THE MATTERHORN CENTENARY

(Nine illustrations: nos. 1–9)

EVEN though the Matterhorn fell with unexpected ease to the first party which seriously pressed an attempt from the Swiss side, the beauty and isolation of the peak and its apparent inaccessibility—the latter confirmed by the lengthening history of frustrated attempts by the Italian ridge—made it the most sought after prize in the Alps at the time of the first ascent. It still remains so, in the obvious sense to which the congestion of the Hörnli ridge on any fine day in July or August bears witness. It has become a tourist's mountain, as well as a mountaineer's. But the mountaineer, however much he may deplore the fixed ropes and the crowds which swarm up and down them, will still wish to have climbed the Matterhorn. Neither the highest nor the hardest of the great peaks of the Alps, it continues to exercise much the same special fascination for climbers as it exercised a hundred years ago.

July 14 of this year marks the hundredth anniversary of the day when Michel Croz' blouse, fixed to a tent-pole on the summit of the Matterhorn, was seen 'at Zermatt—at the Riffel—in the Val Tournanche'; when the watchers in Breuil cried, 'Victory is ours!'; and when, an hour or two later, a sharp-eyed lad in Zermatt ran into the Monte Rosa hotel, saying that he had seen an avalanche fall from the summit of the Matterhorn onto the Matterhorn glacier, and was reproved for telling idle stories.

Whymper's familiar phrases remind us that, although this year's centenary would have been an occasion to be marked even if the climb had been uneventful, it is the actual circumstances of the first ascent of the Matterhorn which have made it the most famous episode in all Alpine history. It is not only an important first ascent which is being commemorated this summer, but also the whole story, of rivalry, triumph and tragedy, immortalised in *Scrambles amongst the Alps*. And one event which will not be forgotten is the postscript to the story, when Carrel reached the summit by the Italian ridge on July 17.

To mark the centenary, we print below a list of some of the important dates in the Matterhorn's history since 1865; a selection of documents which relate to the first ascent; and a study of the career of 'Old' Peter Taugwalder, by D. F. O. Dangar and T. S. Blakeney. In addition, it is appropriate that a Swiss and an Italian mountaineer—our member, Dr. H-F. von Tscharner, and Signor Gaetano De Luca—should each have been kind enough to contribute an article on the Matterhorn written from a more general standpoint. The photographs reproduced

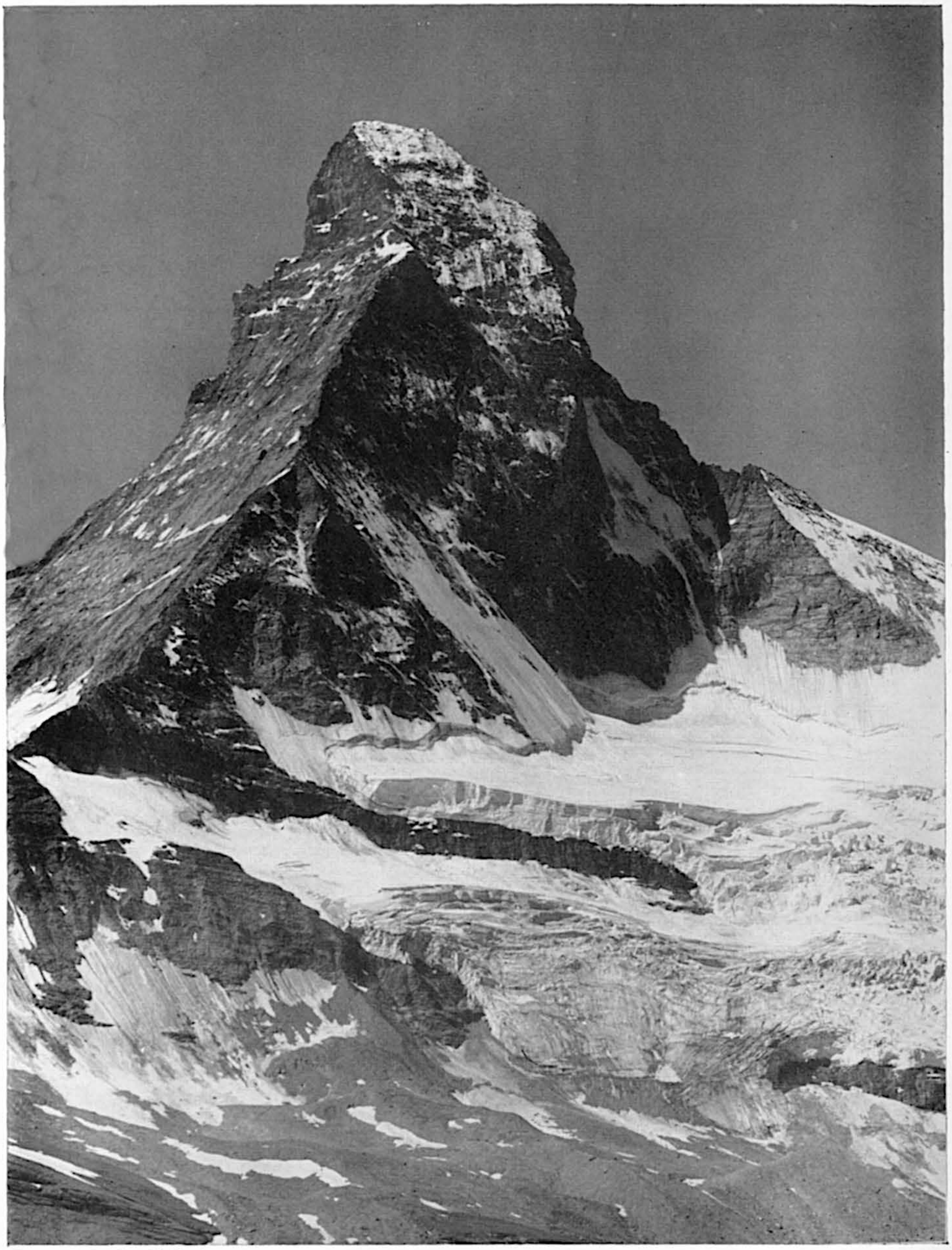


Photo: B. R. Goodfellow]

THE MATTERHORN

(No. 1)



Photo: S. Kuffner]

ALEXANDER BURGENER (*c.* 1909).
(Zmutt ridge, 1879. Col du Lion, 1880.)

(No. 2)

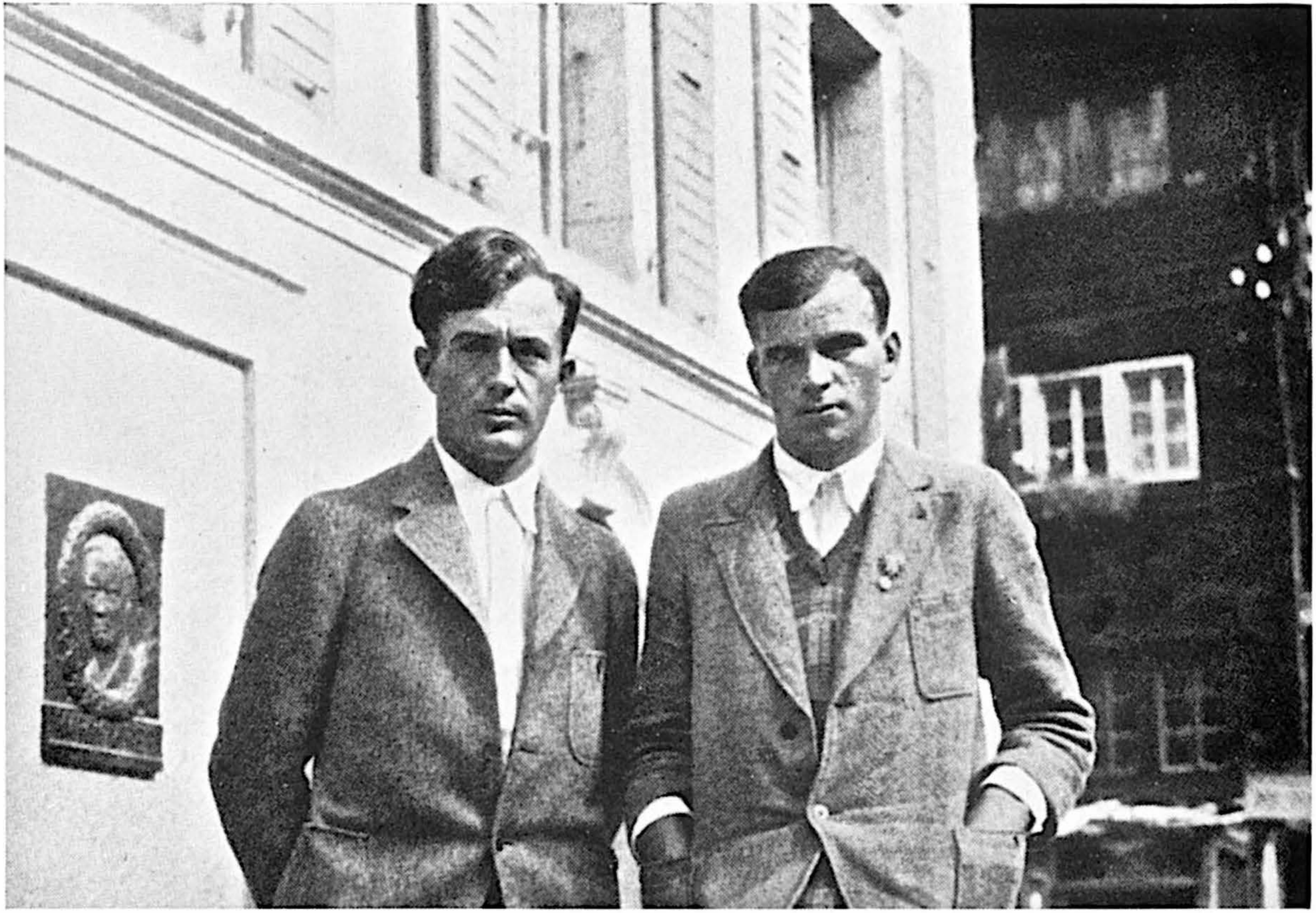


Photo: W. Bellows]

FRANZ AND TONI SCHMID, TAKEN SHORTLY AFTER THEIR ASCENT.
(North face, 1931.)

(No. 3)

include portraits of some of the men whose names are particularly associated with the Matterhorn.[1]

A. D. M. Cox

(1) SOME DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE MATTERHORN, 1865–1965

The bibliography of the Matterhorn is so immense that it would crowd these pages excessively, and needlessly, to quote the source for every expedition that is mentioned here. Apart from the classic works, such as Whymper's *Scrambles amongst the Alps* (1871) and *The Ascent of the Matterhorn* (1880), Tyndall's *Hours of Exercise in the Alps* (1871), Mummery's *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus* (1895), Guido Rey's *Il Monte Cervino* (1904), there are innumerable other studies of particular routes or problems. Charles Gos's *Le Cervin* (2 vols., 1948) is valuable, and the Italian Alpine Club has published an anthology, *Il Gran Cervino* (1963); Marcel Kurz's *Guide des Alpes Valaisannes*, vol. II (1947) is a useful source for references in the various climbing journals.

(1) 1865 July 14. First ascent (from Zermatt).
Lord Francis Douglas, D. Hadow, C. Hudson, Edward Whymper, Michel-Auguste Croz, Peter Taugwalder (*vater und sohn*).
Nothing need be said of this first ascent, which is one of the most famous episodes in mountaineering history, and has been the subject of countless articles. Whymper's description of the climb is a classic; Young Peter Taugwalder's narrative is given in *A.J. 61*. 484 sqq. The official enquiry after the accident is printed in *A.J. 33*. 234 sqq.

(2) 1865 July 17. First ascent from Breuil.
Jean-Antoine Carrel, Jean-Baptiste Bich.
The rivalry between Whymper and Italian climbers, for the credit of the first ascent of the Matterhorn, needs no embellishment here. It is, however, appropriate to remember that although Whymper considered he had been tricked by the Italians who, so to speak, 'bought up' J-A. Carrel (on whom success on the Italian ridge really depended) before Whymper could engage him, yet, in his

[1] I should like to express my warm thanks to Dr. von Tscharner and Signor De Luca, and also to the Assistant Editors, who have been responsible for very much more than the single item which appears under their names. I am also grateful to Mr. B. R. Goodfellow and Mr. F. Solari for help with the photographs.

moment of triumph at the summit Whymper could say that he wished Carrel had been with him, since he had been the one Italian guide who never wavered in his determination to reach the top of the mountain.

Two other members of this party, the Abbé Amé Gorret and J-A. Meynet, did not complete the ascent, but remained on the Galerie Carrel, a short distance below the summit.

In 1867, Joseph and J-Pierre Maquignaz climbed the mountain by a variant of Carrel's route which avoided the Galerie and followed the South-west ridge more or less direct to the summit. Three other guides, plus Félicité Carrel, the enterprising daughter of one of them, stopped short at the last section, about 350 ft. below the top.

(3) 1867 Erection of the refuge on the Cravate (Italian ridge).

(4) 1868 July 27. First traverse from Breuil to Zermatt.
J. Tyndall, J-J. and J-P. Maquignaz.
W. Leighton Jordan had virtually traversed the mountain on October 2, 1867, since he had ascended to the Swiss 'shoulder' on September 10 before having to retreat. He then went round to the Italian ridge, climbed the mountain and descended the Swiss ridge to the point that he had reached the previous month. He did not, however, continue the descent further, but returned over the summit and down by the Italian ridge (*A.J. 30*. 316–23; *31*. 90–1).

(5) 1868 August 3. First traverse from Zermatt to Breuil.
O. Hoiler, F. Thioly, J-J. and Victor Maquignaz, Elie Pession.

(6) 1868 Erection of the 'old' hut on the North-east (Swiss) ridge.

(7) 1871 July 22. First ascent by a woman.
Lucy Walker, with F. Gardiner, F. Walker, Heinrich and Melchior Anderegg, Nicholas and Peter Knubel, Peter Perren.

(8) 1871 September 5. First traverse by a woman, Zermatt to Breuil.
Meta C. Brevoort, with W. A. B. Coolidge, Christian and Ulrich Almer, Nicholas Knubel.
Some feminine rivalry existed between the two above distinguished women climbers, Miss Walker and Miss Brevoort. Slight sketches of them occur in Claire Engel's *They Came to the Hills*, chapter vi, and in Ronald Clark's

The Victorian Mountaineers, chapter viii. Lucy Walker was commemorated in *A.J. 31*. 97, and Miss Brevoort appears regularly in Ronald Clark's biography of her nephew, W. A. B. Coolidge, *An Eccentric in the Alps*.

(9) 1873 August 22. First traverse by a woman, Breuil to Zermatt. Anna and Ella Pigeon, J-A. Carrel, Victor Maquignaz, J. Martin.

This party was confined in the hut on the Italian side from August 18–21 by bad weather; and in descending upon the Zermatt side it was surprised by night before the cabane could be reached and had to pass the night on the open mountain side.

Anna and Ella Pigeon are best remembered today for their crossing of the Sesiajoch in 1869, with the guide Jean Martin. This was the first time the Italian slope of the pass had been descended, and the guide proved so incompetent that he had, almost, to be led by the ladies instead of *vice versa*.

(10) 1876 July 23. First guideless ascent. A. H. Cawood, J. B. Colgrove, A. Cust.

For an account of this climb, see *A.J. 8*. 110, 242. It is difficult at this distance in time to realise how startling it seemed for a guideless party to ascend a mountain, although British parties had already made the first guideless ascents of both Mont Blanc (1855) and the Finsteraarhorn (1865). But neither of these mountains could catch public attention as the Matterhorn did; the guideless ascent of the latter mountain must be considered one of the outstanding dates in the Matterhorn's history if only because of the outcry made in the Press. Six years earlier the Alpine Club had deprecated guideless climbing except by well-experienced mountaineers (see *A.J. 65*. 95 on this point); the ascent by Cawood and his friends was, of course, recognised as a thoroughly competent and justifiable expedition.

(11) 1879 September 3. First ascent of the Zmutt ridge. A. F. Mummery, Alexander Burgener, Augustin Gentinetta, Johann Petrus.

(12) 1879 September 3. First ascent by the Penhall couloir and West face. W. Penhall, Ferdinand Imseng, Louis Zurbrücken.

These two climbs, made on the same day, are sometimes thought of as being virtually the same route. Mummery's



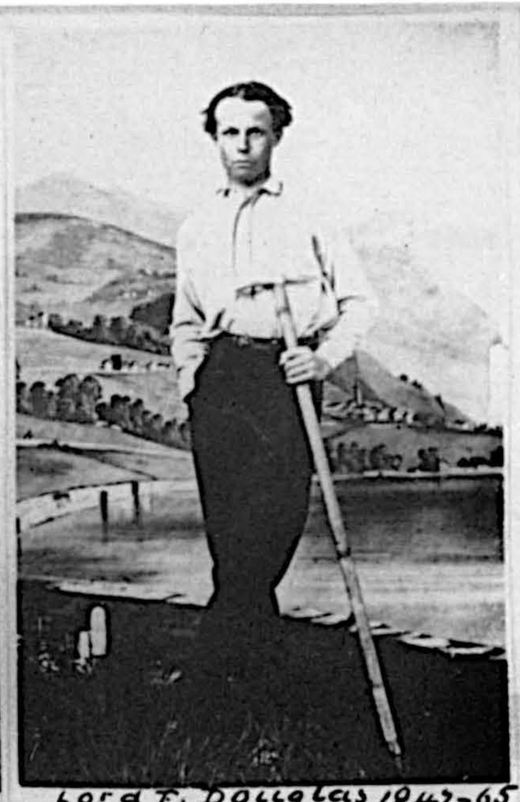
MICHEL A. CROZ.



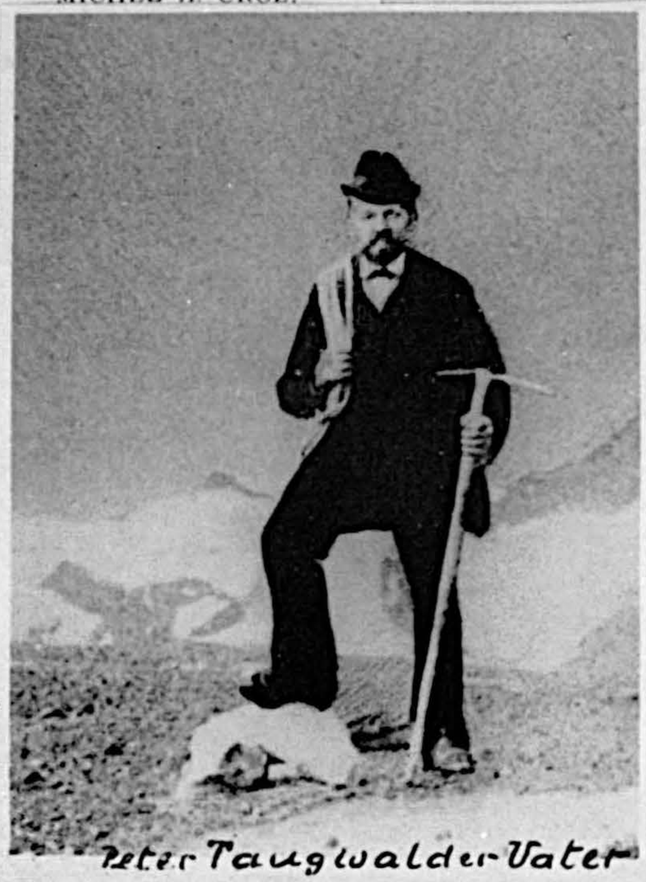
Hadow.



Charles Hudson 1828-1865



Lord F. Douglas 1847-65



Peter Taugwalder Vater



Edward Whymper 1865



1865 (22)
Peter Taugwalder Sohn

Photos in possession of the Alpine Club]

THE PARTY OF THE FIRST ASCENT, JULY 14, 1865.

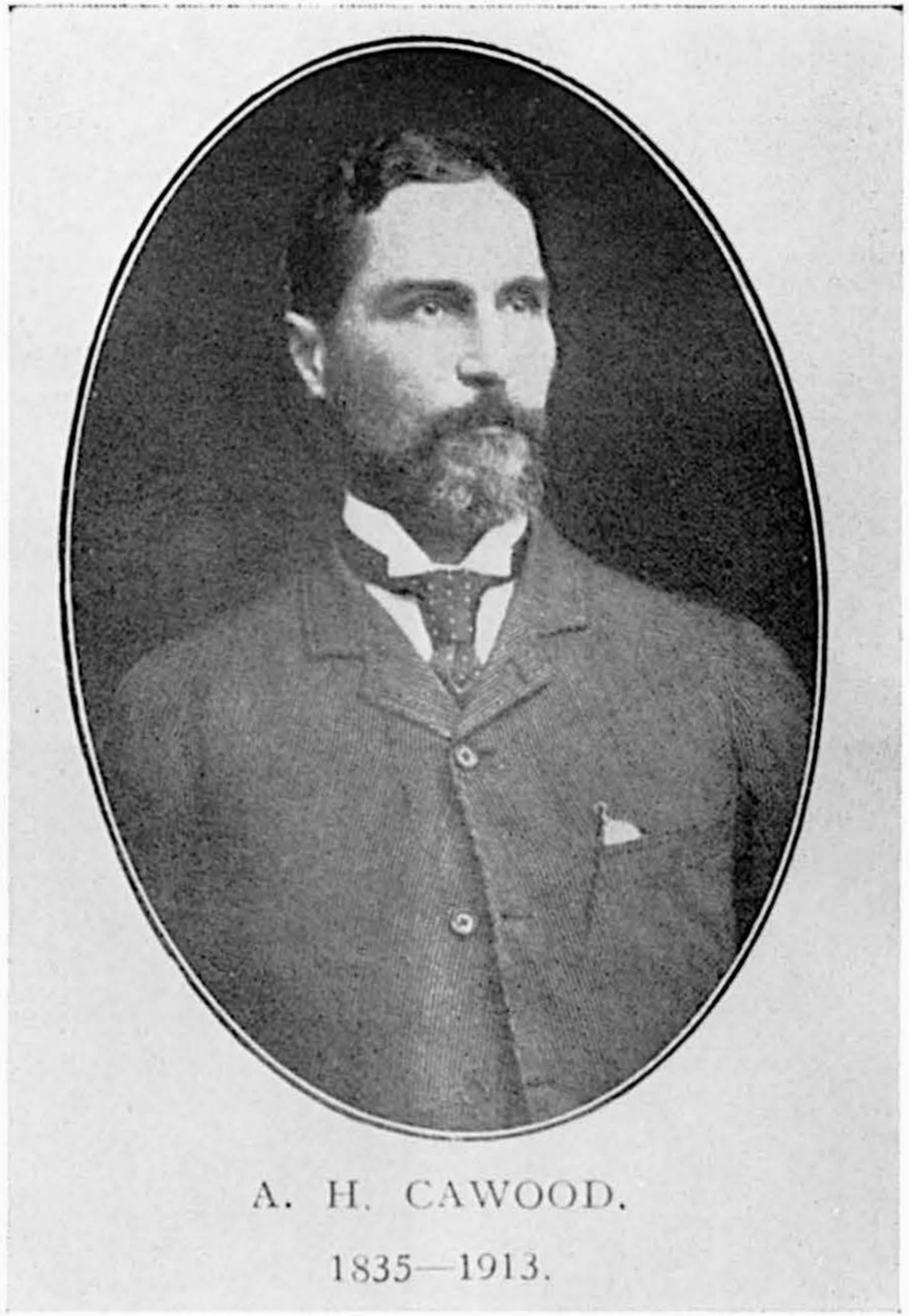


W. PENHALL,
in 1879.

Photos in possession of the Alpine Club]

W. PENHALL (1858–1882)—A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN THE YEAR OF HIS ASCENT.
(Penhall couloir and West face, 1879.)

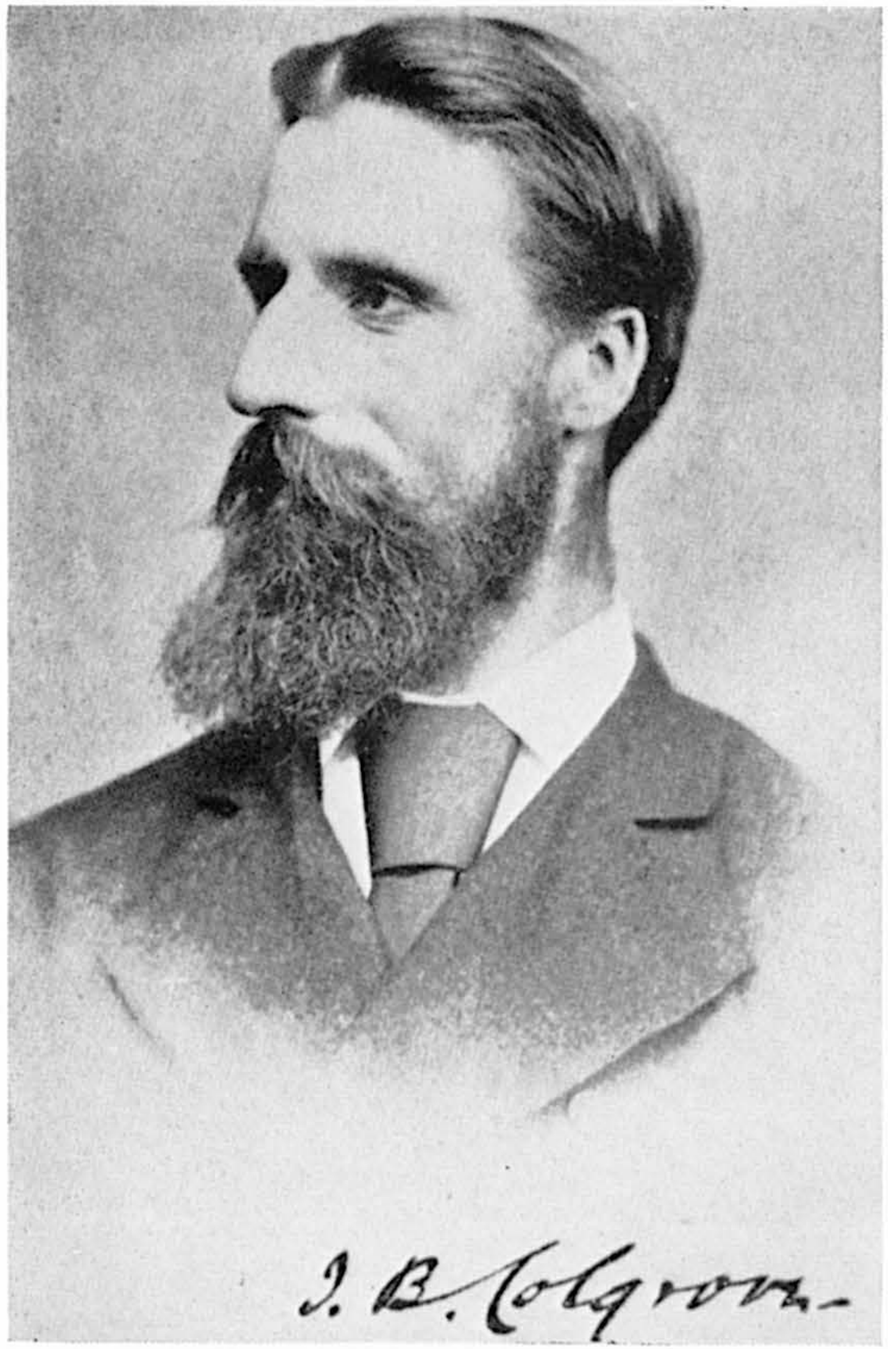
(No. 5)



A. H. CAWOOD.
1835—1913.

A. H. CAWOOD.
(First ascent of the Matterhorn guideless,with J. B. Colgrove and A. Cust, 1876.)

(No. 6)





Photos in possession of the Alpine Club]

J. B. COLGROVE (1840–1931) AND A. CUST.
(First ascent of the Matterhorn guideless, with A. H. Cawood, 1876.)

(Nos. 7, 8)

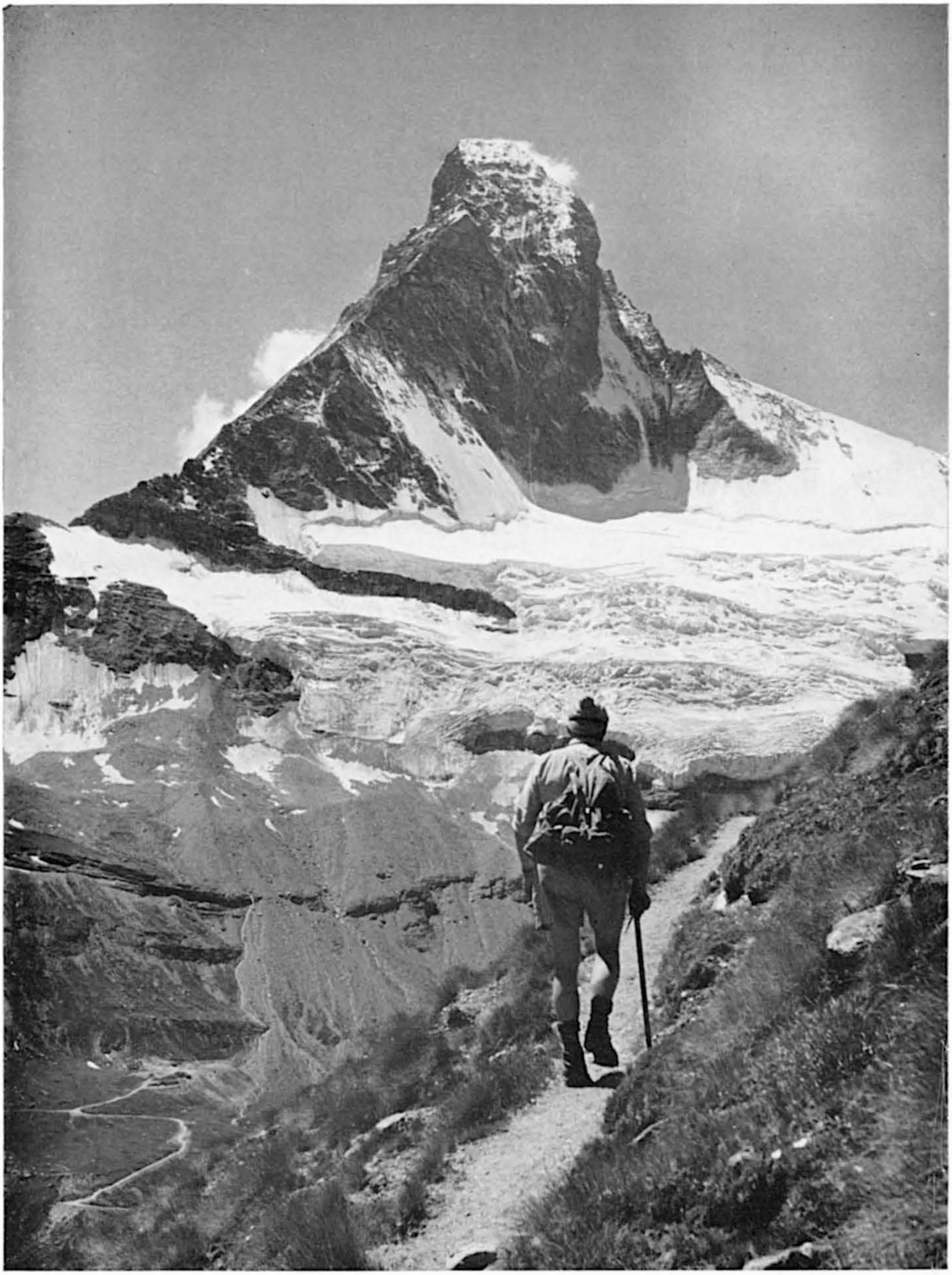


Photo: B. R. Goodfellow]

THE MATTERHORN FROM THE SCHÖNBÜHL PATH.

(No. 9)

route was substantially identical with that normally followed on the Zmutt ridge today; Penhall had examined it two days earlier, but had been driven back by bad weather. He then established a quite distinct, if decidedly more dangerous route to the summit. Lammer and Lorria's accident on August 3, 1887, in the Penhall couloir, underlined the unsafeness of Penhall's route.

(13) 1880 July 19. First attempt on the Furggen ridge.
A. F. Mummery, Alexander Burgener, Benedikt Venetz.
The attempt succeeded only up to the Furggen shoulder, leaving untouched the upper part of the arête, and this last constitutes the real problem of the Furggen ridge. Mummery's attempt is only significant as marking a further break-away from the traditional routes—his success on the Zmutt ridge the previous year had been the first move in this respect.

The lower stretches of the Furggen ridge are usually surmounted on the Eastern face, and the climbing is much like that on the Hörnli ridge and of no marked difficulty (*A.J.* 23. 271).

(14) 1880 Erection of first hut on the Hörnli.

(15) 1882 March 17. First winter ascent (from Breuil).
V. Sella, J-A., J. B. and L. Carrel.
In the early 1880's, the winter ascent of great peaks was not so well established a practice as it was to become, and Sella's ascent was a notable achievement at the time. By 1894 (see no. 18 below), when the first ascent was made from Zermatt, winter mountaineering had developed appreciably.

(16) 1885 Erection of a hut on the Great Tower (Italian ridge).

(17) 1893 Erection of the Luigi Amedeo hut on the Italian ridge.

(18) 1894 March 27. First winter ascent from Zermatt.
C. Simon, Alexander Burgener, Alois Pollinger.

(19) 1894 August 31. First descent of the Zmutt ridge.
Miss L. Bristowe, Matthias Zurbriggen, Joseph Pollinger.
On the same day, but later, J. P. Farrar and Daniel Maquignaz also descended this ridge.

(20) 1899 August 24–8. Exploration of the upper part of the Furggen ridge.
Guido Rey, Antoine, David and Aimé Maquignaz.

To Guido Rey may be credited the first complete exploration of the Furggen ridge, but in order to do so, he had to have a rope ladder fixed above the worst features of the climb, and had to be lowered on ropes until he had set foot on the highest rocks he had previously attained on the ascent (*A.J. 20.* 17).

(21) 1911 September 4. First ascent of the Furggen ridge.
Mario Piacenza, J-J. Carrel, Joseph Gaspard.
This ascent completed the mastering of the four ridges of the Matterhorn and was the sequel to some years of exploration (*A.J. 26.* 150 sqq.). The great buttress above the Furggen shoulder was turned on the Italian flank; thirty years later (September 23, 1941) another Italian party, A. Perino with the guides Louis Carrel and Giacomo Chiara, with the aid of numerous pitons, overcame the buttress and made a more direct ascent.

On September 2, 1930, Enzo Benedetti, with Louis Carrel and Maurice Bich, made a variant of Piacenza's route, which reduced the turning movement on the buttress to a minimum, and is the usual route nowadays.

(22) 1916 Erection of the Solvay hut on the Hörnli ridge.

(23) 1929 July 19. Second, and first solo, ascent of the Penhall Couloir and West face (no. 12 above).
Fritz Herrmann.
For an account of this expedition, see *Alpinisme*, 1931, pp. 339 sqq. Herrmann disappeared on the Zinal Rothorn in 1930.

(24) 1931 August 1. First ascent by the North face.
Franz and Toni Schmid. (*A.J. 43.* 358; *44.* 69.)
Many will recollect the sensation caused by the Schmid brothers' successful ascent of the North face, certainly one of the great dates in the Matterhorn's history. It was, in its day, as startling an adventure as an ascent of the Eigerwand has become in our own times. A notable attempt on the North face had been made on August 12, 1923, by A. Horeschowsky and F. Piekielko (*A.J. 36.* 156).

Toni Schmid was killed on the Gross Wiesbachhorn in 1932.

(25) 1931 October 15. First ascent by the South face.
E. Benedetti, Maurice Bich, Louis Carrel. (*A.J. 44.* 75.)

(26) 1932 September 19. First ascent by the East face.
E. Benedetti, G. Mazzotti, Maurice Bich, Louis and Lucien Carrel, Antoine Gaspard. (*A.J.* *44.* 342; *45.* 156. *Rivista Mensile*, lii, 11–21.)

Signor Benedetti rapidly saw to it that the success of the Schmids on the North face was not left unrivalled, and secured for Italian climbers the two foregoing formidable faces. The South face is less distinctive than any of the Matterhorn faces; the East face, up to the base of the final pyramid (that is, approximately to the line of the Furggen to Hörnli traverse made by Mummery in 1880) is not difficult, but the remaining portion, which from Zermatt appears to be overhung by the head of the Matterhorn, is very different.

A great drawback to both these South and East face climbs is their liability to stone-falls, owing to the great friability of the rocks. In a dry season both faces can be very dangerous from this cause.

(27) 1941 September 25. Circuit of the Tête du Cervin.
A. Deffeyes, Louis Carrel, Pierre Maquignaz. (*Les Alpes*, 1947, p. 41.)

The party started from the Hörnli shoulder, and crossed the East face to the Furggen shoulder, and thence across the South face to the Col Félicité on the Italian ridge. The Zmutt ridge was then gained by way of Carrel's Corridor, and the Hörnli ridge reached across the North face.

Only the crossing of the North face was entirely new, as all the other faces had been crossed at one time or another, the West face by J-A. Carrel in 1865 by the Corridor known by his name. On August 19, 1910, Miss M. T. Meyer, with Christian Jossi the younger and D. Gaspard, crossed the same face at a lower level than the Corridor. (*A.J.* *25.* 359.) Dr. Piacenza had crossed the South face from the Italian ridge to the Furggen shoulder in the course of his explorations into the Furggen ridge, and the East face had been crossed by Mummery's party (from the Furggen to the Hörnli ridge) in 1880.

At a lower level, a circuit of the Matterhorn may be made with relative ease, save for one section, the crossing of the Col du Lion, first effected by A. F. Mummery and Alexander Burgener, from the Tiefenmatten glacier to Breuil, on July 6, 1880. Paul Güssfeldt and Alexander Burgener crossed the pass in the reverse direction on July 2–3, 1881.

(28) 1948 March 25. First winter ascent by the Zmutt ridge.
H. Masson, Edmund Petrig. (*Alpinisme*, 1948, 69.)
Monsieur Masson had come to Zermatt with the intention of skiing, but in view of the exceptional weather thought he would attempt the Zmutt ridge. He had to borrow equipment and for the first time in his life was roped to a guide. The ascent was made without incident in nine hours, starting from the Hörnli hut (*Alpinisme*, 1949, 228).

Nos. 28, 29, 31, 32, 34: It has become the practice to make ever-harder winter ascents; winter mountaineering had been in vogue since at least 1866, but its early votaries kept to snow routes and it was not until the present century that severe rock climbs were undertaken under winter conditions. Today, almost any climb made in summer may be expected to be essayed in winter.

(29) 1949 April 18. First winter ascent of Penhall's route (no. 12), by couloir and West face.
J. Fuchs, R. Monney. (*Alpinisme*, 1949, 228.)

(30) 1950 August 19. Ascent of the Matterhorn by a cat. (Hörnli ridge.)
An amusing, if freakish, 'first ascent' was made by a kitten, apparently entirely unaided. The animal did eventually traverse the mountain, but the descent to Breuil was made in a guide's rucksack (*A.J.* 57. 569).

(31) 1953 March 21. First winter ascent of the Furggen ridge.
R. Bignami, W. Bonatti.
This was the first *complete* winter ascent. On March 28, 1948, J. Fuchs and R. Monney, starting from the Solvay cabane, crossed to the Furggen shoulder and ascended to the summit (*Alpinisme*, 1953, 236).

(32) 1959 April 26. First winter ascent by the East face.
S. Biel, J. Nostovski. (*La Montagne*, 1959, 138.)

(33) 1959 July 23. First solo ascent by the North face.
D. Marchart. (S.A.C. *Bulletin*, 1959, 270; but date incorrectly given.)
Although the North face of the Matterhorn has been outclassed by the North face of the Grandes Jorasses and by the Eigerwand, a solo ascent is no ordinary achievement, though not necessarily one to be emulated. This brilliant climber was killed in 1962, attempting the Eigerwand solo.

(34) 1962 February 4. First winter ascent by the North face.
P. Etter, H. von Allmen. (*The Mountain World*, 1962–3, 1.)
There were also on the face an Austrian rope of two, and a

three-man German party, all of whom reached the top the *next* day, February 5.

(35) 1962 August 13. First direct ascent by the West face. R. Daguin, J. Ottin. (*Les Alpes*, 1963, 208.) This was a very formidable climb, as everyone who has looked at this face will agree. Penhall's route (no. 12) was not, of course, anything like so direct a route up the face as was that of 1962.

(36) 1965 February 22. First solo winter ascent by the North face. W. Bonatti. A line west of the 1931 route was taken, emerging at the Italian summit. The climb took five days (*The Times*, February 23).

(2) SOME DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE FIRST ASCENT OF THE MATTERHORN

In 1957, the American Alpine Club generously presented to the Alpine Club a number of original papers, dealing, *inter alia*, with the Matterhorn tragedy, and we are glad to take this opportunity to thank them by printing several of the letters. They constitute Nos. I to V shown below.

In addition (Nos. VI and VII), we have reprinted McCormick's letter to *The Times*, giving the first detailed news of the disaster; and T. S. Kennedy's letter written some days later. The former of these is probably the earliest record of what Whymper said of the accident, and his concurrence in McCormick writing to *The Times* may fairly be assumed. This letter may be regarded, therefore, as rather more first hand testimony than Girdlestone's notes (*A.J.* 57. 375–6).

Finally, through the courtesy of the Berne Section, S.A.C., we print a copy of Whymper's letter of July 25 to von Fellenberg (No. VIII). Substantially, Whymper never altered his views, although, naturally, changes of phrasing and emphasis might creep in, and additional detail might be added to later accounts.

No. I. *Charles Hudson to Rev. J. McCormick.*[2]

Skillington Vic.,
Grantham.
April 26th, '65.

My dear McCormick,

Thanks for yours of 21st instant. I have determined to start on Monday 26th of June or Monday 3rd of July according to your movements. We

[2] Joseph McCormick (1834–1914). From 1864 to 1867 he was curate of St. Stephen's, Marylebone. He was Canon of York from 1884 to 1914, and Honorary Chaplain to Queen Victoria, Edward VII and George V. For a number of years he acted as summer chaplain at Grindelwald. He was the father of the well-known 'Pat' McCormick.

can travel together to Suisse & you can come round by Chamounix (in return for my starting with you) & perhaps you might have time to get up the Aiguille Verte. Please let me know as soon as possible what day you start, for there are several who wish to be informed of my starting day. It will be delightful to travel with you, & might we not arrange to return together. I expect to be away 4 Sundays. You did not reply to my question as to whether it would be possible for me to get Chamounix for July; or halve it with the Zermatt man. That would suit exactly if I could have Cham[ounix] the first two Sundays in July & Zermatt the last 3. Could you get your Interlaken duty done for one Sunday, for in that case you might have a good spell at Zermatt with us & have a shot at the Matterhorn. One long day would bring you from Lauterbrunnen into the Valley of the Rhone & a second to Zermatt. You understood that Mirehouse,[3] R. of Colsterworth, allows you to lecture there. Would it suit you better to take us on your way to L'pool or not ? Have you been to Hulls ? [*sic*]

With kindest regards,

I am yours affectly,

C. Hudson.

7.30 a.m. will suit me quite well. I have many times had the pleasure of asking that your path might be made clear. I will do so regularly at 7.30, along with the other.

(*The above letter was referred to in* A.J. 61. *487* (*n. 21*), *where the date was given as April 25. It seems more likely, however, that the figure '5' has been changed into '6', though this is not certain.*)

No. II. *Telegram from Lady Queensberry to Rev. J. McCormick, Hotel Monte Rosa, Zermatt* (*despatched from Ryde, I. of Wight, at 11.57 a.m., July 24, 1865. Arrived Brigue July 24, 1865, at 4.45 p.m.*).

'Is it not possible to seek in the rocks above or to let down food'.

(*Lord Francis Douglas's mother seems not to have realised the true nature of the catastrophe, although McCormick's letter to* The Times *had appeared on July 22.*)

No. III. *P. D. Hadow to Rev. J. McCormick.*

Sudbury Priory,
Middlesex.
July 22, 1865.

My dear Sir,

Your letter of 16th inst. reached me last evening, having been delayed by going to Sudbury, Suffolk; I can hardly tell you how grateful we feel

[3] John Mirehouse (1839–1911), of Clare College, Cambridge; Rector of Colsterworth, Lincs. (near Grantham), 1864–1909.

to you for your kind exertions about my dear son, and for your truly Christian attempts to give us some consolation, in alluding to his attractive and religious character. . . . We had indulged the hope that his remains, with those of poor Mr. Hudson, might have been conveyed to Zermatt, and there deposited where we might perhaps have visited them, and placed a tombstone over them; you have however no doubt acted wisely, and much do we thank you; still, if this could even now be done, *without endangering life*, I should willingly incur the expense of accomplishing it, for I know it would be a consolation for his dear mother, and I doubt not for Mrs. Hudson also. As regards poor Mr. Hudson, I will gladly bear any expenses that may have been incurred on his account, and shall feel a pleasure in paying even so trifling a tribute to his memory.

My brother left London last evening for Zermatt, and will be at the Mont Cervin Hotel about the time you receive this; he will of course meet you, and do all that is necessary in recompensing the guides and those who accompanied you, and will receive my dear boy's effects &c.

Yours very truly,

P. D. Hadow.

(*At the time that young Hadow's father wrote, he did not know that the bodies had in fact, after the initial burial on the Matterhorn glacier on July 16, been brought down on July 19 to Zermatt for re-burial.*)

No. IV. *Same to same.*

The Priory,

Sudbury, Middlesex.

August 10, 1865.

My dear Sir,

My brother tells me that you have probably now returned to London; I am very anxious to see you, if it were only to thank you in person for the kind and generous sympathy you have shewn in our own very sad and terrible bereavement; but I wish also to learn something more about the church proposed to be erected at Zermatt, and to have your advice as to the stone to be placed over the grave of my dear son and our friend Mr. Hudson.

We have been greatly distressed at Mr. Whymper's letter in the 'Times', and the leading article which I was sure would follow. I had thought from your published letter that all actually seen and known was there described as to the sad catastrophe, but Mr. Whymper now describes the details so minutely, as to lead people to suppose he must have seen it all, and the 'Times' writes accordingly.

I think too that without keeping back anything material, he might have spared those unnecessary remarks about poor Mr. Hudson, which have brought blame on him for want of prudence and caution. . . .

Yours very truly,

P. D. Hadow.

(*Whymper's letter appeared in* The Times *of August 8. It was, necessarily, fuller than McCormick's of July 22, which gave fewer details and had not the authority of a record from an actual survivor. It was inevitable that Hudson's responsibility for taking Hadow would be evident, though Whymper does not lay heavy stress on this, and as we know* (*Smythe*, Edward Whymper, *p. 214*) *he told Robertson that he had found it a difficult letter to write. That people would attribute blame to Hudson is seen in F. J. A. Hort's letter, dated August 1, written before ever Whymper had published anything* (*see* A.J. 57. *381*).)

No. V. *Mrs. Birkbeck to Captain J. P. Farrar.*

Anley,
Settle.
March 20, 1918.

. . . 'Michel Croz my husband had engaged for 6 weeks for the summer of 1865. My husband was taken ill in Geneva and had to return home, so he gave Croz to Mr. Hudson; they had met in Geneva, en route to attempt the ascent of the Matterhorn. In that case, I believe, Mr. Hadow would *not* have been of the party; he was no mountaineer, but good Mr. Hudson was of such a generous mind that what he could do easily himself, he gave other people the credit of being able to do. Mr. Hadow came to Settle with Mr. Hudson (I think in 1864) and we walked up our small hill 'Pennyghent'; on one side there is a small piece of rock which has to be descended with care, but most of our party could walk down it with ease. Poor Mr. Hadow found it very difficult and had to be helped down. Later, we were not surprised to hear he had slipped on the Matterhorn. . . .'

Yours truly,

Rachel W. Birkbeck.

(*Farrar could not use this letter in his article, 'Days of Long Ago'* (A.J. 32. *2*), *but he might have done so later. It is certainly interesting to learn that*

Birkbeck would have declined having Hadow on the Matterhorn, could he have accompanied Hudson to Zermatt.)

No. VI. *The Rev. J. McCormick to the Editor of* The Times. (*Printed July 22, 1865.*)

Sir,

As the news of the fatal accident on the Matterhorn must by this time have reached England, I think it is right for the sake of the friends of those who have been killed, and to prevent mistakes, to give a correct account of it, and of what has taken place with reference to it.

Some months ago the Rev. Charles Hudson determined to ascend the Matterhorn this season. Before leaving England he invented and had made a kind of ladder for scaling precipices.

Mr. Birkbeck and I agreed to accompany him on his expedition. On arriving in Zermatt on Wednesday the 12th instant, he met with Mr. Whymper, who for some years past has been anxious to conquer the Matterhorn, and has made several attempts to do so. They agreed to work together. Mr. Birkbeck and I were both prevented from joining them. Lord Francis Douglas, who had made several successful ascents this season, and had been with Mr. Whymper for a few days previously, and Mr. Hadow, who had been up some high mountains with Mr. Hudson, were allowed to go with them. Having secured the services of Michel Croz, one of the best of the Chamounix guides, and of Peter Taugevald and his son, they started on their expedition on Thursday morning. That night they slept on the Hörnli *arrête*, and at 3.40 a.m. on Friday they began the ascent of the rocks on the left of it. They met with no great difficulty, and reached the top about 2 o'clock. There they were in the greatest delight at the accomplishment of their purpose. We saw them distinctly from Zermatt. About 3 o'clock they began the descent. Soon after they were all roped together, Croz was first, Hadow next; then came Hudson, Lord Francis Douglas, Peter Taugevald, Whymper, and Peter Taugevald's son. Not far from the summit they had to pass over a difficult and rather dangerous place. It was a decline composed of snow and rock, with very indifferent holding for the feet. They were descending with great care, when Whymper was startled by an exclamation from Croz, and the next moment he saw Hadow and Croz flying downwards. The weight of the two falling men jerked Hudson and Lord Francis Douglas from their feet. The two Taugevalds and Whymper, having a warning of a second or two from the time that Croz called out, planted themselves as firmly as possible, to hold the others up. The pressure upon the rope was too much. It broke, and Croz, Hadow, Hudson, and Lord Francis Douglas fell headlong down the slope and shot out of sight over a fearful precipice.

Mr. Whymper's feelings at this time may be imagined. The two remaining guides were so completely unnerved by the calamity which had befallen their companions that he found it difficult to descend with them. He and they spent a miserable night on the mountain at a great height. As they came down they looked in all directions for some traces of their companions, but from the shape of the mountain they could not catch even a glimpse of them. At 10.30 a.m. on Saturday they reached Zermatt.

Though he had no hope that any of his companions were alive, Mr. Whymper immediately sent guides to search for them. In the evening they returned to tell us that they had been able with the aid of their telescopes to see where they lay, but had been prevented by the width of the crevasses from reaching them. Being a friend of Mr. Hudson, Mr. Whymper sent for me. I had gone to the Gorner[4] Grat. On my return it was too late to do anything that day. After consulting together Mr. Whymper and I agreed to start in search of our friends on the following morning at 1 o'clock. The Rev. J. Robertson and Mr. Phillpotts most kindly volunteered to accompany us. The Zermatt guides refused to go with us, as it would be Sunday, and urged us, as there was no hope of saving any lives, to defer our expedition until they had made preparations for overcoming the difficulties of the way. Mr. Whymper, though exhausted by upwards of 60 hours' work, gallantly refused to accede to their request. Franz Andermatten, of Saas; the brothers Lochmatter of Macugnaga; and Frederic Payot and Jean Tairras, of Chamounix, generously offered their services for the expedition. We hope their names will not be forgotten.

After an arduous walk, in which we were exposed to much danger, we reached the snowfield on to which our friends had fallen. When we looked up at the 4,000 feet above us, and observed how they must have bumped from rock to rock before they reached the bottom, we knew they could not be alive, and we feared that they would be so awfully mangled that we should not be able to recognize them. Our worst fears were realized. We found no traces of Lord Francis Douglas, with the exception of some trifling articles of dress. His body must either have remained on some of the rocks above or been buried deeply in the snow. Croz lay near to Hadow. Hudson was some 50 yards from them.

From the state of their remains, the danger of the place (for it is exposed to showers of stones), and the very great difficulty of the way to it, we came to the conclusion that the best thing we could do would be to bury them in the snow. We drew them all to one spot, covered them with snow, read over them the 90th Psalm from a Prayer-book taken from poor Hudson's pocket, repeated some prayers and a few words from the Burial Service, and left them.

[4] Mis-spelt in *The Times* as 'Corner'.

They are mourned here with heartfelt grief, and the greatest sympathy is expressed for the bereaved.

Mr. Seiler, the landlord of this hotel, and his wife have assisted us in every way in their power. They are deeply distressed at what has happened.

Your obedient servant,

Joseph M'Cormick.

Chaplain at Zermatt.

Hôtel du Mont Rose, July 17.

No. VII. *T. S. Kennedy to the Editor of* The Times. (*Printed, July 28.*)

Leeds.

July 25, 1865.

Sir,

Permit me to make a few remarks on Alpine mountaineering, which the two recent accidents[5] in Switzerland seem to warrant. I speak not, of course, to those who are better mountaineers than myself, but to the numerous tribe of climbers who, without experience, and without the necessary powers of mountaineering, induce guides to conduct them up the most difficult summits.

The conditions of safety against all Alpine dangers, excepting that of thunderstorm, are easily insured. Three men, when the traveller is an ordinary one, are sufficient to ascend any mountain; two, when the traveller and guide are such magnificent fellows as my lamented friend Charles Hudson and his guide Michel Croz; but such men are not plentiful. A large party should always be divided into threes, or, at the most, fours, and this for many reasons. It does not stop the whole party when one man calls for a halt; it is the safest method, for if one division should slip the other is not dragged after it, it being impossible to arrest three men falling on a steep slope whatever be the force behind, for one man after another is dragged off his feet and shares the fate of those in front. This system also usually admits of a greater length of cord for each man. I am now speaking for difficult summits; for these a length of 30 or 35 feet between each pair is not too great. The first man descends an awkward place, while his companions behind anchor themselves upon a firm rock or some secure place and pay out his rope; the process is repeated for the second man; the two then unite their forces below to receive the third, who, having no rope from above to trust to, should usually be the best cragsman of the three.

[5] The second of the two accidents referred to in this letter was that of Knyvet Wilson on the Riffelhorn.

It is probably to the neglect of this obvious rule that the terrible accident at Zermatt is to be assigned; men who have succeeded in a difficult task usually become indifferent to danger, and their thoughts are wholly directed to the quickest mode of getting down again.

By this slow but sure method long and dangerous slopes of softened snow lying on smooth rocks may be safely traversed late in the afternoon; in extreme cases the central man may be detached from the rope in order to give number one a chance of attaining a more secure position, which the increased length of rope will allow him to reach.

Further, a long steep *couloir* of softened snow or of ice should always be descended backwards, a mode of descent which is also fully twice as fast as the ordinary one.

The ice axe is grasped in one hand, close beneath and touching the head; its broad flattened end is pressed with the weight of the body into the snow; if on ice its sharp spike is used, the greater the strain upon it the deeper it anchors itself; the left hand and arm are thrust into the snow even to the shoulder, or the hand rests in the icy step above, and the toes—not the heels—bear the weight of the body, the climber looking for his footing between his legs. In this manner, about three weeks ago, I twice brought up a man who slipped beneath me while descending from the Aiguille Verte. Many guides foolishly think it undignified to descend thus. Any one can slip face foremost, but he cannot possibly arrest a slip below; the pull of the rope brings him off his balance, his heels slip from under him, and away he goes.

I may also call attention to the great use of crampons on an icy slope, more especially for the man who is engaged in cutting steps; with their aid it is scarcely possible to slip.

Finally, it is necessary to protest against the practice of inexperienced men ascending difficult peaks. A man who has spent only three or four years on the Alps is not and cannot be a first-rate mountaineer. Let them graduate on the well known glacier passes, and on such peaks as Mont Blanc or Monte Rosa, but until they are able to go in the style and with the certainty of such men as Michel Croz it is unfair for them to venture up difficult summits.

I am, Sir, &c.

Thomas Stuart Kennedy.

(*Kennedy's letter shows very clearly that he had appreciated better than was common at that time—better, indeed, than either Whymper or Hudson—that a large, cumbersome party is potentially dangerous, and that the best climber should come down last. Also, he realised the psychological factor involved in the Matterhorn accident, that men are apt to become careless on a descent, when the excitement of the ascent is over. His plea that steep snow or ice should be descended backwards, facing in to the slope, is not perhaps the*

usual one to be found in textbooks, but notable climbers of later times, such as R. L. G. Irving (A.J. 42. 360) *and E. L. Strutt* (A.J. 37. 119) *have recommended this position, and Strutt, in commending Irving in the matter, says that Josef Pollinger, by all testimony one of the finest icemen the Alps have produced, insisted on his parties doing the same on steep ground.*)

No. VIII. *E. Whymper to E. von Fellenberg.*

Interlachen.
July 25, 1865.

Sir,

The great interest taken in the recent lamentable accident that occurred during the descent of the Matterhorn, renders one anxious for the sake of truth, that an account of it should be made known to the Swiss public, free from errors, in order to correct the numerous versions already published all of which contain statements more or less inaccurate. I therefore send you a simple statement of facts, and beg as a favour, that you will take the earliest opportunity of submitting it to the members of the Swiss Alpine Club; and that you will, should you see fit, forward the enclosed copy of it to the Editor of the Journal de Génève (Editor of der Bund).

On Wednesday the 12th inst. I crossed the Col Théodule with Lord Francis Douglas, from Breuil to Zermatt with the intention of endeavouring to ascend the Matterhorn from the northern side. On arriving at Zermatt we engaged Pierre Taugwalder as guide, giving him liberty to select another guide, and porters. In the course of the evening we learnt however that the Revd. Charles Hudson with a friend—Mr. Hadow, was in the same hotel, and intending to start at nearly the same hour as ourselves, with the guide Michel Croz of Chamounix. He was invited to join us; but as we had not the acquaintance of Mr. Hadow (who was not a member of the English Alpine Club), we took the precaution to enquire what expeditions he had made in the Alps. Mr. Hudson's reply was that he had made the ascent of Mont Blanc in less time than most men, and also named a few other excursions that he had made; adding, in answer to a further question, that he considered he was a sufficiently good man to accompany us on the present expedition. We then discussed the matter of guides. Mr. Hudson thought that Croz and Taugwalder were sufficient and they made no objection on being told of the proposed arrangements: the latter by his own desire, took his two sons as porters.

We started with these at 5.35 on Thursday morning, not intending to go to any great height on that day, but to stop when we found a good position for placing my tent. We took provisions amply sufficient for three days, in case the ascent should prove longer than we anticipated. At 11.50 a.m. we found an eligible situation for the tent, and halted, at a height of about 11,000 English feet, sending Croz and the elder of

Taugwalder's sons on in advance, in order to save time on the next morning; the remainder built the platform on which we passed the night, and by the time it was finished the two men returned, reported they had seen nothing but that which was good, and triumphantly asserted that had we gone on with them that day, we could have ascended the mountain and have returned to the tent with facility. Well pleased with the intelligence we retired to our blankets, Lord F. Douglas, myself and the Taugwalders occupying the tent, the others remaining by preference outside; but the sleep which we might otherwise have enjoyed was driven away by the snoring of the Taugwalder family, and long before daybreak we had risen, breakfasted, and were ready to start again.

We started on Friday morning at 3.50, leaving the youngest of Taugwalder's sons below, and mounted easily and rapidly; at 6.20 we had attained a height of 12,800 feet—halted for half an hour and then ascended again without a break until 9.55, when we stopped for 50 minutes. By this time we had arrived at the foot of that part which from Zermatt appears perpendicular or overhanging; it is in reality neither one nor the other, although extremely precipitous. Thus far we had ascended by the north-eastern face and had not met a single difficulty, but here we could no longer continue on the same side and therefore went over to the north-western face. For two or three hundred feet the ascent was difficult, and required caution, but as we approached the summit it became easier, and at last it was so gentle that Croz and myself detached ourselves from the others and ran on to the top; we arrived there at 1.40 p.m. and the others about 10 minutes after us.

We remained an hour on the summit and then commenced the descent. Michel Croz, the most powerful of our party, led the way and by arrangement between Mr. Hudson and myself, Mr. Hadow was placed next to Croz in order that he might receive every assistance. Mr. Hudson, who in surefootedness was equal to a guide, was third, Lord F. Douglas fourth, Pierre Taugwalder fifth. I remained on the summit with Taugwalder fils a few minutes after the others, to write our names on a card, but we caught them before they had descended any great distance, and I then tied myself in line behind old Taugwalder.

On arriving at the difficult part of which I have already spoken, the greatest care was taken: only one man moved at a time; when he was firmly planted the next advanced, and so on. The difficulty arose, not from the inclination of the mountain—for, probably, it was at this part in angle of not more than 35°, but from the nature of the footing. The rocks were mixed with snow and occasionally with ice; they were firm; it is true, but they afforded little hold in some places. Still it was a part over which any good mountaineer might pass in safety. Michel Croz, however, in order to give Mr. Hadow greater security, did not trust to his descending by himself, but absolutely took hold of his feet and placed

them in their proper positions. As far as I know, at the moment of the accident, no one was actually moving. I cannot speak with certainty, neither can Taugwalder, because the two leading men were partially hidden from our sight by an intervening mass of rock, but it is my belief that Croz had just placed the feet of Mr. Hadow in the manner I have described and was turning to go down a step or two himself, when Mr. Hadow slipped, fell upon him, and knocked him over. I heard one startled exclamation from Croz, then saw him and Mr. Hadow flying downwards; in another moment Mr. Hudson was dragged from his steps and Lord F. Douglas immediately after him. All this was the work of a moment, but immediately I heard the exclamation from Croz, I planted myself as firmly as the ground would permit, Taugwalder did the same, the rope was tight between us and the shock came upon us both as on one man. We held, but the rope broke mid-way between Taugwalder and Lord F. Douglas. It has been stated that it broke in consequence of its fraying over a rock; this is not the case, it broke in mid-air, and the end does not shew any traces of its having been previously injured. For two or three seconds we saw our unfortunate companions sliding downwards on their backs and spreading out their hands endeavouring to save themselves; they then disappeared from our sight and fell from precipice to precipice on to the Matterhorn glacier below, a distance of nearly 4,000 feet in height.

I need not trouble you with details of our descent, it is enough to say that for more than two hours afterwards, I thought every moment would be my last; the two Taugwalders, utterly unnerved, cried like infants, and trembled in such a manner as to threaten us with the fate of the others. We looked in every direction during the descent for some traces of our companions, but saw none, save two of their axes arrested in the snow. We thus lost much time, and spent another night on the mountain at a height of more than 13,000 feet, arriving at Zermatt at 10.30 on Saturday morning.

Mr. Hudson, Mr. Hadow and Michel Croz, the first of all the Chamounix guides, now lie buried in the church-yard at Zermatt: to bring their bodies down was a work of some difficulty and of great danger, and the thanks of all Englishmen are due to the brave men who performed this duty. The body of Lord Francis Douglas is—God alone knows where—probably arrested in the rocks above.

This, Sir, is the end of this sad narrative; a single slip, or a single false step, has been the cause of all this misery. No blame can be attached to any of the guides; they all did their duty manfully, but, I cannot but think, that had the rope been tight between those who fell as it was between myself and Taugwalder, that the whole of this frightful calamity might have been averted, and that I should have been spared the pain of writing this letter. The rope when used properly is a great safeguard;

but, whether on rocks, or whether on snow, or glacier, if two men approach each other so that the rope falls in a loop, the whole party is involved in danger; for should one slip, or fall, he may acquire before he is arrested, a momentum that may drag down one man after another, and bring destruction on all; but, if the rope is tight, this is all but impossible.

I am, Sir,

Your very obedient servant,

Edward Whymper.

(*This is the earliest extant record that Whymper seems to have written about the accident, though it is virtually identical with that dated a day later, and printed (in Italian translation) in the* C.A.I. Bollettino, *1865, no. 1, pp. 20–5.*

Edmund von Fellenberg (1838–1902), to whom this letter was written, was an eminent Swiss geologist and mountaineer, specialising in the Bernese Oberland. He was an original member of the S.A.C., and its first Secretary; he joined the Alpine Club in 1863. Whymper sent him the letter with a view to its being published in the S.A.C.J.*; the reasons for its non-appearance are given by Dr. H. Dübi in* Alpina, *1911, p. 223.*)

(3) 'OLD' PETER TAUGWALDER, 1820–88

By D. F. O. Dangar and T. S. Blakeney

As the centenary of the first ascent of the Matterhorn approaches, it is inevitable that attention will be directed to the famous accident and to the men involved. Among these last, 'Old' Peter Taugwalder holds a particular place, as the man who was held to blame for employing a weak type of rope between himself and the victims.

Not much has been written about Taugwalder; it is not known if his Führerbuch exists, and without it his career cannot adequately be written. Carl Egger, in *Pioniere der Alpen* (1945), attempted to trace it, but necessarily was handicapped by lack of information; Ronald Clark, *The Early Mountain Guides* (1949) did not include Taugwalder and, more unfortunately, the latter found no place in Cunningham and Abney's *Pioneers of the Alps* (1887). At the time, Old Peter was still alive and there were people about who could speak of him; though his death in 1888 was noticed in the *Alpine Journal* (*14.* 169), it was a very brief note that really told one nothing of him.

It is fitting, therefore, to try and appraise him now; a century after the accident should be long enough for hard feelings to have disappeared. What is wanted is as much data as can be found on which to base one's estimate of the guide; the time for partisanship is surely over.

Peter Taugwalder was born in 1820, the son of Johann Joseph Taugwalder. In 1841 he married Anna Maria zum Taugwald, a cousin of the three zum Taugwald brothers, well-known guides at Zermatt in the fifties and early sixties (*A.J. 31.* 218).

The first occasion on which we hear of Taugwalder was on August 22, 1851, when he was leading guide to the brothers Adolph and Hermann Schlagintweit on their ascent of the Ostspitze of Monte Rosa, the point reached by Professor Ulrich's guides in 1848.

Four years passed without any record of further expeditions. T. W. Hinchliff mentions in *Summer Months among the Alps* that he and W. Dundas had made many expeditions with Taugwalder in the summer of 1855; these included an attempt on Monte Rosa, frustrated by bad weather, and an attempt to cross the New Weisstor pass, but again the weather ruined the expedition, and in the prevailing fog neither Taugwalder nor the other local guide was able to find the pass.

The highest point of Monte Rosa had been reached for the first time on August 1, 1855, and became the ambition of many tourists visiting Zermatt. Taugwalder may have been with J. J. Weilenmann and others in an ascent on August 14,[6] and was in an attempt made late in September. In 1856 he was one of the guides of Sigmund Porges (who later made the first ascent of the Mönch); E. Bradshaw Smith was another member of the Alpine Club whom he accompanied to the summit this year. In 1857 and 1858 Taugwalder does not appear to have done anything but make several ascents of Monte Rosa.

By 1859 he had evidently acquired a certain reputation at Zermatt, for F. F. Tuckett, who engaged him this year, writes of him as a 'first-rate Zermatt guide', but the only expeditions they made together were an attempt on Monte Rosa and an ascent of the Breithorn. Few of the great peaks round Zermatt had been climbed before 1860, and on July 16 of that year Taugwalder and Joseph Tairraz were guides to Tuckett and T. S. Kennedy in the first attempt on the Lyskamm, made by way of the West arête from the Felikjoch, but after two hours of 'a terrible arête', as Tuckett describes it, the party turned back. Although Tuckett was at Zermatt in the following year he engaged another guide and did not employ Taugwalder again; Kennedy, however, did not forget him.

By this time Taugwalder's son, 'Young' Peter, had started his alpine career, and father and son were engaged together on several ascents. At the end of July, 1860, we find Taugwalder with F. W. Jacomb and J. Fisher when he took part in the first traverse of the Allalinhorn; also in the party were Leslie Stephen and W. F. Short with Franz Andenmatten (who seems to have been the leading guide). Taugwalder found the

[6] There is some doubt about this; the record (*A.J. 31.* 316) says that a Peter zum Taugwald was a guide, but there was no known member of the zum Taugwald family named Peter, so Taugwalder may be meant.

descent rather trying; he did not agree (wrongly, in Stephen's opinion) with the route selected by Andenmatten, and even considered it necessary to use a double rope down the last slope to the Allalin Pass, a needless precaution. A few days later he took Jacomb and Fisher up Monte Rosa and over the Col d'Hérens; they were evidently fully satisfied with him and the other two guides and wished 'to report in the highest terms of commendation'.

At the end of August, 1861, Edward Whymper arrived at Breuil with an Oberland guide, to make his first attempt on the Matterhorn. Another man was needed to complete the party; though several well-known guides were there, all with one exception refused to go. 'A sturdy old fellow—Peter Taugwalder by name—said he would go! His price? "Two hundred francs". "What, whether we ascend or not?" "Yes—nothing less."' So Whymper records his first meeting with one of those who were to be his companions on July 14, 1865. The only expeditions recorded for Taugwalder in 1861 are in his son's Führerbuch—Monte Rosa and Col d'Hérens—for employment by Whymper fell through, needless to say.

In January, 1862, T. S. Kennedy, one of the most enterprising mountaineers of the day, came to Zermatt to put to the test his odd theory that the Matterhorn might prove easier in winter than in summer. Peter Perren was engaged as leading guide and Taugwalder as second man. The night was spent in the Schwarzsee chapel and a start made at 6 a.m. Reaching the Hörnli ridge, it was not very long before Old Peter announced that he could go no further, and Perren took the lead, but the wind and the cold were too much for them all and this audacious attempt was abandoned at a height of about 11,000 ft.

Kennedy was back again at Zermatt in the summer of 1862, and on July 9 set out with the two Taugwalders to try the unclimbed Dent Blanche, but the expedition proved a lamentable affair and reflected no credit on the guides. Sent on (roped) at one point by Kennedy to reconnoitre, Old Peter climbed up some fifty to sixty feet and then came clattering down with 'a face as white as that of a frightened girl'; at the top of the gendarme his foot had slipped and he thought he was done for. His nerve failed him, and Kennedy took the lead; but it was of no avail, for so shaken was Taugwalder that he soon declared he could not follow him, and his son sided with him; the expedition was brought to a premature close. Some days later, when Kennedy went and completed the ascent, he chose different guides. Taugwalder's only other noteworthy ascent this year was the second ascent of the Lyskamm, with H. B. George and others. The leading guides, however, were Christian Almer and Peter Bohren.

The only expeditions recorded in 1863 are two ascents of Monte Rosa; in 1864 came the first ascent of Pollux, achieved by Jules Jacot, student of

La Chaux-de-Fonds, with Taugwalder and Josef-Marie Perren. The guides did well and Jacot warmly recommended them 'non seulement pour leur habilité mais aussi pour l'agrément de leur compagnie, et pour les prévenances et les petits soins dont ils ont été remplis envers moi et dont je garderai longtemps le souvenir'.

On June 27, 1865, Lord Francis Douglas reached Zermatt with every intention of making, as his final expedition, an attempt to reach the summit of the Matterhorn. The same day he sought out and engaged Taugwalder who, within the next three weeks, was to experience to the full the vicissitudes of life, failure and success; triumph followed by overwhelming disaster. In the evening, they set out with Peter Inäbnit to attempt the unclimbed Ober Gabelhorn. The failure of this expedition was held by Douglas to have been the responsibility of Taugwalder for having, as he told F. W. Maclean, 'led them by a circuitous route'. The Unter Gabelhorn, it is true, was climbed for the first time, but an attempt to continue along the ridge to the Ober Gabelhorn had to be abandoned, so much time having been lost as a result of Taugwalder's mistake.

Next day a further attempt on the Gabelhorn was broken off at a very early stage, owing to rain, and the party was back in Zermatt by the evening. With admirable determination Douglas set off again on June 30 for a third attempt, but once more Taugwalder was at fault, though the party got up the (then unnamed) Wellenkuppe (first ascent); the arête connecting it with the Ober Gabelhorn 'was found impracticable'.

This double failure on the Gabelhorn on the part of Taugwalder is the more marked because a few days later Jakob Anderegg (with A. W. Moore and Horace Walker) arrived on the scene and, without previous experience of the mountain, led his party up it at the first attempt, striking evidence of the difference in quality of the two guides.

The movements of Douglas and Taugwalder during the next few days are not known, but it was possibly during this period that the latter went off by himself to examine the Matterhorn, no doubt having learned of Douglas's intention to attack the peak. He reached a point beyond the Hörnli and came to the conclusion that the ascent was feasible from the Zermatt side. Though he was not the first to recognise the possibilities of this route—he had, in fact, reached much the same position in January, 1862, with Kennedy, so he knew that the face was not nearly so steep as it appears from Zermatt—full credit may be given to Taugwalder for his enterprise and decision. He refused to be overawed by the Matterhorn, and it was on account of his reconnaissance that Whymper at last abandoned the Italian ridge and came to make the final, decisive attempt from Zermatt.

On July 6 Douglas, Inäbnit and Taugwalder crossed the Triftjoch to Zinal, hearing on the pass the triumphant cries of Moore and his companions from the summit of the Ober Gabelhorn. On the following day,

reinforced by Joseph Vianin in place of Inäbnit, they made the second ascent and first traverse of the Ober Gabelhorn. This was perhaps the best thing in Taugwalder's record; he 'acted admirably and really showed himself a first-rate guide'. Unfortunately, he marred his performance by allowing his party to sit and eat lunch on a dangerous cornice that broke under them (Moore had noted the danger the day before) and it was thanks to the presence of mind of Vianin that they were saved.

Douglas would seem to have paid off Old Peter at this stage, and went to Breuil with Joseph, Taugwalder's second son. There they met Whymper, stranded without guides.

Douglas and Whymper, having crossed the Théodule from Breuil, arrived in Zermatt in the evening of July 12, and sought out and engaged Taugwalder for the ascent of the Matterhorn. At 5.30 on July 13, 1865, 'on a brilliant and perfectly cloudless morning', the party of eight (Douglas, Whymper, Taugwalder with two of his sons, plus the trio of Hudson, Hadow and Michel Croz) set out from Zermatt on the fatal expedition.

It is needless to describe the ascent; it is so well known. All that concerns us here is the part played by Taugwalder. On the ascent he took no leading part; on the descent, however, his position proved to be crucial. It was Taugwalder who tied himself to Douglas with the thinner rope, and it is impossible to agree with Egger and Lunn that this was Whymper's responsibility. While the party was being roped, Whymper was on the summit, finishing a sketch, and writing the names to be left there in a bottle. The roping up was carried out by Michel Croz and Taugwalder; if Hudson noticed the use of the sash-line between Douglas and Taugwalder, he apparently made no objection; nor did Douglas, though he should have been aware that the rope connecting him to Taugwalder was thinner than that joining him to the rest of the party. Douglas, not Whymper, it is to be remembered, was the real employer of the Taugwalders, so a greater responsibility rested with him to keep an eye on Old Peter's actions. It may be taken as certain that the sash-line had not been so used on the ascent, when the party had been linked by the two lengths of 100 ft. each of Alpine Club (Manilla) rope. On the descent, one of these was used to join the first four men; the other was used by Whymper and Young Peter, when they followed after the others who had commenced to descend. Had Taugwalder delayed their departure until the last two had joined on, and the whole 200 ft. of Manilla rope been brought into use, all might have been well; as it was, finding himself with not enough of the first rope with which to tie himself on to Douglas, he made the mistake of using the sash-line to form this link.

At the moment of the accident, Taugwalder was evidently holding on

to the rope between him and Douglas (normal enough practice to prevent a rope being caught up on rocks); without dropping it he promptly clasped a rock near by him, and thus, with the rope behind him kept taut by Whymper, was enabled to withstand the drag of the falling bodies, though the sash-line rasped his hands and wrists as it ran out before breaking.[7] He certainly did well at this moment; anything less and the whole party would probably have been lost. Whymper says of him, 'Not only was his act at the critical moment wonderful as a feat of strength, but it was admirable in its performance at the right time'.

Of his conduct on the rest of the descent, there is no information to suggest that he did not behave as Whymper has related, nor any reason to doubt Whymper's veracity. On the Dent Blanche in 1862, as we have seen, Old Peter lost his nerve in far less trying conditions; and Young Peter has recorded how terrified they now were; how he himself was weeping; how even two days later, at Zermatt, they were both too upset to accompany the party that went to find the bodies.[8]

Whymper disposes of the 'infamous charge', that Taugwalder had cut the rope by observing that he *could* not have done so at the moment of the slip, and the end of the rope showed that it had not been cut earlier. Yeats Brown saw the rope immediately after the accident, and says it was *broken*, not cut, and the talk of Taugwalder cutting it was absurd. The suggestion that he had done so originated among his own friends and neighbours in Zermatt and was already current in the village before the return of the search party that had set out to recover the bodies. This may indicate that Taugwalder's reputation in Zermatt was not very high, rather than that the local inhabitants were jealous of him.

Old Taugwalder never again, apparently, ascended the Matterhorn, though he had opportunities to do so from Güssfeldt in September, 1865 (*S.A.C.J.* XV. 240), and from F. Thioly in 1866 and 1867. But the Matterhorn tragedy did not immediately wreck his career; indeed, 1866 was one of his better years, for he broke new ground (for him) by climbing Mont Blanc twice, and he also ascended the Dom. Had he shown more enterprise, he might well have prospered on the strength of his first ascent of the Matterhorn, as his son did, for Young Peter went ahead well, and became an excellent guide.

Old Peter, however, seems only to have made rather minor expeditions in later years, a few with John Stogdon, including another ascent

[7] Taugwalder exhibited his damaged hands to Robertson in Zermatt, after the accident, and even as late as September Güssfeldt could still see the scars.

[8] There was nothing very rare about this sort of emotional breakdown; both Bennen and Melchior Anderegg had burst frequently into tears after the accident to Birkbeck on the Col de Miage in 1861. The descriptions of the immense outbreaks of grief on the return of the bodies of Owen Glynne Jones and his companions from the Dent Blanche in 1899 show how easily the alpine peasantry could give way to emotion.

of Mont Blanc in August, 1870. In September, 1871, he with Young Peter crossed the Théodule pass and the Furggenjoch with Lord Queensberry[9] and the Hon. E. Ellis; these are the last expeditions recorded and later, obtaining little employment, he emigrated to America, where he lived for some years, but subsequently returned to Zermatt and died of syncope at the Schwarzsee inn on July 11, 1888, at the age of sixty-eight.

Lunn's contention (*A.J.* 55. 296) that Taugwalder's career suffered from Whymper's 'attack' seems incorrect. Whymper commented adversely on the guides' breakdown in morale after the accident, but (as is quoted above) he praised Taugwalder strongly for his action at the time of it; and he disposed of the accusation of cutting the rope in the most emphatic terms. This he did in one of the most widely-read books on mountaineering that has ever been written, whereas Leslie Stephen's defence of Taugwalder, which Lunn is fond of quoting, was hidden away in an obscure magazine and was only brought to light by Lunn himself twenty years ago. The defence amounts to saying (after endorsing Whymper's words of praise) that Stephen wishes that the story of Taugwalder deliberately using a weak rope between himself and Douglas had been disposed of as thoroughly as the fable about cutting the rope. Stephen's defence consists of saying that guides are always careless about ropes.

In fact, *Scrambles* did not appear until 1871, and Taugwalder could well have lived down reproaches about his nerve having failed after the accident—as indeed his son had done. Whymper was not responsible for malicious gossip in Zermatt; he tried to quash it. Moreover, adverse gossip does not necessarily blight a guide's career, as can be seen with Alexander Burgener, who lived under a much more serious reproach as regards the Curé Imseng.

How shall one assess Old Taugwalder's merits as a guide? Until 1864 he had hardly done anything of note, his climbs, as the list shows, being predominantly ascents of Monte Rosa. Considering the age in which he lived, he might fairly be expected, had he shown enterprise, to have had a better record in the 1850's, when he was still in his thirties, and when first ascents were to be had for the asking. Most of his climbs on Monte Rosa and other easy peaks round Zermatt were made with other guides and he was not necessarily the leader; until he met Douglas in 1865, his only first ascent was on Pollux.

Looking to his past record, one is inclined to think that it was unfortunate that Old Peter was engaged by Douglas in 1865, for it took him out of his class. Hinchliff, Tuckett and T. S. Kennedy had dropped him earlier; could he have continued on his old lines, he might have had fifteen or more years of comfortable guiding on peaks round Zermatt.

[9] Lord Francis Douglas's brother, so clearly no resentment against the Taugwalders was cherished by Douglas's relatives.

Until 1866 he does not seem to have climbed outside the Valais. This alone distinguishes him from the first rate guides of the day: Almer, the Andereggs, the Laueners, Peter Bohren, Michel Croz; even those who were not quite in the front rank, such as Christian Bleuer, the Andenmattens, the Perrens, Bennen, the three zum Taugwalds, had better records than old Taugwalder.

Mention has already been made of Taugwalder's failure to win a place in Cunningham and Abney's *Pioneers of the Alps*. John Ball, in his lists of the best Alpine guides of the day in *Western Alps*, 1863, and in *Central Alps*, 1864 and 1870, never mentions Taugwalder, though Zermatt guides are referred to. Ball does mention him, however, in the 1870 edition of *Western Alps*, describing him as 'a steady climber, strong and willing, though no longer young. Rather eccentric in his ways'. In the next edition of *Western Alps*, Taugwalder was dropped. Ball gives somewhat faint praise; if by 'eccentric' he was referring to the outbreaks of temperament exhibited by Taugwalder on more than one occasion, it is certainly true. But the terms 'steady' and 'strong' are also justified, for Taugwalder exhibited just those qualities at the moment of the Matterhorn accident. Indeed, had he, and not Hudson, been roped up after Hadow, the accident might have been prevented; as R. L. G. Irving, *A History of British Mountaineering*, p. 90, says, 'The causes of the accident are clear; Hadow's inexperience on rocks and the absence immediately behind him of a guide accustomed to keep an ever-watchful eye on a tourist for whose safety he is responsible'. Farrar (*A.J. 32*. 31) presumably had this thought in mind when he remarked that the one point in which the amateur is generally inferior to a guide is in intuitively realising when a sudden slip is likely to occur, and that a moderate guide is often as quick as the best in this, owing to the less capable clients he has usually in his care.

Peter Knubel is reported (*A.J. 32*. 97) as having regarded Taugwalder as a good man on a mountain, safe and trustworthy. This confirms Ball's estimate in the main. Charles Parker met Taugwalder some time in Zermatt about the end of July or early August, 1865 (*A.J. 65*. 95 and *68*. 286 sqq.), but appears to have discussed with him merely the question of Old Peter's remuneration for the climb. By that time, however, relations between Whymper and Taugwalder had become strained, nor is it clear how much of the gossip he reports was believed by Parker, who, in fact, hoped that his brother Sandbach, who had encountered Whymper, had obtained from him 'the truth about Taugwalder'.

Parker says 'Taugwalder is a very good cragsman & Whymper is said to be a bad one', an interesting statement, but certainly not conclusive, for Parker's informant about Whymper may merely have been Taugwalder, hardly an unbiased critic. In fact, Whymper had a good deal more varied and noteworthy climbing record at this time than Old Peter had.

Farrar's statement (*A.J. 32*. 26) that Taugwalder was one of the boldest guides in the Alps, does not bear examination, any more than Lunn's statement (*A.J. 55*. 290) that he was 'by common consent one of the leading guides of his generation'.

Causes of the Accident

The causes of the accident have been laid on various shoulders. It is in fact possible to attribute some measure of blame for the tragedy to six out of the seven climbers; only Young Taugwalder is completely free.

Croz was certainly the leading guide, and had taken charge openly on the ascent from the Shoulder upwards. If anyone, he was in charge of the party and therefore responsible for seeing (it is a guide's normal duty) to the roping up. But with people strung out to some extent along the summit ridge, and with another guide, Old Peter, at one end, capable of seeing to any roping in his sector of the party, it is understandable if Croz did not supervise more than the tying on of those near to him. Moreover, it seems that Croz and Taugwalder did not speak one another's language, so communication may have been awkward, though in practice guides usually have some *lingua franca* to help them.

Hadow's responsibility consists in his slip, at a place not in itself difficult. What exactly caused him to slip, we do not know, but it may have been the bad nailing of his boots.

Hudson was to blame for bringing Hadow at all; he cannot be acquitted of that, for he had had the question of Hadow's fitness brought to his attention by Whymper before they started. Moreover, he can scarcely not have observed, as both Kennedy and Yeats Brown had, that Hadow on Mont Blanc was very much of a beginner, too unsure on his feet to be fit to take on the Matterhorn. We print elsewhere (p. 18) Mrs. Birkbeck's letter to Farrar (who never used the information it contains), which bears upon both Hadow and Hudson; it is interesting to see how she confirms what Whymper, Taugwalder, T. S. Kennedy and Yeats Brown all say about Hadow's incompetence.[10] Farrar's attempt to justify Hadow's inclusion (*A.J. 32*. 28) is unconvincing. Mrs. Birkbeck also confirms the view that was expressed, one way or another, by Whymper, Hort and McCormick, that Hudson was too incautious about taking people with him on climbs. As was pointed out in *A.J. 61*. 486–7,

[10] Whymper says simply that Hadow needed constant help on the climb, and that it was not a case of fatigue or want of courage, but just lack of experience. Taugwalder, at the Official Enquiry, said bluntly that Hadow was 'a very bad climber'. Kennedy (*A.J. 3*. 76) said that Hadow on Mont Blanc 'had not yet acquired sufficient practice to make him quite secure upon his feet' (Charles Gos, *Alpine Tragedy*, p. 33, n. 6, comments aptly on this remark); Yeats Brown (*Family Notes*, pp. 277–8) had also noticed how Hadow on Mont Blanc floundered about and 'should not have been encouraged to attempt such a formidable mountain (as the Matterhorn)'.

Hudson was rather prone to light-hearted invitations; as regards the Matterhorn, he had at one time or another proposed to try it with John Birkbeck junior, T. S. Kennedy, and with McCormick[11]; he casually invited James Robertson to join in also, and it is even said that a certain Rev. R. Wood was invited. Girdlestone says that he too might have joined the party, but luckily the expedition was spared him.

Whether Hudson ought to have noticed that Old Peter was using the sash-line is more questionable, but he was the most experienced amateur present and, being next to Douglas, might well have noticed how the roping was being done. That he failed to arrest Hadow's slip is obvious; the testimony of all three survivors is that the fall of all four victims was the matter of a moment, and although Farrar endeavours to excuse Hudson, it seems only too clear that the latter was caught unawares by Hadow's slip.

The only blame that can apply to Douglas is that he did not notice or draw attention to the different qualities of the two ropes round his waist. Whymper's responsibility is similar; when he tied on to Taugwalder he should have noticed that the latter was using the sash-line between himself and Douglas.

Old Taugwalder's fault lay in using a weak rope, instead of insisting on waiting for Whymper and Young Peter to come and tie on to himself and Douglas with the rope that was available to them. At the Enquiry in Zermatt, Old Peter was a bit rambling and evasive when asked about the sash-line, but said, in effect, that he judged it to be good enough.

Order of Descent

Few people would today defend the order adopted that put Croz first. As Smythe says (*Edward Whymper*, p. 187), it is easy to think of several combinations better than that used. If it had to be a single party of seven, then perhaps the best arrangement would have been that adopted on the upper part of the ascent, but in reverse.[12] This would have put Young Peter to lead down, for which he was perfectly competent,[13] with Douglas next and Old Taugwalder third. Hadow would then have been left securely in the middle of the rope, with Old Peter immediately below him, and with Hudson, Whymper and Croz, in that order, above.

Smythe (*op. cit.*, p. 190) and Lunn (*A.J.* 55. 290) both put a finger on the real cause of the accident, namely the psychological one. T. S.

[11] The first two were experienced climbers, but little is known of McCormick's experience, if any. He had been a noted athlete at Cambridge and had had a parish in Ireland from 1860–64, and may have been something of a stranger to mountaineering.

[12] See *A.J.* 61. 495–6 for discussion of the order of ascent.

[13] Young Taugwalder was nearly twenty-two and had had a number of seasons' climbing, with some quite nice ascents. He rapidly developed after 1865 and had a good record, dying in 1923.

Kennedy, writing in *The Times* after the accident (July 28) says the same, that after a difficult ascent men are apt to get careless. The tension and excitement of the first ascent of the Matterhorn; the uncertainty whether the Italians might not have got there first; all this naturally led to some measure of reaction. Want of sufficient care on the descent has caused fatalities to better climbers than any of those lost on the Matterhorn in 1865; we have only to think of the deaths of Emile Rey on the Aiguille du Géant (1895); of Franz Lochmatter on the Weisshorn (1933); or of Hermann Buhl on Chogolisa (1957).

The Climbs of Peter Taugwalder (vater)

In compiling this list of climbs made by Old Peter Taugwalder, it has not been thought necessary to insert all the references, since the bulk of them come from a few sources, such as Young Taugwalder's Führerbuch, extracts from which were printed in *A.J. 59*. 436 sqq., and the original document consulted for some few further items; from Montagnier's valuable articles in *A.J. 31*. 305 sqq., *32*. 42 sqq. and 206 sqq.; and from the well known books of Hinchliff, Tuckett, Whymper and Güssfeldt. Other references can, of course, be obtained from *Alpes Valaisannes*; and Mumm's *Alpine Club Register* has been of use.

1851	August 22	Monte Rosa (Ostspitze).
1855	August 14	Monte Rosa (Dufourspitze; *uncertain*).
	September 27	Monte Rosa (attempt).
	With Hinchliff, attempts on Monte Rosa and the New Weisstor pass.	
1856	July 9	Monte Rosa.
	July 29	Monte Rosa.
	August 30	Monte Rosa.
1857	July 13–16	Monte Rosa.
	July 31	Monte Rosa.
	August 27	Monte Rosa.
	September 17	Monte Rosa.
1858	June 6	Monte Rosa (attempt).
	July 16	Monte Rosa.
1859	June 25	Monte Rosa (attempt).
	June 28	Breithorn.
	August 13	Monte Rosa.
	August 28	Monte Rosa.
1860	July 9	Monte Rosa.
	July 16	Lyskamm (attempt).
	July 24	Cima di Jazzi.
	July 28	Théodule Pass.
	July 31	Allalinhorn (1st traverse) and Allalin Pass.
	August 3	Monte Rosa.
	August 5	Col d'Hérens.

1861	June 26	Monte Rosa.
	September 5	Col d'Hérens.
1862	January	Matterhorn (attempt).
	July 9	Dent Blanche (attempt)
	August 2	Lyskamm.
	September 19	Breithorn.
1863	June 23	Monte Rosa.
	July 6	Monte Rosa.
1864	July 30	Monte Rosa (attempt).
	August 1	Pollux (1st ascent).
1865	June 28	Unter Gabelhorn (1st ascent).
	July 1	Wellenkuppe (1st ascent).
	July 6	Triftjoch.
	July 7	Ober Gabelhorn (2nd ascent—1st from Zinal—and 1st traverse).
	July 14	Matterhorn (1st ascent).
	September 18	Matterhorn (attempt, Italian ridge, with Güssfeldt).
1866	August 7	Mont Blanc.
	September 1	Monte Rosa (attempt).
	September 2	Klein Matterhorn.
	September 4	Dom.
	September 14	Mont Blanc.

F. Thioly could get no Zermatt guide,[14] Taugwalder included presumably, to attempt the Matterhorn this yeai.

1867 F. Thioly tried to get Taugwalder to attempt the Matterhorn this year, but failed. Leighton Jordan, however, met the two Taugwalders in Breuil and they, hearing that Jordan had nearly ascended the Matterhorn from Zermatt very recently, with J. M. Lochmatter and Peter Knubel, expressed a wish to return to Zermatt to try the mountain with him themselves. Jordan, however, was now bent on climbing the Italian ridge, and engaged Italian guides. (*A.J.* 30. 319; 31. 90–2.)

1870 August 26 Mont Blanc (see *A.J.* 5. 193).
Possibly in this year he climbed Monte Rosa and the Tête Blanche with J. Stogdon. (*A.J.* 55. 291.)

1871 September 10–15 Théodule Pass and Furggjoch.

Note: The foregoing list is as much as we have been able to find of Old Peter Taugwalder's climbing careei. The list will have served a good purpose if it stimulates someone to discover more; best of all would be if the old guide's Führerbuch could be discovered and made public. Are there no members of the Taugwalder family in Zermatt who could institute a house search for the missing volume ?

[14] John Birkbeck junior, however, got Peter Knubel and other guides to make an attempt this year (*A.J.* 32. 108).

(4) RANDOM THOUGHTS ON THE MATTERHORN

By H-F. von TSCHARNER

(*Translated by Hugh Merrick*)

I

It is the evening of July 14, 1865. Four of Whymper's companions have hurtled into the abyss. There are three survivors, Whymper himself and the two Taugwalders. There they stand, stunned and utterly unnerved. Night falls terribly slowly. In the last red glare of the sunset, the portent of the two crosses in the sky manifests itself, just above the Lyskamm. After a long silence, Taugwalder utters those 'historic' words, asking Whymper to write in his guide's testimonial book, once they get down to Zermatt, that the Taugwalders have not been paid; the entry would ensure them many new clients the following summer, when a crowd of visitors and tourists would surely be coming to Zermatt.

This is not the place to discuss whether his words really carried this exact meaning, in view of the state of mind of those concerned and their difficulties of communication in each other's divergent languages; but the sense of Taugwalder's speech, all considerations of personal interest apart, was in fact a kind of prophecy. It was not so much the Matterhorn, nor the fact that it had been climbed, which would draw increasing numbers of foreigners to Zermatt, but the disaster which had just taken place. Everyone would want to see the mountain from which the Rev. Hudson, in the very forefront of British climbers of the day, Lord Francis Douglas, so widely known in England, Mr. Hadow and that famous guide, Michel Croz, had fallen to their death. True, there had already been in 1820 and 1860, two great alpine tragedies in the Mont Blanc region, but for four men to have fallen from so great a height was something unprecedented, incredible.

Today, a hundred years later, we must admit that, though he would of course have been vastly surprised to see all the hurly-burly in Zermatt, and on and about the Matterhorn, all the year round, Taugwalder, directly after the accident, spoke words pregnant with visionary foresight. Naturally, he could never have foreseen so great a fulfilment of his look into the future.

II

The first ascent of a peak, face or ridge can obviously become the object of a race, though in mountaineering the probability is that such a

race will be decided by an unaccompanied attempt on the part of the ultimate winners. For it should be added that the rivals make their alternating attempts at different times, till one party or another is finally successful. It hardly ever happens that two sets of competitors attempt the climb at exactly the same time—though, by sheer chance, on July 31, 1865, there was a very close finish to the first ascent of the Lauterbrunnen Breithorn, the Bernese climber Edmund von Fellenberg reaching the summit just ten minutes before the English team of Hornby and Philpott.

The Matterhorn is not like other mountains. Here, the various problems were solved by intense efforts, during which the competitors frequently joined up at the last moment; though local and national prestige also took a hand from time to time.

Let us start with the first ascent. In my humble opinion, the prestige war between Zermatt and Breuil had already been decided with the appearance of Alexander Seiler. Favre, the host of the inn at Breuil, would never have been able to turn his village into a Zermatt as we know it, even if Carrel had won the prize of the first ascent for Italy. No, the battle royal was between Carrel, driven by national pride, and that unremitting man, Whymper. At times they even worked together, until the day when Carrel found a way to outwit his rival with a view to ensuring, if possible, a hundred per cent Italian victory.

The successful English party, itself, consisted of three sets of competitors, driven by the dictates of fate to join up with each other. There was Hudson with Croz, there was Lord Francis Douglas with Taugwalder. With them Whymper, deserted by Carrel, guideless and solitary, and in real danger of being robbed at the last moment of his treasured climb, contrived to ally himself.[15] So it came to a straight fight between England and Italy. Both parties were at work on opposite sides of the mountain on the same day; fate so dictated events that the Englishmen were visible on the summit at the very time when the inhabitants of Breuil were celebrating an Italian victory. It was not till three days later that Carrel reached the summit, by way of the arête du Lion.

In 1879 there was a real race between Mummery and Penhall, the former reaching the summit with an hour and a quarter to spare. Penhall, however, followed a line up the West face, only using the Zmuttgrat for the summit section; so it is best to describe it as a sort of race to climb the peak by a western route. It ought really to have been declared a dead-heat, since Mummery gained valuable time on the snow ridge by using the steps which Penhall's guide, Ferdinand Imseng, had cut for use on the following day's climb.

The first descent of the Zmuttgrat, on August 31, 1894, was also made

[15] Perhaps this does not present quite a fair picture. Whymper and Douglas had already agreed to join forces before they left Breuil, and it was they who suggested to Hudson that he should join them.—EDITOR.

by two parties. Miss Bristowe, with Matthias Zurbriggen and Joseph Pollinger, chose the ridge for her descent, while Captain J. P. Farrar, with Daniel Maquignaz, climbed it in both directions, up and down.

When the North face was climbed for the first time, there might have been another exciting duel, had that specialist in unclimbed faces, E. R. Blanchet, and his inseparable guide, Kaspar Mooser, arrived in Zermatt a few days sooner. I can still see Blanchet sitting opposite me at the grand banquet arranged by Dr. Hermann Seiler in honour of the brothers Schmid, hardly able to conceal his disappointment at having seen the climb snatched from him—as it were, off his very toes.

The first winter ascent of this face, in 1962, was disputed by three parties, one Austrian, one German and one Swiss. They were forced to start up at the same time, but by a gentleman's agreement the Swiss rope of Hilti von Allmen and Paul Etter, as likely to be much the fastest movers, were given pride of place. They proved themselves worthy of this honour by arriving at the top twenty-two hours ahead.

I had almost forgotten to say that of recent years, owing to the great numbers of Hörnligrat aspirants, a daily race has become common form. Everyone wants to be among those dislodging the rocks up above and not among those down below, at the receiving end. For those interested in athletic records, it may be mentioned that the best time for the Matterhorn by the Hörnligrat (up and down, with a snack at the top and occasional meals on the way) is precisely three hours. Anyone who does it in two hours fifty-nine minutes is likely to earn undying fame. Be warned, however; speed has its dangers. For we could very soon find traffic-cops, attached to the mountain police corps, regulating the ever-increasing jams on the Hörnligrat with traffic-lights.

III

The Matterhorn was soon recognised as an inexhaustible money-bag; its economic influence has in fact proved immense. The hotels and the guides are the top line profit-earners. A tremendous share goes to every branch of the photographic industry; for no statesman or general in the history of the world has been photographed so often and from all angles—even from the back—as the Matterhorn. One only has to consider the packed trains which run up to the Gornergrat every day. Every passenger has a camera, and starts, far too soon, to take shot after shot of the Matterhorn. The result is a vast daily trade in useless films. Once at the Gornergrat, a perfect frenzy of snapping breaks out. If you haven't a camera, there are thousands of postcards of the Matterhorn available, taken at all seasons and in the most varied light effects. There is also a photographer ready to offer, with a promising smile, to portray you with or without—but it is very rarely without—the Matterhorn. Heaven only knows in how many books, prospectuses, on how many poster-kiosks

at home and abroad, in newspapers, advertisements, and who knows where else, the image of the peak of all peaks confronts our gaze.

Another industry which obviously benefits from our mountain is the textile trade; you only have to think of all those worn out trouser-seats—and, of course, boot-making also takes its share. The caterers profit greatly from the innumerable and often lavish 'summit lunches' they put up; doctors, too, reap a small harvest when the game of dropping stones gets a little too rough.

The already very large percentage of the guides' total earnings which stems from the Matterhorn has grown greatly of recent years. Everyone wants to climb the Matterhorn, and the guides prefer the climb because it is relatively short and trouble-free, but still commands a lucrative fee. And so, now, most of the guides do nothing but the Matterhorn. Many of them base themselves entirely on the Belvedere, and in good weather do the climb every day; guides have frequently done it seven times in a week. (Mass is celebrated at the Belvedere on Sundays.) Clients are sent up by the Guides' Bureau or by their relatives to the Belvedere, the arrangements being made by telephone. And, of course, the ropeway to the Schwarzsee has helped to make things even easier.

How different it all is from the days when one could sit opposite the Monte Rosa hotel, watching every party setting out for and returning from the Matterhorn, and could somehow share in their activities. Not a sign survives of all that. Everything is fixed up by wire, and the climbers start out from all directions, and at any time of day, for the Belvedere. If you look at the mountain through a telescope on a fine day, all you see is a long queue crawling up and down like ants; and all there is left is to assess whether there are more or less than a hundred people climbing it on that particular day.

The hotel industry has to thank the Matterhorn and its epic history for a colossal increase. A few years ago, it could safely be said that almost every Zermatt family owned a hotel, a pension, or a shop at least; today it will very soon be safe to say that they own two apiece.

To borrow an American's words about the Swiss, it is easy to see that the inhabitants of Zermatt knew better than anyone how to produce gold, by rubbing men against rocks.

IV

What would Zermatt be today, but for the Matterhorn? I have often asked myself this rather silly question, and have even been asked it by others. It all depends whether Alexander Seiler would have moved into Zermatt if the Matterhorn hadn't been there. I do not believe he would. Zermatt without a Seiler or a Matterhorn would have become an average mountain resort. Saas Fee, with its view of the Mischabel group and its glaciers, would simply have run rings round Zermatt. Later on, Zermatt

would of course have expanded from its original status as a small village, because of the many interesting four-thousanders surrounding it. In all probability its potentialities as a ski-centre would have been discovered; but two things are certain—the line of hotel-porters waiting at the station, with the names of their hotels worked in gold letters on their caps, would have been only half its present length, and there would have been no rooms 'with a view of the Matterhorn', as booked in advance nowadays. There might even have been no railway, and then there would have been no porters. . . .

V

There has been a great deal of monkey-business, too, about the Matterhorn. But those who wanted to get rich quick through it did not get very far. I do not just mean that somewhat questionable mountaineer, who had himself shaved on the summit and allowed a press photographer to immortalise this unique feat, by word and picture, in a glossy periodical. I mean the truly diabolical projects, initiated about the turn of the century, to take a railway up to the Matterhorn's summit. The fares and the shareholders' dividends had all been nicely calculated. The administration and Parliament had already cheerfully voted the concession, but in the end it did not work out as the tycoons hoped. The whole populace of Switzerland voiced its opposition and, as the most respected newspapers all over the world demolished this vile project with their heaviest guns, and sickness or death removed its initiators from the arena, the whole idea gradually sank into oblivion, and the Matterhorn was spared this shameless desecration.

Half a century later, a fresh danger menaced our mountain, this time from the south. It was proposed to erect a ropeway from the Furggen to the summit. A unanimous war-cry resounded on all sides, 'hands off the Matterhorn!'. Thirty Alpine Clubs, with more than 825,000 members all over the world, supported by 114,000 individual signatures, petitioned the government in Rome not to grant a concession to these speculators. All credit to the Italian government that it prevented the spoliation of 'the most noble cliff in Europe', to use Ruskin's words.

VI

In the early days, men were afraid of the mountains. Dragons lived in their caves, and the gorges were the resort of evil spirits. They were the source of bad weather, tempest and thunderstorms. Today men have lost their fear of the mountains, and also their respect. Diffidently men made their first approaches to the Matterhorn; later, the élite struggled up the Zmuttgrat. The ascent of the North face was heralded as a unique achievement: a feat which had to be accomplished once, but would never be repeated. Presently, summer was not a sufficient test—the faces were

too easy: everything had to be done in winter conditions. Soon, a few years from now, anyone who does the Matterhorn traverse by the Zmutt and Italian ridges will be regarded as a mere hiker: the new traverse will be by the North and South faces. Nobody is afraid of the Matterhorn any more, and that in spite of its having claimed more than a hundred and fifty victims.

At times, indeed, one might well ask, 'Who's afraid of whom?'. Perhaps it is the Matterhorn which ought to be afraid of men, who want to debase its stature with railways, lifts and ropeways?

We protect ancient monuments of culture; we establish nature reserves; should we not, then, be able to find a way of protecting the Matterhorn, the world's greatest natural monument, and end for all time any talk of putting people on its summit by purely mechanical devices? Italians and Swiss would have to join in one great movement, towards which the Zermatt Alpine Association has already taken a number of important steps.

And let it never be forgotten that it was a man of the Valais, Paul de Chastonay, who penned the proud words: 'thoughts of the Matterhorn are thoughts of eternity'.

(5) THE MATTERHORN: AN IMPRESSION FROM ITALY

By GAETANO DE LUCA

(*Translated by S.K. Armitstead*)

OBVIOUSLY each generation looks at historical events from its own point of view, and their different assessments, whether in agreement or contradictory, become merged with the passage of time so as to become as nearly as possible a really true interpretation of the facts. History, however, is not merely a mixture of politics, religion, economics and struggles for freedom. It is also marked by events which while apparently incidental can yet have a profound effect on the customs and social behaviour of the people.

Such an effect can, without exaggeration, be accorded to the first ascent of the Matterhorn, the importance of which goes beyond the bounds of the history of pioneering in alpine climbing to become a cardinal point in the formation of the mentality of those men who are not confined to a purely materialist view of life, even though they have never thought of reaching the peaks. In the same way one might say that the space

undertakings of the modern age awaken the sensibility and stimulate the imagination of many who will certainly never undertake an interplanetary voyage.

It is only from the geopolitical point of view that the Matterhorn can be considered part Swiss and part Italian, and only a victim of nationalist prejudice could wish for such a division. For the lovers of mountains the Matterhorn, ever since man first thought of achieving those 'useless undertakings', the conquest of summits, has been an aspiration, a goal, a mirage common to all climbers and those who aspire to be climbers, irrespective of nationality, to the extent that it has acquired the value of a myth.

Is this aspect of the most fascinating peak in the Alps still valid for those in Italy who know that mountains exist and that there are men who want to climb them ?

First of all we must see how the undertaking first achieved by Whymper, and made famous by the tragedy that put an end to it and by the antagonistic dealings with the Italians, came to be regarded south of the Alps with the passage of time. We must remember that news travelled slowly in those days, or even not at all. The details were known only to a circle of initiates, and they were very few. The love of climbing had been born only some decades previously, and the Matterhorn, it is true, was one of the few great peaks that had not been trodden by human feet, but how many in Italy knew this ? Very few.

This situation of an 'enclosed world', typical of the climbing fraternity, was moreover to last for decades. It is quite true that the Italian Alpine Club had been founded two years before, but alpine climbers remained very scarce. The dates of foundation of sections of the C.A.I. in the towns of the peninsula bear witness to the time it took for the love of mountains to develop in Italy. In the first twenty years of its life, i.e. until 1883, only twenty-three branches of the C.A.I. had been founded, some in towns far from the Alps, and the members were very few, the active ones even less, and scarcer still those who could afford the luxury, which it was, of a mountaineering 'campaign'.

The connoisseurs of the Alps and the Italians who climbed there were a limited élite, representative of certain social classes only ; the aristocrats of the north and a few great names of the south who after frequenting Paris and the Côte d'Azur were later also attracted by Chamonix and Zermatt, mainly for snobbish reasons. Later the circle extended to some rich (and even poor) members of the new society which industrial progress was developing, chiefly in Piedmont and Lombardy.

It can be stated that the Italians who visited the mountains, and therefore the Matterhorn, were to remain very limited in numbers until the first years of this century, and it is at this point that the Matterhorn's 'fortune' was born in Italy, both as an attraction and as a myth. At the

root of it we must place a book, that of Guido Rey, which was a sort of Bible for more than a generation of young Italians.

Guido Rey was certainly inspired by a poetical instinct and a gift for story telling in writing the history of the great mountain, and he virtually gave it a soul. He definitely never imagined that he possessed the powers of present day psychic persuasion, but the success of the book was extraordinary. In families of good standing it became almost *de rigueur* to give it to the boys as a present, and in the eyes of that generation, today no less than in years past, the deeds narrated by Rey appeared on the same plane as *Gulliver's Travels* or the fantasies of Jules Verne, except that the Matterhorn was something real and tangible; one could go and see it, one could think of climbing it.

In the wake of Guido Rey the Matterhorn has inspired a host of writers. There are numerous articles soaked in rhetoric (as well as testimonies of love) but also, still confining ourselves to what has appeared in Italian, volumes of literary and documentary value. It is almost certainly the mountain about which most has been written, even in the Italian language.

Even fifty years ago the Matterhorn was still quite remote. The basin of Breil or Breuil was on the threshold of the legend, there were no roads and only two hotels. The refuge named after the Duke of the Abruzzi had been built, and the climb had been made less arduous by the fixed ropes. Increasing numbers of people came back with tales of the marvels of this stupendous pyramid, and the Lion, Pic Tyndall, and the Linceul were by now familiar names in the world of mountaineering.

Climbing was spreading in Italy as a result of the rise in the standard of living, but the thing that brought the masses to the mountains and hence to the Matterhorn, was the first World War. The harshness of life in the mountains had been described at length by journalists, and ex-servicemen brought home with them, in addition to their many problems, the fascination and spiritual recollection of life among the rocks and snows.

Until yesterday, as it were, there has been no climber worthy of the name who has not aspired to climb the Matterhorn. Success was another matter. We have spoken to many of them, including experts, men with thirty or more years of climbing behind them. In every case the Matterhorn has been in the forefront of their thoughts, but very few reached the top at their first attempt, many tried once or twice more and finally succeeded, so setting the seal on their climbing careers, from a spiritual point of view, while those who had to give up nursed their sorrow for a long time.

This is true for the average climber, and certainly used to be true for the outstanding ones, more or less until the generation of Gervasutti, whose dry enthusiasm in telling of his solitary climb on Christmas Day, 1936,

still strikes us; but perhaps it is no longer so today. Climbing itself has altered, in its techniques and in its ambitions, and in evidence of this we can quote a remark made to us by one of the greatest Italian climbers, a man who is world famous: 'I have tried twice, once by the Furggen ridge and once by the North face (speaking of when they were both unclimbed) and had to give up, but I am not making an obsession of that mountain'.

On the other hand, the attraction that the Matterhorn has had and still has for the great climbers of today, even if they only experience it at the limits of possibility, is demonstrated by the first winter ascent of the overhangs of Furggen by Walter Bonatti and Roberto Bignami in 1953.

Can one speak of a decline? Every summer roped parties of climbers of medium ability climb the Matterhorn from the Italian side, as from the others, even though climbing, more perhaps in Italy than elsewhere, has in a certain sense been corrupted. It has become a business of first ascents, of vertical climbs which are outside the traditional concept of mountaineering. It is a different sport. The great snow-covered 'four thousanders' like Mont Blanc, Monte Rosa and some peaks of the Mischabel or the Oberland remain the star attractions of ski-mountaineering, but the Matterhorn . . . it could not possibly lower itself to that extent. However, the 'fortune' of its name continues. When, thirty years ago, the motor road from Valtournanche to Breuil was completed, and the transformation of that stupendous basin into a circus for skiers began, it was natural to use the most famous name available, and so Cervinia was born.

When the Italian army in the second World War formed a battalion specially equipped for fighting in snow, it chose its men from the Alps and called it the *Battaglione Monte Cervino*. It was almost wiped out and routed on the Russian front, but the valour of the men who composed it, and its technical efficiency, were well worthy of the name it bore.

Finally, the most recent variation on the name has occurred in a field where we would least expect it of a mountain—advertising.

Our Swiss friends, admittedly, have never neglected using their mountains as a means of attracting tourists, but we are sure that never before has there appeared a half-page advertisement in the newspapers entitled literally *Invito al Cervino*. It appeared on June 5, 1964, in *La Stampa* of Turin and *Il Corriere della Sera* of Milan, and in it the guides of the valley, whose association is in fact named 'Società Guide del Cervino', invited enthusiasts to take advantage of their experience to climb the Matterhorn, and other mountains.

In this adaptation to new requirements one thing must be recognised above all—the continuity and strength of the fascination of this unique mountain. Typical, in this connection, is the enthusiasm with which the 'academicians' of the C.A.A.I. supported their President, Ugo di Vallepiana, some months ago, when he proposed a large-scale ascent of

the Matterhorn by the classic Italian routes on the day of the anniversary of the first ascent. Last of all, official homage. On the same occasion the Italian Alpine Club will place a commemorative bronze plaque on the building of the Society of Guides of the Matterhorn, with an inscription which, in translation, reads:

You must set off again
said Giordano
and on 17 July 1865
J. A. Carrel J. B. Bich
A. Gorret J. A. Meynet
opened up
the Italian route of the Matterhorn.[16]

[16] 'Dovete ripartire'
disse Giordano
e il 17 luglio 1865
J. A. Carrell J. B. Bich
A. Gorret J. A. Meynet
aprivano
la via italiana del Cervino.