

NEW EXPEDITIONS.

Mont Blanc Group.

MONT MAUDIT, 4471 m. = 14,669 ft. By the S.S.E. face. August 4, 1929. Signori Amilcare Cretier, Lino Binet, and Renato Chabard. On the true right (W.) of the face there is a big rock rib which rises up and joins the frontier ridge at about 125 ft. from the summit. This rock rib in its lower part has on its true left, N.E., a red buttress of pinnacle shape about 1000 ft. high which appears to hold up a large triangular snow patch lying above the lower part of the face.

The route is first up that buttress, afterwards it slants alternatively on rocks and snow so as to reach the big rock rib at an altitude of about 4200 m., where it forms a small snow shoulder. Afterwards it continues along the rock rib which in its upper part ends in a very narrow snow arête. Times: left the C.A.A.I. shelter (about 3100 m.) 01.30. Stopped on Brenva Glacier (below La Fourche) 04.20-04.50.

Stopped at top of red buttress (about 4000 m.) 11.10-11.30.

Stopped at snow shoulder (4200 m.) 15.00-15.15.

Reached frontier ridge 19.15.

In good conditions this route could be followed in 7-8 hours. The party encountered a great quantity of fresh snow on the rocks, making progress very slow and difficult.

Bernese Oberland.

ALETSCHHORN, 4182 m. = 13,721 ft. By the S.E. face. August 29, 1929. Monsieur E. R. Blanchet with Kaspar Mooser and Linus Pollinger. Party left Hôtel Jungfrau, Eggishorn, at 00.15 and attained angle between Aletsch and Mittel Aletsch Glaciers at 03.15. Latter mounted throughout its length, base of S. rocky face of Aletschhorn attained at 08.15. (From 05.50 till 08.15, party contoured round by the right, avoiding a very crevassed and broken-up zone. The end of this slant led them right under the summit after a risky traverse over fallen ice blocks under a sérac wall.) Three snowy tongues lead up from the glacier between the ribs of the rocky face. Party, reckoning from the left, steered towards the rib between the first two tongues. Rib attacked at 09.45 (despite shower of small falling stones lasting 20 mins.). The first rocks resemble light Chamonix 'granite,' are vertically split and afford good holds. After a small platform, level in height with the end of central snow tongue, rocks become much darker and rotten. Platform attained by a diagonal climb to the left, crossing two couloirs. A well-marked rib soon reached; this leads towards the summit bearing somewhat to the right. At this spot, 10.35, good reddish rocks; small cairn built. Thence some 20 metres become excessively steep, followed by abrupt and complete stoppage of direct

ascent. Party accordingly bore to the *left* round a corner by a smooth ledge, and *descended* diagonally to the left—very awkward—to a deep-cut couloir, still snowy, where water flowed. This descent to the left is the key to the ascent of the face.

Party followed for a long time true left bank of the said couloir formed of slabs like the tiles of a roof. Gradually couloir becomes easier and bifurcates into a kind of U. Go up the true right bank of the right branch, to the left of the great rib. Level of point 3966 m. (*S. map*), seen to the left, attained at 12.15. At 12.40 party regained the great rib; halt 12.55–13.10. At 13.30 snowy buttress attained coming from the right, S.E. arête¹ also appearing quite close. Over aforementioned snowy buttress, very icy, to the summit, 14.15. Descent to Belalp, 20.15.

Expedition is enormously long, first 8 hours accomplished without a halt. Great danger from séracs before attaining base of S.E. face, on which stones are very frequent, especially in lower third. Difficulties, however, never very serious.

E. R. B.

[This appears to be the first ascent of the Aletschhorn *direct* from the Mittel Aletsch Glacier, but on August 30, 1928, Mr. J. W. Alexander, with Oscar Supersaxo, attained the summit by a route that can be described as 'by the E. arête attained from the S.' From a bivouac near point 2651 m. (*S. map*), to the E. of the Mittel Aletsch Glacier, starting at 05.00, the first party, hampered by much fresh snow, attained the base of the S.E. face (to the E. of spot attained by the 1929 party—*Editor*) at 10.00. Direct ascent to summit impossible owing to conditions, party accordingly kept to the right, E., of a plainly marked rocky rib and mounted by good rocks and patches of snow. Up to this point a fine climb of no special difficulty; higher up, however, party, forced under dangerous and overhanging eaves of ice, climbed upwards by an extremely difficult and nearly vertical rock step, about 100 ft. high. Thence over much easier snow and ice to the easy E. arête followed over snow and rocks to the summit, 15.45.—Communication from O. Supersaxo through Dr. Lauper.]

SCHEIDEGG WETTERHORN (*Grindelwald Dru*), 3474 m. = 11,201 ft. By the N.W. face. September 10, 1929. Dr. N. S. Finzi with Franz Josef Biner² and Josef Knubel of St. Niklaus. Party left Grosse Scheidegg at 05.06, following that ridge or just below it to base of face. From this point a chimney leads upwards to a series

¹ It was by this arête, starting from the Mittel Aletschjoch and passing over point 3966 m., July 10, 1898, that Messrs. Wilson, Wicks, Bradby and Kesteven attained the summit.—*A.J.* 19, 251.

² Son of the late J. M. Biener, see p. 282. The name is now spelt as above.

of ledges separated by rocky steps in which there are chimneys. Route leads at first to the left, N.E., and then a long way to the right, S.W. Eventually a ledge is followed back to the left whence a difficult chimney leads to a level platform (*ca.* 9500 ft.), just under the enormous tower near the centre of the face or wall (09.40–10.05). Another terrace or ledge now leads to the left, slightly



Photo, N. S. Fuzi.]

SCHEIDEGG WETTERHORN (foreshortened) showing 1929 route.

downwards, until it reaches that part of the wall facing rather more to the N. From here a chimney containing two large reddish hollows leads up to a small platform. Thence a long and difficult chimney, playing out eventually in the face, is climbed; next comes a diagonal traverse to the right, S.W., to a large platform. (A piton was fixed at the start of the traverse and a *karabiner* proved necessary also; the step is about 120 ft. high.) The face is then climbed

up to the peak's N.W. ridge, *ca.* 10,300 ft., which is then followed to the summit, 15.10. Descent by Hühnergutz Glacier to the Gleckstein Hut, 21.00 hrs.

Kletterschuhen are essential, as rocks are very smooth, sloping at a very high and wrong angle. Ledges must be absolutely dry and fine, settled weather is essential.

[This splendid—despite the use of artificial aids—expedition solves one of the remaining problems of the Alps; the N.W. face has been attempted on countless previous occasions. It is, we believe, only the second ascent of the Scheidegg Wetterhorn, the first ascent of which was made May 13, 1901, by Herr G. Hasler with Christian Jossi and Peter Bernet ('A.J.' 20, 466–8, illustrations facing 467, and 33 facing 457) by approximately the same—S.W.—line taken by Dr. Finzi's party in the *descent*. The account of the attainment of the *Schwarzwaldfirn*, on the N.E. slope of the Scheidegg Wetterhorn, direct from the N., is given in 'A.J.' 41, 210–11.—*Editor.*]

Drakensberg Mountains, Natal.

IN its annual camp of July 1929 the Natal Mountain Club had its base camp in the Ingangwana Valley of the Garden Castle district, at an approximate height of 6300 ft., about 3 miles above Houston's farm, some 70 miles S. of Mont aux Sources, in a comparatively unexplored region, most of the summits of the main chain hereabouts not having been previously ascended.

In the fortnight available different parties accomplished the following three first ascents:

THAMATUWE, *ca.* 10,300 ft. This is the square-shaped summit which is a conspicuous feature at the head of the valley. The party of Messrs. Botha-Reid and Marriott ascended it from the E.

PEAK AT HEAD OF UMZIMKULU VALLEY. This summit lies W. of and rises above the main ridge of the Drakensberg. It appears to be distinctly higher than either Thamatuwe or the peak which we climbed. A party led by Mr. R. R. Butcher climbed it from a sub-camp in the Umzimkulu valley, which is the next parallel valley to the N. of the Ingangwana valley, and below Swaimana; probably the most remarkable rock formation in the Drakensberg.

PEAK IMMEDIATELY TO THE N. OF THAMATUWE. On July 12, 1929, Dr. Park Ross's party, *i.e.* Miss J. Braby and Messrs. Park Ross, R. Murray, G. Murray, M. P. Frank, and O. K. Williamson, having left the main camp at 08.45, ascended the main valley for about a mile and then diverged up the first valley on its true left. They ascended the slopes on the true right of this, leading up to a mountain lower than the main Drakensberg and consisting of the red beds overlaid by cave sandstone, the latter being weathered

into numerous fantastic pinnacles and rocking-stones. As, however, this route would have involved too long a détour the party traversed slopes which again led them down into the main valley, which they then ascended to its head. They thus reached at 11.30 a grassy col on the edge of a plateau, affording an uninterrupted view of the main chain of the Drakensberg. Our peak showed on the right of Thamatuwe and rose approximately 2000 ft. above our point of view. A slight descent now took the party to the actual foot of the peak, at which point a stream in a subsidiary valley was reached. There is a well-marked rib descending at about the middle of the E. face of the mountain. The foot of this, set at a steep angle, was reached on its true left side by ascending a very steep grassy slope, and this side of the rib was ascended. The cave sandstone of the face gave place on the rib to the lavas of the Stormberg series, characterizing the highest peaks in South Africa. The work consisted of hard, frozen glassy slopes, with patches of snow interspersed here and there with rock, much of the latter forming ledges such as are typical of the Drakensberg. There was no real difficulty, but the climbing, on account of the hard frozen surface, necessitated care. This sunny side of the rib appeared preferable to that on its right, which looked very uninviting. At the top of the rib the steep slope suddenly emerged, at about 300-400 ft. below the summit, in a gentle slope, now covered with hard snow, which led up to the final rocky wall. The first obstacle in this was a band of rock some 40 ft. in height extending round the final peak as far as could be seen. An open chimney on the S. aspect of this wall, and so facing Thamatuwe, was chosen as the only obvious route. The rocks forming its true left were smooth, and it contained some snow and ice. It was ascended, however, traversing in a leftward direction on good holds. A steep slope, consisting of boulders embedded in deep snow, soon led the party to a short chimney in the upper rocky wall, which was thus climbed without difficulty, and a short ascent over snow and stones led to the snow-covered summit ridge. This was 2 or 3 yards in width, was a narrow dyke of basalt, and fully 50 yards in length. At its further higher end a cairn was made, as no traces of a previous ascent were found. It was obvious that this peak formed part of the main Drakensberg ridge. Owing to the fact that there had been a heavy fall of snow some three days previously, and that the day was one of remarkable atmospheric clearness, being practically cloudless and windless, the views, especially in a northward direction, were more beautiful than any one of us (O. K. W.) had ever previously seen in the Drakensberg. Looking along the main ridge in a southerly direction the next peak was Thamatuwe, apparently of the same height as our summit. Beyond Thamatuwe rose 'The Knuckles.' Westward over Basutoland an extensive plateau now snow-covered was disclosed. This was studded with many peaks, several of which were obviously markedly higher than our point of view. Northward, the serrated main Drakensberg

ridge showed up clearly, Hodson's Peak being prominent. Eastward, Mahaqa, above Bulwer, was the most prominent landmark, and southward from this one saw successively the Ingeli, Mt. Currie, the Chimney Peak, and Insikeni near Malenge. The descent was commenced at 14.55, the same route being followed as during the ascent, except as regards the détour, camp being regained at 18.15, the total halts during the day having only amounted to 1½ hrs.

G. A. PARK ROSS.

O. K. WILLIAMSON.

VARIOUS EXPEDITIONS.

Dauphiné.

AIGUILLES MÉRIDIONALE, 3514 m. = 11,529 ft.; CENTRALE, 3512 m. = 11,523 ft.; SEPTENTRIONALE D'ARVES (Corne Sud c. 3342 m. = 10,965 ft.). Traverse. July 20, 1928. Messrs. L. R. Wager and J. L. Longland.

Arrived at site of new Refuge Lombard from St. Jean de Maurienne, July 18; found hut destroyed. Constructed, or rather improved, gîte made from wreckage, salvaged many of the utensils, including a small spirit stove. July 19, spent in exploration on S. Aiguille. July 20, left bivouac 05.35, arrived Col Lombard 06.15. By normal route up S.W. face to the Brèche Supérieure on the Southern Aiguille; there we roped up and reached the summit by the *Corra* variation. This pleasant and sound slab route (which incidentally is marked with arrows in red lead!) is much safer than the 'Mauvais Pas,' by which we descended on the doubled rope. [Times: summit 08.15-08.45; returned to Brèche Supérieure 09.15.] From the Brèche we descended the E. face to the Glacier de Gros Jean in 65 min.

We then traversed across the Glacier de Gros Jean and attained the E. ridge of the Central Aiguille by the right hand of one of two easy couloirs that lead up to this ridge from the S. From this time we began to be badly hampered by cloud, and in fact never got a clear view of the route off the Central Aiguille, nor anything but glimpses of the N. Aiguille. From the well-marked shoulder on the E. ridge we took the northerly or 'primitive' route up a fine slab to the summit (time, 13.10), descending to the shoulder by the usual traverse on the S. face. From then we had difficulty in the cloud in locating the proper couloir, but eventually reached the Glacier des Aiguilles d'Arves by the short couloir (Route C in Coolidge, *Central Alps of the Dauphiny*, p. 33), very near the snout of the glacier. We reached the Col des Aiguilles d'Arves, left our rucksack, and hastily climbed the Corne Sud of the N. Aiguille. We had hoped to add the N. summit as well, but were prevented by the lateness of the hour and because the route was invisible in clouds.