day that I had the chance of trying again, and of discovering how different a climb the Z'Mutt can be under unfavourable conditions.

I was climbing with Josef Pollinger and his son Adolf, but at the last moment Josef was seedy. So at 2.30 A.M. on September 3 Adolf and I started from the Schönbühl hut in somewhat dubious weather. On the upper glacier we began by carrying on beyond the snow couloir from which one works to the left to the foot of the long snow ridge which leads to the actual climb and, rather than retrace our steps, decided to make straight up the rocks to the upper end of the ridge, *i.e.* just to the left of the long, narrow snow couloir which leads straight up to the 'teeth.' We negotiated a tricky bergschrund and got some quite good scrambling, and would not really have lost so very much time if the ridge itself had been snow. But after weeks of fine weather its sides were hard ice, and what looked from below a mere strip of snow, and might under other conditions have taken ten minutes, meant over an hour and a half of step-cutting. So we started on the climb proper at least a couple of hours behind time.

This seemed a trifle at first. On the jagged teeth which connect the snow ridge with the main Z'Mutt arête the rock was in good condition, and we were quickly across them. But when we came to the arête itself, with its steeper angle and treacherous rock, we found everything smothered in fresh powder-snow, deposited and conserved by the cloud which for the last two days had hung over the N. face of the mountain. If Josef had been there we should probably have turned right about. But we hoped for the best and went on. The higher we went the worse things became and the slower our progress. Climbing simultaneously was out of the question, and even Adolf could only advance with infinite care, brushing a square yard of mountain side with his hands for every hold, and ever on the watch for glaze of which there was plenty. Hands froze, and thawed and froze again—a painful business—and, what was almost worse, got soft in the process so that our fingers were cut all to pieces before the day was out. At times the weather looked threatening and we were lost in mist and light snow flurries. Then the mist would clear and reveal

the contorted folds of brilliantly coloured rock on the great N. wall of the mountain to our left or the summit above our heads, appallingly vertical and appallingly distant.

Still, by slow degrees, the distance diminished. Meanwhile the state of the rocks on the ridge itself had led us gradually to bear away more and more to our right on to the Tiefenmatten face, and the thick weather may have helped to prevent our realizing quite how far we had got across the face and away from the ordinary route. A small vertical chimney in a projecting square-faced block above us to the right drew us still further away with its suggestion of shelter and refreshment. This proved a disappointment, for the chimney was full of ice and offered no suitable halting place inside or at the top. Soon after passing it we came up under the vertical final pitch to the level of Carrel's 'galerie.' As we did so the weather cleared and revealed the Italian ridge not much more than 100 yards to our right. The 'galerie' extended towards it, I will not say invitingly—for it shelved in very exposed fashion over the endless steep below, and the rocks were unpleasantly glazed—but still quite feasibly. In any case it was the easiest and certainly the speediest way out of a difficult position. An excellent natural belay was visible just above, and with the rope secured over this Adolf made his way across and found a good stance just within the full length of 120 ft. of rope. It was a traverse needing steadiness, for handholds on the face above were few or none, but not otherwise exceptionally difficult. The rest was easy and in a few minutes more we were safe on Tyndall's arête at Col Félicité.¹

At this moment the sun came out brilliantly, and on the retreating cloud S.E. of us we saw a small circular halo, recalling to mind the similar spectacle which, about the same time of day, was seen by Whymper after the accident on the day of the first ascent and by the Italians a few days later. But we had little time to study such phenomena. It was half-past five, and the only question was whether we should finish the ascent and try to reach the Solvay hut before dark, or cut out the summit and make for the Italian hut. We decided for the latter, consoling ourselves by the thought that, if the morrow were really fine, we might retrace the mountain. So we hurried down the ridge. Presently the

¹ See *A.J.* 37, 223 *seq.* The route we followed must have been approximately K-B on the sketch plan on p. 223.

Italian hut was visible nestling under its great gendarme, and made us feel that we were all but arrived. But the sun was descending a good deal faster than we were, and soon we were climbing first in twilight, then in darkness. For a while we kept on by lantern-light till suddenly, through some flaw in the mechanism of Adolf's lantern, the candle dropped out of the bottom of the lantern and left us in real black night. We felt our way a little further, helped by an occasional flash of summer lightning; hoping every minute that we might see the hut just below us. But it was too dangerous to go on and we decided that we had to sleep out. A bottomless black abyss into which I had just fearfully lowered myself proved to be quite a good shelf on the ridge with an overhang above it for shelter. We supped heartily off the fag end of a sausage, some prunes and a tot of rum, put on whatever spare clothes we had, took off our boots, tucked our feet in our rucksacks, 'and so to bed,' prepared for a chilly and probably snowy night.

Five minutes later I heard a distant shout. Soon the voice came nearer and a lantern showed faintly in the misty depths below. A few minutes more and we were shaking hands with Louis Carrel, who from the hut had seen us on the ridge just before dark, and when we had not reached the hut by 9.30 had, like a good sportsman, come out to help us in. With the aid of his lantern and intimate knowledge of every bit of the ridge we were down in less than half an hour, and by 10.30 were enjoying hot tea with some hospitable young Italians who had come up with Carrel to do the mountain next day.

In this they were to be disappointed, for there was a bad storm in the night—to which I listened from under my warm blankets wondering what our bivouac would have been like—and by the morning everything was deep in snow and the wire railings round the hut all embedded in thick ice.

So we made our way down at leisure to Carrel's cross, where the great Carrel died on a similar but much more difficult retreat, and there parted, our Italian friends to Breuil, Adolf and I back to Zermatt. So ended an interesting and, at moments, anxious climb. But I have registered a mental note that next time I climb the Z'Mutt I shall be sure that the sun has cleaned the snow off the rocks and not left the job to be done by hand.