

EXPEDITIONS

Mont Blanc District

AIGUILLE D'ARGENTIÈRE, 3907 m. = 12,819 ft. By the N. face. August 14, 1929. Messrs. T. A. H. Peacocke and D. A. Hodgkinson.

The party left the Saleinaz hut at 02.30 and followed the route to the Col du Chardonnet, turning left when some 30 minutes short of the col, and reaching the base of the wall at 05.00. The bergschrund was crossed at 05.15 and a direct line followed to the shoulder of the N.W. ridge which was reached at 07.45 and the summit at 08.30. The snow conditions were very good and steps could generally be made by kicking. Comparatively little step-cutting was required, but the party gained some assistance from the remains of steps made by a previous party. This route was first taken by Jacques Lagarde and Henri de Ségogne in 1926¹ and is free from objective danger. The séracs are small and quite solid. The situation is magnificent. A line which works more to the left and leads direct to the summit was made by R. Gréloz in 1930. This route is certainly more direct but was exposed to some risk this year from the summit cornice. Lack of training and considerations of safety caused the party to take the right-hand route.

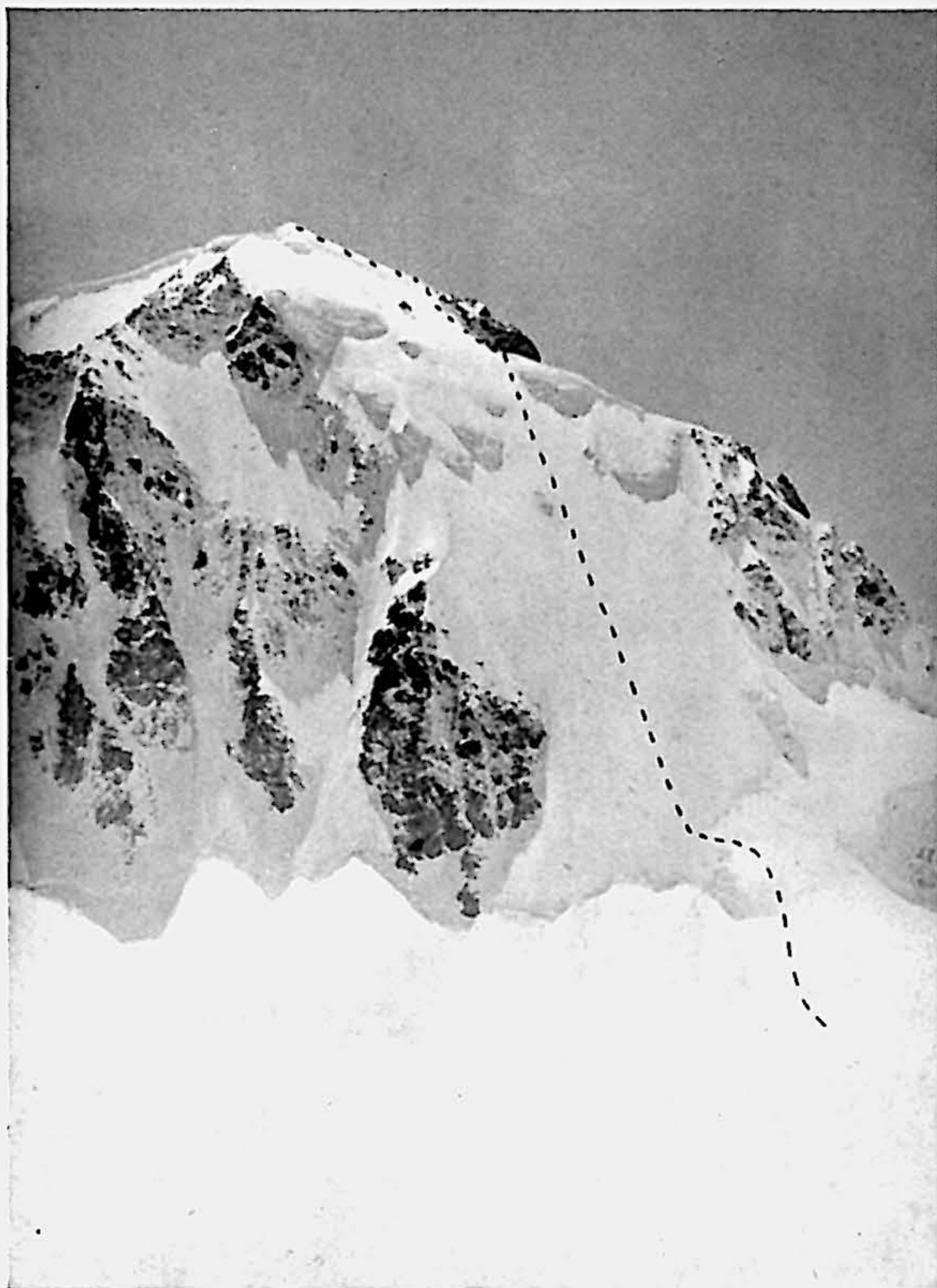
T. A. H. P.

LES COURTES, 3855 m. = 12,648 ft. Traverse from Col des Cristaux.² August 17, 1939. Messrs. T. A. H. Peacocke and D. A. Hodgkinson.

The party left the Refuge d'Argentière (with its electric light and other modern conveniences) at 03.00 and following the Argentière Glacier reached the foot of the spur descending from the Col des Cristaux at 04.30. Uncertain light caused some delay in circumventing the crevasses, but the bergschrund at the foot of the slope was crossed without difficulty at 05.10. There excellent snow and crampons enabled the party to make rapid progress. The spur was struck about half-way up, at the beginning of a fine narrow snow arête. This was in excellent condition and led to easy rocks and the crest of the ridge, somewhat above the lowest point, at 07.15. (Halt till 07.45.) The weather, which had been doubtful, now improved and the summit of Les Courtes was reached at 09.15. The conditions were excellent. At 10.00 distress signals were detected from the direction of Les Droites and the descent was begun. After some time a party of four was seen on the S. face. It was impossible to ascertain the nature of their trouble and as the approach from Les Courtes was raked by

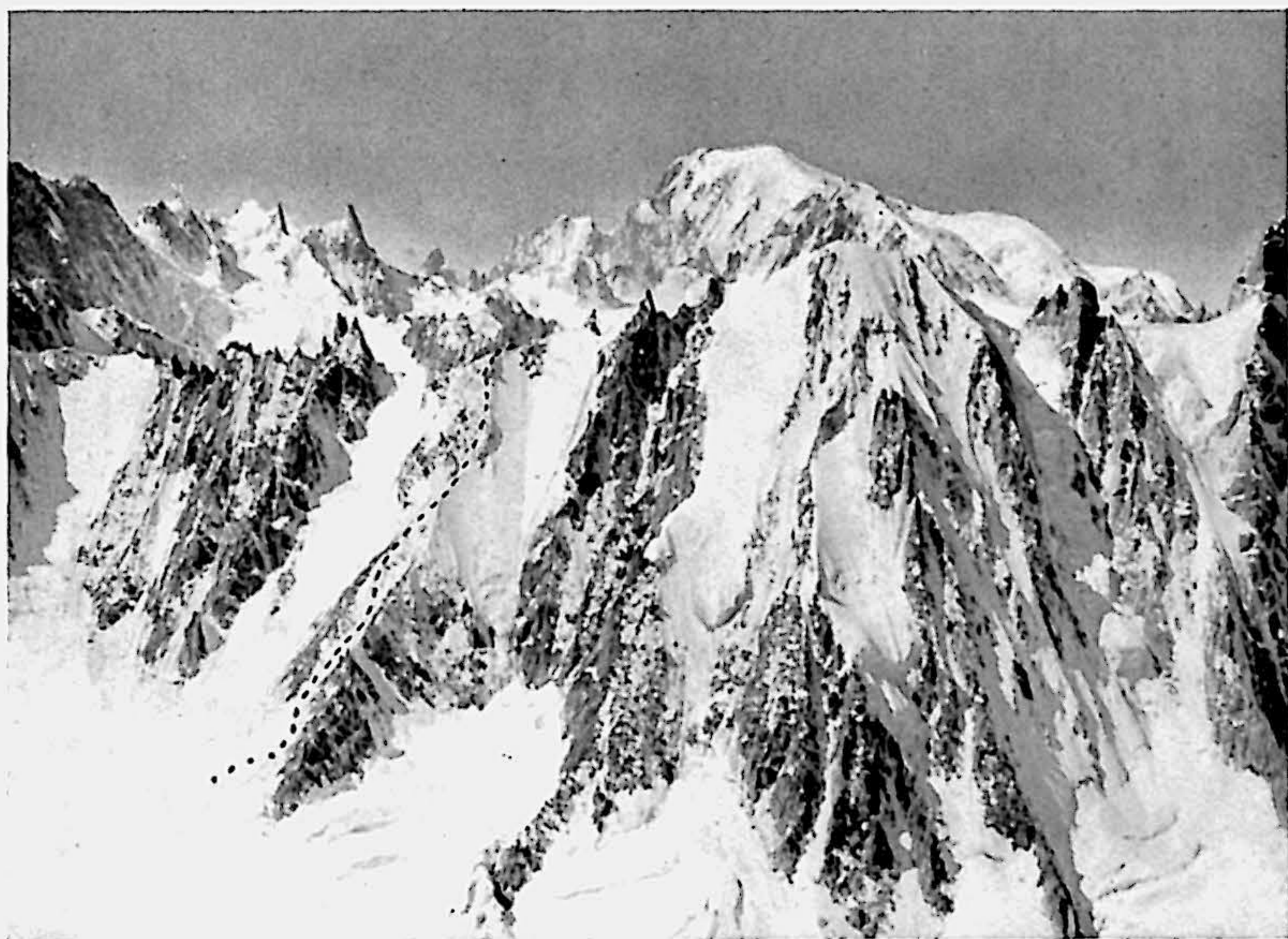
¹ *A. J.* 38. 307.

² *A. J.* 24. 351, 613 *sqq.* with illustration; 28. 333, 409; *Echo des Alpes*, 1911, 299 *sqq.*; *La Montagne*, 1913, 657 *sqq.*



Photo, T. A. H. Peacocke.]

AIGUILLE D'ARGENTIÈRE, N. FACE.



Photo, T. A. H. Peacocke.]

LES COURTES, SHOWING ROUTE TO COL DES CRISTAUX.

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falling stones, the party descended direct to the Couvercle to give the alarm. The upper slopes below the Tour des Courtes were in a somewhat dangerous condition and care was necessary. In certain snow conditions, and in the afternoon, this slope would be most dangerous from avalanche risk; it should be crossed early. An enormous pile of avalanche débris, probably caused by the descent of the whole upper layer of snow, was found at the bottom. It had fallen a few days previously.

The Couvercle was reached about 13.00. Great difficulty was experienced in arousing the *gardien* and the two or three guides present to the need of organising a search party. The guides pleaded that they did not know the nature of the accident, and that the approach was dangerous in the afternoon owing to stonefall. The *gardien*, once he realised that an accident really had occurred, was genuinely concerned and suggested that help should be sought from Chamonix as there was not sufficient man-power at the Couvercle; so the party descended to Montenvers where, with further difficulty, a rescue party of soldiers was obtained from Chamonix, largely owing to the efforts of the guide, Camille Tournier, who rendered very great assistance. The four climbers, who were guideless Swiss, were safely collected at 05.00 the next morning. Only one was injured and he had a fractured skull—fortunately not serious. The chief difficulty in forming a rescue party was the absence of good guides at the Couvercle and the fact that, owing to the fine weather, all the guides in Chamonix were employed.

T. A. H. P.

Bernese Oberland

STRAHLHÖRNER, second summit, 3279 m. = 10,758 ft. By the S.E. face. July 29, 1939. Dr. O. K. Williamson with Karl Pollinger.

This small chain (highest point 3330 m. = 10,925 ft.), the S. termination of the Walliser Fiescherhörner, is rightly described in the *Hochgebirgsführer durch die Berner Alpen*, Band IV, 1931, as being of 'geringer touristischer Bedeutung,' and seems to have been little explored. This is doubtless partly for the reason that for most of the climbs from the Jungfrau Hotel a start is made from the Concordia hut. Yet for expeditions easily carried out in one day this ridge of pure rock can be confidently recommended.

Karl Pollinger and I, having started from the Jungfrau Hotel, Eggishorn, by way of the small glacier which lies to the S.E. of the two highest points of the Strahlhörner, reached the foot of the S.E. rock wall of our peak, about due S. of its summit.

After crossing the bergschrund a very steep couloir was first climbed; this had some large loose blocks in its upper part, and Karl had to use the full length of our 100-ft. rope before reaching sound anchorage. More steep rocks, some of them loose, were ascended obliquely to the left, and brought us to the crest of the main ridge some 40 or 50 m. above the bergschrund. The climbing was interesting and needed

great care. A few minutes N.E. up the comparatively easy ridge landed us on the top, in some $6\frac{3}{4}$ hours excluding halts. The descent was effected by the same face from the main ridge a few yards N.E. of the summit. We went down, first obliquely to the left, then to the right. The descent was of about the same height as the wall ascended; it was, however, less steep and much easier, except for a drop of some 20 ft. high, with some doubtfully secure rocks at its top, about half-way down. Here the right-hand wall of the chimney overhung and tended to throw one's balance out. The routes of ascent and descent showed no signs of previous visitors, and the little peak appears to have been previously climbed by the main ridge. The way taken to and from the foot of the S.E. face is practically the same as that leading to the S. arête of the Klein Wannehorn. The hotel was regained in about $3\frac{3}{4}$ hours' actual walking from the top. The expedition was a most enjoyable training climb, in perfect weather.

O. K. W.

GROSS SCHRECKHORN, 4080 m. = 13,386 ft. By the N.E. face. August 26, 1938. Messrs. Ichiro and Jiro Taguchi, with Samuel Brawand and Christian Kaufmann, jun.

The party left the Gleckstein hut at 00.45. The ordinary route over the Lauteraarsattel to the Anderson ridge was followed until we arrived at a basin below this face at 05.30. In order to avoid the huge overhanging ice cliff at the base of the face, the party made for a rather big rock rib bounding the S. corner of the face, which leads up to the lower summit of Gross Schreckhorn.³

The lower portion of the rib was climbed without any difficulty, although a few steps were needed at some places. Thus the upper edge of the overhanging ice cliff was gained at 06.20. The traverse towards the centre of the face from this point was plain sailing, as snow conditions were more than splendid. But thereafter the slope gradually steepened and became badly icy. More than 300 steps had to be cut before one of the small rock ribs descending from the summit ridge was attained.

This rib was followed over easy, unsound rocks to the place where it merged into the face again. A short traverse of a steep ice couloir to the right led us to another rock rib. Here the rocks were much better, and the summit ridge was reached at 11.30 after a pleasant scramble. The summit was less than three minutes' walk from this point.

We descended to the Strahlegg hut by the usual route.

³ Among the references given in Dübi's *Climbers' Guide*, 1909, are:

(1) W. M. and R. Pendlebury with P. Baumann and P. Kaufmann. July 11, 1873. *A. J.* 6. 298; 7. 34 *sqq.*; 14. 156; 15. 370.

(2) H. Woolley with Chr. Jossi and H. Kaufmann. July 28, 1887. *A. J.* 14. 156.

(3) In descent, Claude Macdonald with Jossi and Jos. Taugwalder. July 25, 1890. *A. J.* 15. 370.



Photo, E. Gyger, Adelboden.]

SCHRECKHORN, N.E. FACE, WITH 1938 ROUTE.

We climbed on two ropes and crampons were used until we gained the rocks. On the whole the climb was surprisingly easier than we had expected.

I. T.

FRÜNDENJÖCH, 2983 m. = 9845 ft. Direct from Gasterntal via the *Löcher*. July 14, 1939. Mr. J. C. H. Runge, with Abrahams and Gottfried Müller.

Left Heimritz 06.40. Went up valley on the right bank of Kander river to within a short distance of the icefall of the Kanderfirn. Then ascended steep grass slopes, leaving the big couloir on our right in the sense of ascent. Traversed the couloir at the *Löchereck*, continuing up for a short distance mainly over very steep grass slopes. Then bearing again left towards the couloir over some screes, snow and slabs, the party took to a steep chimney leading on to a steep slope, rocks with patches of grass, and after ascending this turned again left up a very steep rock ridge ending in a little saddle. Thence up steep but very firm rocks to a second small saddle, thence over easy rocks on to the glacier, which was struck below the Fründenjoch. Up the glacier and a final small snow couloir to the top of Fründenjoch, 14.30. Actual going time a little under six hours. Thence descent to Kandersteg via the Fründen hut. A second party would no doubt be able to shorten the time.

J. C. H. R.