

## THE JUNGFRAU.

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INTEREST in the hills extends far beyond the Cairngorms and the British Isles, for the members of the Club are frequently European wanderers, all the better of their earlier experience on the hills, and rocks, and snows of Scotland. These notes may interest a number of readers of the *Journal* of the Club, though only to bring out contrasts between the giants of Switzerland and the giants of the Cairngorms. All the mighty hills are more or less unapproachable, and are attractive only to those who seek adventure and are, therefore, prepared to run risks more or less serious. To many the grandeur of the giant Cairngorms and other tops of Scotland is no less striking than the giants of the Alps, from certain view points.

Jungfrau means Virgin, Maiden—never been conquered. She still retains her name as a consistent spinster, notwithstanding the conquests of ascent during the last half century.

In the earlier guide books the Jungfrau (13,671 feet) was poetically described as the Maiden Queen of the Alps, clothed in her snowy mantle, with two unshakable guards—the Silberhorn (12,156 feet) and the Schneehorn (11,204 feet)—representing *silver* and *snow* respectively. The couplet of the 16th century is still appropriate:—

*Raleigh*—I fain would climb and yet I fear to fall.

*Queen Elizabeth*—If fear assail thee, do not climb at all.

Until quite recently it used to be a prolonged, toilsome climb, taken in sections as it were. The common route from Grindelwald used to take some nineteen hours. There were various routes. Within the last few months a Wengen guide—Fritz Fuchs—with a companion, claims to have made the ascent by the southern slope from the Rottal Hut in twelve hours. It was made just before the first serious snowstorm of this winter and they had excellent luck under exceptional conditions. The route by the Guggli Hut was a long tedious climb with a tramp of five to seven hours to the Hut, and a nine to ten hours' journey from the Hut to the summit. The Guggli (8,800 feet) is reached by traversing the Eiger glacier on to the ridge of the Mönch. This hut (by the north route) is now a nice comfortable, compact, wooden shanty with a long board for sleepers, rugs or blankets, a good stove for heating, and for cooking, as well as a supply of dishes. Guides carry up heaps of firewood at the beginning of the season. There are also buckets for bringing in snow, which is the only way to provide water for domestic purposes. It never rains in these regions, and if there are springs about, they are embedded in ice or in frozen snow. The height of the snow line here is over 7,000 feet. From the Guggli Hut to the Jungfrau seemed a short span. Indeed one could hear voices at the Jungfrau Joch quite distinctly in a favourable wind, but the Joch could only be reached by facing a huge dip, with an unenviable trudge through snow, traversing two glaciers, and the toilsome rise, all which required some nine to ten hours before reaching the summit. But the mechanical devices of this age have brought the summit to within three hours from a railway terminal, that is, for a fairly expert climber. The climb is within reach of a multitude now as compared with a dozen years ago.

Before describing my trip of two years ago, it may be explained that the two principal starting points for the ascent of the Jungfrau are Grindelwald, under the

shadow of the mighty Wetterhorn (12,137 feet) or via Lauterbrunnen from Interlaken to Wengen. The well-known hills called the Scheidegg (7,000 feet), along with a minor hill called Byron Hill, where Lord Byron made a trip 100 years ago, separate the two valleys of Grindelwald and Lauterbrunnen. The funicular railway from Lauterbrunnen ascends to the Scheidegg, via Wengen, and from Grindelwald to Scheidegg there is a railway. An ordinary map of Switzerland will show these places marked quite clearly. The tramp from Grindelwald (3,000 feet) is a most striking one from the varying views obtained in the ascent. The funicular railway to Lauterbrunnen passes through Wengen, a very popular resort both in summer and in winter. While there are two horses to serve the numerous hotels and villagers of Wengen there are obviously no motor-cars, for there is no driving road to Wengen at all. Scheidegg is the starting point of the wonderful railway cutting through two mighty mountains of solid rock—the Eiger (13,042 feet), to the terminal Jungfrau Joch, which is a coll between the great Mönch (12,900 feet) and the Jungfrau. At the terminal in the rocks there is a splendid hotel, well equipped with some 200 bedrooms and spacious reception rooms, almost entirely hidden from the outside. The railway journey through the tunnels is relieved by two cuttings to the open on either side looking down upon glaciers. For miles around there is nothing to be seen but snow and the outside of the Hotel shows only a bit of yellow wood-work. The excellent chef, an Italian, who occupied a similar position at one time in an Edinburgh Hotel, told us that he had no difficulty with water or anything else, and he prepared midday dinners for a few hundred trippers daily during the summer season, that is from mid-July to say mid-September. He warned us specially against eating heartily immediately after arrival, as he said one should eat very sparingly at high altitudes for a day or two, especially for one about to climb on the following day. The rule is well-known and, indeed,

I went to the guides' quarters to have a snack with them; but I got a hint from an official that I was expected to take a table d'hôte dinner. I did so, and as it, unfortunately for me, included specially heavy items for a Swiss dinner, namely, boiled salmon and roast beef, I did not sleep for more than two hours. I had the advantage, however, of being awake in the night. I was awake at reveille 3, coffee and rolls at 3.30, and start at 4-4.20. The compensation for shortage of sleep was a succession of wonderful views of the summit, and a clear sky. At high altitudes I have often felt that the stars looked like great pearls, looking larger and brighter than at lower levels. There was a brilliantly, kindly moon, which seemed to say "Never mind though you are a bit sleepy on the morrow, you must keep your tryst." The Joch (pronounced Yoch) is the starting point for ski matches, being the head of the great Aletsch glacier, which is some ten to twelve miles long and said to be the biggest glacier in Europe. At Wengen I had sought out a guide who rigged me out in good hobnailer boots, and a delightful little axe. I had no crampons on my boots, and I slipped frequently on some snow slopes—thus impeding progress somewhat and making the climb rather more fatiguing. This was balanced, however, by less weight to carry and an alert guide. The recent tendency to have much lighter boots than formerly is most welcome to climbers of only moderate physique. But my main difficulty lay in the many dangerous crevasses in the ascent, these crevasses being veritable danger traps, especially after a snowfall when their yawning mouths were frequently covered over with non-carrying snow. I had learned that in such dangerous places there should be a party of not less than three. The guide said he would rather take me alone, after surveying that I was only a ten stone man, though I warned him that, his life being as valuable to him as mine was to me, I was quite sure *he* could pull *me* out if I fell into a crevasse, being of course roped to him, but that I was equally sure that if he fell in I could

not pull him out. I had just heard, through a London friend, of a guide to an experienced lady climber—on this same climb. The guide, in falling, was held before reaching the bottom of the crevasse by the lady smartly fixing her axe into the snow with the rope attached. Though they struggled for hours the poor fellow was held fast in the pit and he ultimately persuaded the lady to leave him to perish. She had not been gone more than an hour when by a lucky stroke he pulled himself by the rope attached to the lady's axe, reached the surface, and arrived in Wengen none the worse of his trying ordeal. My good-natured guide carried my belongings as well as the lunch and watched me like a jailer.

The ascent is about 2,350 feet from the Joch Hotel. I was glad to be on the rope for the whole journey. The conditions were good. It was the second day of the season and the prospects were excellent. The guide was as sure of the weather as of a daily rising sun; for he had planned trips in summer and in winter, always twelve hours ahead—no more—and had very, very seldom been wrong in regard to weather. He required neither compass nor map as he knew every yard of the route. While he was thus talking, of the wind from Russia and the wind from the Atlantic, etc., as weather guides, I noticed him swerving from the sloping path and I could see serious disturbances of the surface, great heaps of ice and frozen snow being accumulated at the base of one slope. He was unwilling to go into details, though he could speak English fluently. On this altered route we came to one of the hazards of the ascent, a perpendicular wall of ice which had to be surmounted. Through want of sleep I felt a little fatigued. I was glad to get a pull up from the guide—a thing which should not be required usually, but I wanted to be fresh for the later tugs up the slopes to the summit. That snow wall is the first barrier to climbers, but it is in no sense dangerous. Looking down from the top of the wall, and resting for a moment I drew the attention of

the guide again to the condition of the heaps of snow which had necessitated a change of route; and I observed many streaks of blood in the snow. He then—unwillingly—told me that a party of the previous day had been late in returning and got caught in an avalanche, but that no life was lost. I did not press him further. Guides wisely say little of accidents for fear of damaging their trade. Incidentally it may be mentioned that if frozen snow had the air squeezed out of it, it would be ice.

The next hazard was at the Rottal saddle. This is on a narrow ridge looking back on the Aletsch glacier and looking straight down—far down—on the Rottal glacier. The Rottal glacier route is the route taken by the guide Fuchs which has been already mentioned. It is better not to slip at that Rottal corner. From it begins the shoulder to the summit, which is tedious and tiresome, especially as the air is becoming rarer at the great height. President Parker's general formula of ascending 1,000 feet in an hour was not achieved on this occasion, for 2,350 feet should take only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours. I was quite glad to get to the summit before eight, in  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours. At the summit, I as thoroughly enjoyed my breakfast as I did the glorious view. It is indescribable by an ordinary climber. We, of course, made out all the near mighty giants and a good many distant ones, but the view hardly equalled the view I had from the Cima Tosa in the Dolomites (11,000 feet), which was the most striking snow view I have ever beheld. It happened to be the centre of rows of circles of snow peaks round and round. The Rocky Mountains of Canada, striking and awe-inspiring, seemed always to be like one-way switches, but then I only ascended one unpretentious top of some 7,000 feet. It was quite comfortable all the thirty to thirty-five minutes we rested at the Cairn or Horn of the Jungfrau, because the day was fine; and I wondered, as I was so much nearer the sun than the dwellers in the valley, whether his rays were so much the warmer. I still wonder!