

had accomplished the ascent of Elbruz in record time. [The W. summit has been attained in less than 7 hours from the hut.]

On August 20 we left Tegenekli, taking a Ford car through the Baksan valley to the 140-kilometres-distant Naltshik. Two days later we attained, by rail, Vladikavkaz, whence on the following morning we went by car over the main Darial road to Gviletui. Our attempt on Kasbek, 16,546 ft., by the N.W. arête, failed after two days, owing to continuous bad weather. On August 26 the car brought us to Tiflis, whence a day later the night express conveyed the party to Batum. A beautiful journey *via* Constantinople, Piraeus, Naples and Marseilles landed us in Genoa on September 14. We met with a warm reception on arrival in Zürich after a three months' absence.

L. SALADIN.

[We must express our grateful thanks to the writers for their interesting accounts.—*Editor*, 'A.J.']

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## MONT BLANC : NOTES ON EARLY ASCENTS.

By J. MONROE THORINGTON.

### I. DID EDMUND KEAN EVER ASCEND MONT BLANC ?

DISCUSSION of the above question has received so little attention in Alpine literature that I venture to quote pertinent paragraphs which appeared in *Notes and Queries* (Fourth Series, vol. iv.) during 1869 :

(P. 31.) 'Now that Edmund Kean's claim to an Eton education is effectually disposed of, it may not be idle to ask if he ever ascended Mont Blanc. Mr. Hawkins says he did about 1818. The celebrated ascent of M. Saussure was in 1787, and that of Auldjo in 1827—I quote both dates from memory—and if Kean preceded Auldjo by so many years, surely it must have excited notice at the time. Possibly, in moments of excitement, he boasted of a feat he never accomplished, as he was known to have asserted that he was present at the battle of Waterloo.

' U. O. N.

' *Westminster Club*.'

'In Hawkins's *Life of Edmund Kean* (ii. 57) we are informed that in 1817, while on his Continental trip, Kean ascended Mont Blanc, and much enjoyed the view from the summit. As in those days, and indeed previous to 1880, ascents of Mont Blanc were few and far between, perhaps some of your readers may be able to inform me whether any details of this interesting ascent exist at Chamounix or elsewhere. The scaling of the mountain by Dr. Hamil [*sic*] in 1820 and by Auldjo in 1826 are duly recorded, and it would be a thousand pities if that of Edmund Kean in 1817 should be forgotten ; certainly the most interesting since that of Saussure. How the little man must have electrified his guides !

' J. A. H.

' *Portsmouth*.'



(P. 202.) 'Being present in Switzerland, and having acquaintances at Chamounix, I have taken the trouble to institute an inquiry, and the result is that I am convinced the statement in Hawkins's *Life of Edmund Kean* is an invention, and may be placed alongside of the Eton scholarship, which, to use the words of U. O. N. (*ut supra*), "is effectually disposed of." Nothing is known of Kean at Chamounix; the oldest guides and hotel-keepers never heard his name! A register of ascensionists has always been kept at Chamounix, and it can be at any time inspected. If Kean was on Mont Blanc in 1817, the registrar has been guilty of gross neglect in omitting to record such an interesting incident. It so happens that after the ascent of Herr Rodaz in 1812, no ascent occurred till 1818, when the Polish Count Matewsky [*sic*] accomplished the feat. I am by no means convinced that Kean was ever at Chamounix. The police registries of strangers (previously to the French annexion) have all been transferred to Turin, and are not, probably, at Florence, and my Chamounix correspondent has therefore not been enabled to consult them. However, I will give Mr. Hawkins the benefit of the doubt, and admit that Kean *was*, in 1817, a visitor to Chamounix. If that were so, he would probably visit the Montanvert, and the Mer de Glace, and the Jardin, and he may have called the excursion an ascent of Mont Blanc! Such an "ascent" would, no doubt, be perfectly satisfactory to the members of the "Covent Garden Parliament" and the frequenters of the "Harp" in Russell Court. There have been many thousands of such "ascents of Mont Blanc," but unfortunately no registrar has been appointed to record them. It is a very general idea that Saussure was the first ascensionist, but he was preceded by Monsieur Jacques Balmat and Doctor Paccard of Chamounix, who ascended on August 8, 1786, the year previous to the ascent of Saussure.

'Albert Smith evidently knew nothing of Kean's ascent. Had he been aware of such a "fact," what a fine bit of "gag" it would have made for his lecture! What Shaksperian quotations we should have been favoured with; what delightful mimicry and "imaginary conversation," rivalling even those of his friend Landor! But Albert indulged in no such rhapsodies, and for a very good reason: "an accident prevented him—the tale was not invented!" It was reserved for some hoaxing correspondent of Mr. Hawkins.

'STEPHEN JACKSON.

'*Hotel Mansfield, Lausanne.*'

(P. 261.) 'I certainly never heard of Edmund Kean having been in Chamonix; nor does his name appear in the list of those who have made the ascent of Mont Blanc, or of those who attempted but did not succeed in reaching the summit.

'A register of all ascents from those of Dr. Paccard and Saussure has been carefully kept in the office of the "Chef des Guides" at Chamonix; and if in the year 1818, when a Russian count, Matzewski, ascended, or in the years preceding or following, Edmund Kean had made an ascent, the event would most certainly have been recorded in the register—particularly at a time when ascents were so rare.

'When I published the account of my own ascent, I added a list of those which had been previously made; and it was compiled from the book in the *chef des guides*' possession, and which I very carefully examined. Kean's name does not appear there.

'Again, had he inscribed his name in the "Tourists' Book" kept at Montanvert (a very old book, which I well remember), it would certainly have been noticed by some one of the many who have written on Chamonix, and who have given the names of celebrated persons which they found therein recorded. Albert Smith, for one, would certainly have taken a note of it, had he met with it anywhere in or about Chamonix.

'It may therefore be concluded, that Edmund Kean did never ascend Mont Blanc; that he never inscribed his name in the book at Montanvert; and it is very doubtful whether he ever visited Chamonix at all.

'JOHN AULDJO,

'5, Rue des Alpes, Geneva, Sept. 8, 1869.'



(P. 361.) 'There is no mention of Kean in the list of ascensionists of Mont Blanc, as given in the *Guide Itinéraire* of 1857, by Venance Payot, which is said to be copies from the official book at Chamouni. This work was recommended to my notice by Albert Smith on account of this list, wherein English names are given in very remarkable forms.

'HENRY F. PONSONBY.'

Despite the foregoing evidence against Edmund Kean's ascent, no reason for such a rumour is advanced. Edmund Kean died in 1833, and Albert Smith seems never to have heard of the possibility of his ascent. Charles Kean lived until 1868, a year before Hawkins's *Life of Edmund Kean* was published. During the period 1850-53, as Sergeant Ballantine and others have recorded, Charles Kean and Albert Smith were bitter enemies; indeed, it is unlikely that the younger Kean ever relinquished the feud.

Edmund Kean, as 'U. O. N.' suggests, may have originated the story during a moment of economy with truth; it seems more likely that Charles Kean, whose temper would substantiate such a thing, himself created the information for F. W. Hawkins with the purpose of detracting from Albert Smith's success.

'J. A. H.' was, I think, John Alfred Hudson (1838-74), a member of the A.C., who made the first ascent of the Lyskamm in 1861.

In the *Dictionary of National Biography* one finds the following: 'During a visit at this time to Switzerland Kean is said to have ascended Mont Blanc, a gratuitous and inaccurate statement.'

Prof. H. N. Hillebrand, Department of English, University of Illinois, author of the most recent biography of Edmund Kean, whom I have consulted, agrees that the Mont Blanc story is posthumous, the nearly contemporary biography by B. W. Procter (1839) containing no mention of it. Hawkins's biography fails to give the sources of the new material.

It is interesting to discover that, while nothing is said about an ascent, the *Theatrical Inquisitor* for August, 1818, printed a brief note of Kean's continental tour, stating that he visited the Swiss lakes and sang to the monks of St. Bernard.

Henry F. Ponsonby may have been the aide-de-camp attached to the party of the Prince of Wales during the continental tour of 1857, when Chamonix was visited.

The passage from Hawkins's *Life* now follows: 'On the way (to Geneva) he was nearly dashed to pieces by the breaking down of the carriage on the Jura mountains about two o'clock one morning; but a temporary shelter was found at a hostelry situate about two miles from the spot where the accident happened. The carriage having been repaired, their progress to Geneva was resumed; and during a fortnight's stay in that city, Kean ascended Mont Blanc, the view from which, embracing all that is picturesque and magnificent in the lovely, rugged, and impressive grandeur of the Alps, seemed to give his mind a new visual power of enjoying the eternal beauties of nature. The monks of the St. Bernard monastery entertained him in the most liberal manner for a day and a night.



Observing an old spinnet in one of the apartments, he opened it, and accompanied a few melodies with such beautiful taste and expression that the monks, transported with delight, earnestly pressed him to prolong his stay with them.'

## II. THE MACGREGOR-SHULDHAM ASCENT OF MONT BLANC (1853).

The ascent of Mont Blanc by John MacGregor and Leopold Shuldham in the autumn of 1853 was noteworthy because these men accompanied Albert Smith's party to the Grands Mulets and were the first to occupy the new hut erected there.

In my book, *Mont Blanc Sideshow*, I quoted from MacGregor's diary, as well as from his letter to *The Times*, both of which are in Edwin Hodder's biography of MacGregor.

MacGregor's own description contains the following paragraph : 'At ten o'clock I sat down on the summit, and soon afterwards Mr. Shuldham, whose unconquerable pluck had sustained him through all the difficulties, attained the same height, though compelled by indisposition immediately to return. The Queen's health, and that of the King of Sardinia, were duly pledged in champagne, drunk out of a leathern drinking cup.'

In contrast with this, I find the following in J. B. Atkins's *Life of Sir William Howard Russell* (i. 118) : 'Shuldham was the first to reach the summit, and he was in the act of drinking a glass of champagne, which the guide had brought, when Rob Roy [MacGregor], who had followed in his tracks, arrived without much difficulty, and with only a couple of porters. Much elated, Rob Roy exclaimed : "Here we are at last ! I shall be very grateful for a glass of champagne if you have any to spare." Shuldham, irritated by the familiar manner of his competitor, bowed stiffly and said : "I beg your pardon, sir, but I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance." This became a pet phrase with us for the rest of the journey. A more generous, kindly companionable man than Leopold Shuldham never existed, but he had then a high Eton and Christ Church manner upon him, and could not put up with familiarity, even on the top of Mont Blanc.'

MacGregor mentions that Shuldham had had toothache and been otherwise ill at the Grands Mulets. Furthermore, MacGregor, in descending, waited there a half-hour for Shuldham, which he would not have done if they had quarrelled. One is therefore not inclined to put much credence in Russell's version, who himself was never on the summit and wrote the above in a fragmentary autobiography, begun more than thirty years after the event.

A rare account of the ascent now follows, being the letterpress accompanying the well-known Baxter prints made from MacGregor's sketches :



THE ASCENT OF MONT BLANC, A Series of Four Views, printed in oil colours by George Baxter, the Original Sketches, and the Description, by John MacGregor, Esq., M.A.

## I.

Mules, guides, and porters; ropes, knapsacks, and ice axes. Provisions, blue spectacles, firewood, gaiters, and iron-spiked shoes;—alpenstocks, green veils, and snow gloves (like large little babies' gloves with a thumb and general finger). Cheering of the village as you leave, 'wending through the wood'; the guides' adieu to Favret's fair sisters. 'The ledge path,' shrouded in mist and forked lightning (at least in some pictures of it). Struggles through boggy grass—again more rocks. Enterprising individual in front assailed by, 'That's the wrong way.' Weary individual in the rear calls out, 'Tom, have you got the brandy?' and Tom on distant crag responds, 'Well, but you've the cork-screw'; more rocks. 'Rock of the ladders'; stumbling and puffing. Faint efforts at song, and successful ones to dislocate the drumsticks of cold fowls. Verdict upon them, 'Very scraggy—but recommended to mercy on account of their great age.'

All that is over now. It is the 20th of September [1853], and we are fairly on the ice. Noon on a hot day, and this cold footing are contradictions. Never mind contradictions, we are 10,000 feet above the sea, passing over the Glacier des Bossons. It is full of fissures, yet generally level, and we push on to the Glacier du Taconay, jagged and rugged and lonely. The air is still, but—bang—what is that? an ice-block in agony. Bang! it goes again, smashing and crashing; fizz—see—bolong—bomm! and down, down, thundering tumble ten thousand tons of ice.

Now we are in the middle of it, just where the picture No. I stereotypes the whole party; that is, Lord Killeen,<sup>1</sup> Col. de Bathe,<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Albert Smith, Shuldham, Russell,<sup>1</sup> Fanshawe, Burrowes, myself, and about forty guides. See how the treacherous ice breaks: but the oil brush has just caught that falling man in time. His name is Tissay, my chief guide—(a very heavy guide too, for he nearly pulled me over into the crevasse); but it was a good strong rope that bound us four together, and it held him swinging in the air.

Further to the left is a ladder bridging a chasm. Holding on by the hands is somehow not practicable, so you must just walk carefully across.<sup>2</sup> Those on the left of the picture are enjoying the glorious view; up, there is the king of mountains; down, there is the pretty vale of Chamouni. All the rest has been transferred to the Egyptian Hall, in London, for admiration every day.

## II.

O that the glorious sunset could have been taken with it! The snow very red, the rocks redder, and people's noses reddest of all. A general changing of garments took place when we arrived at the 'Mulets,' and on their top-most peak you might see the last rays of evening, ruddy and full, on the brawny limbs of a fine young 'Switzer,' clothed like a sailor cleared for action. He was actually 'Boots' at the inn. 'Garçon!' 'Waiter' they shouted from the snow, teasing him, and to answer, he struggled to get free from the entanglements of a riven shirt, hopelessly involved as it was.

Chilly cold crept up the mountain as the sun receded. The top still glowed in crimson day, when it was gray eve with us, and pitch blue night in the

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<sup>1</sup> These three are in the Crimea—the first two with their sharp swords, and the last with his smart pen.

<sup>2</sup> The crevasses rise and fall, and open and close every season. In a letter to the *Illustrated London News*, Mr. Albert Smith, alluding to this expedition, says that they were then peculiarly awkward and unsafe. In '54 again they were so well covered as to save two hours to the travellers.



valley below. Then fire and a few sticks brought here with us, gave melted snow for the punch, and credulous people thought they were warmed.

Two trusty guides went forward to test the way ; and soon returned singing a wild melody. That frozen chorus rang from out the pale solitudes, as if the still mountain chaunted from its snowy swelling bosom.

*This* struck me more than anything on Mont Blanc.

The hut built last summer for shelter, was now inhabited for the first time—and thus.

A selfish Scotchman lies on a nine-inch plank, and imparts variety to the scene by kicking down alternately the candle in a bottle and an avalanche of knapsacks. S. squeezes into a corner with a tooth-ache on one side, and a headache on the other. Then, 'Man' generally sits close against the wall, and in his arms sits Man. Man over these ; Man across these again. At the door Man, and Man outside. 'Individual,' 'Tom,' 'Garçon,' and guides, porters, and travellers, all plaited together. Fifty types of humanity where twenty would have been crowded.

And why this dead silence ?—Don't I see cigars like fire flies glimmering in the dark, turning the snow peak into a volcano ?

The spasmodic and quick repeated sound, 'ppahh,' 'ppahh,' of fifty smokers on Mont Blanc—could anybody sleep under it ? Then the malicious revelry of Albert Smith, and others who were not going further ; earnest remonstrances against X's heels being ironshod and on your mouth, and the noise kept up by everybody calling 'Silence.' This, perpetually, until it chimed 'one' (somewhere or other, if we could only have heard it).<sup>3</sup>

'At the first summons to get ready, the whole party' 'rose in a moment ; every one bounded to his feet, eager' 'to be the first in resuming the ascent.' No ! let us tell the honest truth. 'Individual' maintained 'it wasn't time to start.' X said he 'couldn't get up till Y left off sitting on his face,' and Z announced flatly, 'I'll go no further.'

Happy Albert Smith ! *he* had to retract no resolution, he had been up to the top before.

A determined yawn, sustained unanimously for ten minutes, put us all again in good spirits, and four travellers, with 'Garçon,' and his friend, and seventeen guides, one by one, got under way, leaving about twenty others to wait until the day should light them back to Chamouni.

They gave us three regular British cheers, and forthwith picture No. II was instantly taken ; nevertheless, though I've rummaged all the old poets, and new albums, I can't find a good simile for the moon as we saw it.

It was our own good old moon to be sure, but her silver face smiling so brightly, so brightly, that one could not see her well known laughing eyes and sober looking nose.

The crust of snow was not hard enough, it broke in most places with every step. Tiresome thing ! To be compelled to plant the feet in the footmarks of the leading guide, was the only disagreeable in the whole expedition, for one's steps were naturally longer than his, and at last there was nothing for it but to burst the 'red tape' and march on the soft snow, in a new track.

'Voyez, Messieurs, there's where the avalanche covered four guides in '22.' 'Ah ! indeed !' 'Encore, Messieurs, a fog here would be sure death to us all.' 'You don't say so.' 'And Messrs. Jones & Robinson slipped into that crevasse in '41.' But we soon got tired of gossiping ; every puff of breath was wanted for work.

A tough little bit soon came for us, about the height of St. Paul's, and to be

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<sup>3</sup> Two guides told us, that like myself and others, they had been awake during the whole of the previous night also, at Chamouni, pondering on the exciting prospect before us. So we had two sleepless nights. Another said he had been twenty-two times up to the G. Mulets, with various persons, and most of them bound for the summit ; but that he had reached it only twice, so numerous are the preventing causes, fogs, storms, laziness, illness, and sheer exhaustion.



climbed up zig-zag. On the top there was a cutting cold wind ; and below, sounding faintly, a voice, 'MacGregor—MacGregor.' 'Well, what's the matter?' 'I can't go further.' 'Oh, come along, it's all right up here.' 'I'm getting sea-sick—I must go back.' An hour's work had shaken poor X's resolve (of *yesterday*), that 'he would go to the top, if he were to be carried up in pieces.'

One of the guides, who had our loaf of bread, took off his knapsack and laid it on the snow, which there seemed hard enough. Whew!—Off went the knapsack and bread, spinning away, and then, bump! into a cold, silent, dark, blue, murderous looking hole.

### III.

The 'Mur de la Cote.' We have brought the gentle reader safely here, but not all the party along with him. 'Y' lagged gradually ; his pluck was manifest to all, but it was beyond his strength. He got over the 'Petit Plateau,' then the icy blast smote him, and his spirit froze. The guides shoved, and were prone even to carry him. The cold seized on his feet, and if he had gone further he might have fared worse, and returned a mere corporation with useless members. Thus ten men gave up the task, and the rest plodded on in silence.

The 'Mur de la Cote' would not do to begin with ; but when you come to it at this stage of the journey it must be done. The precipice is steep and deep, but there is no escaping the traverse of its edge. Snow here becomes ice, and it is roughened by little ledges which enable the foot to get hold ; or where it cannot thus do so, you tread in a cut <sup>4</sup> made with the axe.

After a long ascent, on the right side of the feet the ankle-bones tingle with the unequal pressure. Suddenly you turn round, and there is at first relief from the change of direction, but then sharp pain.

When Porson was asked how he could remember so many Greek plays, he said, 'I don't see any reason why I should forget them.' Nor is there any more reason why you should slip down these ice hills if you are only careful with every step ; yet everybody stumbled many times in turning this corner ; and the guides, all except two, shewed symptoms of 'giving in.'

He was a daring man indeed, who first went round this edge ; <sup>5</sup> so was the first passenger in a railway carriage. And even now—come, let us not exaggerate the difficulty which defeats us, or magnify that we surmount.

'But what business had we to go there?' asks envious friend. 'Was it to hold a meeting of the Protestant Alliance on the top, or to visit the Ragged School at the bottom said to be frozen up somewhere in these mountains, with the boys preserved like flies in amber—and the master too?'

The air was highly rarified, and made us stupid and drowsy. Five minutes walking, and then a stop, when everybody sits down, tied by the rope to everybody else. In a moment four or five are fast asleep, and the one who has slept soonest and longest, slowly begins to nod bodily forwards, and starting to consciousness, reproves all the rest for being sleepy. On again. Another stop—sleep—start—and on again ; and ditto, ditto, *da capo*, and over again. I thought it better never to sit down, after once feeling this sleepiness.

It was unnatural to feel but deliciously pleasant, exactly like the sensation produced by taking chloroform. (This is what is called 'regarding with intense emotion the magnificent panoramic view!')

'Up rose the sun'—nay, I can save a page by not describing *how*, besides we are at the 'Rocher Rouge'—the last halt, and people are persuaded that they are very hungry ; accordingly, they crunch chocolate, and dandle a raisin

<sup>4</sup> There are about 260 of these generally, according to Mr. Albert Smith's account. The route to the top is about two hours longer, since the guides of Dr. Hamell, the Russian traveller, were buried by an avalanche, for the wary Switzer prudently avoids the fatal spot where this occurred. Last summer, however, the old route was used again.

<sup>5</sup> The number of travellers who have reached the summit is about fifty (1855).



in the mouth. It is by law and custom you do it, and it's against law to eat snow, which is therefore of course far nicer for breakfast than raisins.

The rock may have been as red as you like ; but our faces were of a lovely indigo. Here a guide got frozen and had to go back, he could not rise to follow us. Poor fellow ! At another time, the guides had to cling round a traveller in a circle to impart warmth to his body from their own. It was not so cold on this occasion, even to one wearing only a shooting coat ; but the actual temperature is less felt than the want of air, sleep, and food.<sup>6</sup> As for the veil and blue spectacles, they were a bore for me after an hour or two, so off they went, and no harm followed. The faces of some of the guides however were scarified ; their eyes were bloodshot, their hands and feet frost bitten. But what is all this compared with the hardships of a little 'reefer,' hanging out on a winter's night, from the main-top-gallant yard of an Indiaman, rounding the Cape ?

#### IV.

See that hero at the bottom of the picture. He positively never reached the top, and Mr. Baxter has fixed him for ever where he is now ; his last steps were made in a minute each, with ten minutes between them to rest.

Oh ! it was lovely, fair, and still, when I first gained the summit. The smoke puffed from the cannon firing at Chamouni ;<sup>7</sup> and only fancy, the telescopes were manned by young ladies, staring even from Geneva, fifty miles away ! Shuldham and his people gave a jejune cry as they successively came up, and thought they were cheering. Common talking could not be heard at all ; loud shouting sounded as a voice below a feather bed, and the pistol we did not bring with us makes a report like a pop-gun.

The highest point in Europe. More earth to be seen from hence than ever again by any of us ! Yet, anon, we are in a 'reverie,' and behold all without seeing anything. Arouse ! for it is a view beyond description. Look quickly, for you must soon go down. Very well then, where's the champagne ? let's feast on that wretched fowl's body, whose case has been reserved for discussion before this high court.

From a leathern cup we quaffed, to the Queen's health, what hissed and brightly sparkled like bubbling fire.

Another noiseless pause. Lonely silence this, oh, how it speaks to the heart ! Here you see a hundred, there two hundred miles ; but we cannot look, sudden reaction had made us utterly passive, calm, weary, quiet, and smiling. Life seemed a dumb brightness, nor pain, nor pleasure ; but a mute, dazzling thing, with dreamy half-closed eyelids. All could have slept in that awfully still sunshine, and peacefully died. It was warm, gleaming rest, silent, white, and happy ; and why not lasting ? Awake ! and behold this coloured map around us.

There is Italy, and the Grand Duke weeding the book-stalls. We can't see King Bomba of Naples, for he is inspecting his prisons. The Pope is in secret consistory, also invisible. Look at France ; brave ally, we greet you ! That dim blue line is Austria, but the atmosphere is not free thereabouts. Bravo ! little Switzerland, you look as large from this as Zwinglius made you !

One sees more inwardly than even through the eye on Mont Blanc.

Then I stamped on my foot, and the icicles rattled like razor-fish on the shore of the sea ; mild radiance around, and below, the deep, deep, pure, eternal snow.

Man never looked so great to me or the world so small. The spectacle was too grand to be uttered ; but the memory of it can never be effaced. Miserable he, who could grudge his toiling to enjoy this !

If thoughts are lofty, according to our height above the plain, then could we surely hope from this white pinnacle of Europe, to 'look through Nature up to nature's God.'

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<sup>6</sup> The density of the air is calculated to be only one-third of that at the level of the sea, 15,000 feet below ; the appetite is nearly lost, even after twenty-four hours of walking.

<sup>7</sup> In a straight line the distance is nearly ten miles. The winding route you walk by is more than thirty miles long.



Not so ! This glass of nature is but a shattered one, dimmed by the stains of ages of man's guilt, and broken by his fall. Mount not, but stoop, and you may surely see revealed what man cannot ' by searching find out,' even from the summit of Mont Blanc.

*Certificates of Early American Ascents of Mont Blanc.*

The American Alpine Club has recently secured the certificates of the two ascents of Mont Blanc made by George W. Heard. They are numbered 88 and 112. Heard ascended for the first time (the third American ascent) on August 17, 1855, accompanied by Kyrle Alfred Chapman, an Eton boy, who subsequently went up Monte Rosa with a single guide (*Times*, September 9). George Heard repeated his ascent on September 5, 1857 (the first American to do the mountain twice), accompanied by his brother Augustine.

The earlier certificate has printed on the back a list of the first 98 ascents, which varies in minor details, chiefly orthography, from Stephen d'Arve's list. It concludes with Paxton's ascent of September 30, 1855.

Below this, Heard has added in manuscript the following :

- (1856) 99. Mr. Richard Forman, anglais, 1 août.
- 100. Mlle. Forman, Emma Catherine, sa fille.
- 101. Mr. John Leech, anglais, 5 août.
- 102. William Leech, anglais, 5 août (frères).
- 103. Henry Fairbanks, américain, 5 août.
- 104. Tom Houldsworth, écossais, 5 août.
- 105. Edward Birbeck, anglais, 30 août.
- 106. Edmond Coleman, anglais, 31 août.
- 107. J. Marshall, anglais, 5 sept.
- (1857) 108. 30 juin. Mons. Charles Rontier de Grandval. France.
- 21 juillet. A. M. Morrison. Worcester, Mass.
- James Kent Stone. Brookline, Mass.
- 31 juillet. Robert Walter & Thomas Hinchliff. Anglais.
- 5 août. Albert Hassler, allemand, & M. Williamson, anglais.
- 28 août. Mr. S. W. Dana. Boston, Mass.
- Stuvesant LeRoy. New York.
- 1 Sept. Mr. Wills & Mr. Russell. Anglais.
- 5 Sept. Mr. Augustine Heard, Jr. Ipswich, Mass.
- Mr. George W. Heard, Jr.

Strangely enough, Professor Tyndall's ascent (August 4, 1857) is not included. It is interesting that the ' James Kidd ' of d'Arve's list turns out to be James Kent Stone, since this throws additional light on the activities of ' Father Fidelis.' It disproves Mumm's supposition (*A.C. Register*, i. 314) that all of Stone's ascents were made in the same season, and, unless he made a second ascent of Mont Blanc, that ' disguised as " Stanley Smith H.," he was the American who made, 18/vii, the one ascent of Mont Blanc accomplished in 1860.'

George Heard was a student at Geneva and, at the time of his second ascent, had visited the valley of Chamonix on nine occasions. He was born in 1837 and died in 1875 while voyaging through the Red Sea, being buried at Suez. He was seventeen years old at the time of his first ascent.

With the two certificates are manuscript accounts of the climbs, as well as a copy of Professor Forbes' map, published in 1855, and used by Heard.

We have also recently examined the manuscript certificates issued to Dr. I. Tisdale Talbot in 1854 (the second American ascent), and to Henry Fairbanks in 1856. The latter document includes an ascent to the Jardin, and is accompanied by another certificate presented to Fairbanks' sister, Charlotte, who went to the Jardin and to the Grands Mulets in the same year. It is, therefore, almost certain that printed certificates superseded manuscript documents in 1857 and thereafter.

These items will be reproduced in connection with a survey of early American mountaineering in the Alps, in the *American Alpine Journal* for 1935.