

The contest for the Matterhorn [concluded]

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THE CONTEST FOR THE MATTERHORN

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first ascent
on 14th July 1865

(Concluded.)

Jean-Antoine Carrel loses the race

After this busy season came the year 1863 with only one attempt made, the sixteenth. Whymper and J. A. Carrel, at the same time rivals and comrades, again joined forces but had to quit at the Crête du Coq at an altitude of 13,290 ft. An attitude of general depression spread; pessimism dominated both the guides and the tourists. The Matterhorn was invincible. In the year 1864 not a single attempt was undertaken.

And yet neither Whymper nor Jean-Antoine Carrel wanted to give in. In June, the tough Englishman reached for his ice pick and his ropes, and not only did he engage the famous guide Michel Croz from Chamonix in addition to Christian Almer, Franz Biner and the porter Meynet; but he also attempted the ascent from a new side, the South-Eastern Furggen Couloir. Violent rock slides at the height of 11,266 ft. nearly resulted in a catastrophe. The defeat was complete. In July 1865, generously supported by prominent members of the Italian Alpine Club, J. A. Carrel organized a team composed exclusively of guides. He himself was the chief, other climbers were Charles Gorret and Jean-Joseph Maquignaz. After four days, on 14th July, they reached a height of almost 14,200 ft. at the Brèche and victory seemed to be within sight. Suddenly, at the summit, two waving figures appeared. Struck to the heart, J. A. Carrel and his group began their retreat.

A dearly bought victory

What had happened?

At Breuil where J. A. Carrel had refused to join his party, Whymper had met the 18-year old Lord Francis Douglas. A few days before, Douglas had proved himself an excellent mountaineer by being the first to traverse the Obergabelhorn from Zinal to Zermatt. He had also shown a lively interest in climbing the Matterhorn. Together Whymper and Douglas hurried over the Theodulpass to Zermatt, engaged the guide Peter Taugwalder. His son Peter was hired as a porter. But unexpectedly, Michel Croz was at Zermatt too. He was with two English tourists: the Reverend Charles Hudson and Robert D. Hadow. These were new candidates for climbing the Matterhorn. The two groups joined forces under the guidance of the 36-year old Michel Croz and left Zermatt on the evening of 13th July in order to camp out on the Hörnli. In the morning twilight of 14th July, they set out, following the Hörnligrat. They made their first rest at 6.20 a.m. at the height of 12,870 ft. Their second pause was at 9.55 a.m. at a height of 14,090 ft. To Whymper's great surprise they encountered relatively few difficulties on this hitherto untried route, with the exception of one spot about 330 ft. below the summit. At 1.40 p.m. they reached the summit after eighteen vain attempts of which fifteen had been made on the Italian side and only three on the Swiss. A total of thirty-one men, i.e. twenty-two

mountaineers and eight tourists, all of them Englishmen, were included in this gigantic eight year long struggle which had not claimed a single victim.

But here too it was shown once again that it is not possible to make an eternal pact with the forces of fate. After an hour on the summit, the descent began in the following order: Croz, Hadow, Hudson, Douglas, Taugwalder senior, Whymper and Taugwalder junior. At about 300 ft. below the summit, at the difficult spot already mentioned, Hadow, the weakest link in the chain from the alpinistic point of view, slipped and fell on the guide Croz. The two of them fell and tore Hudson and Douglas along with them over the precipitous 3,960 ft. high northface into the depths. Between Douglas and Taugwalder senior, the rope had broken. This way Whymper and the Taugwalders escaped with their lives. The conquered mountain had taken terrible vengeance in the eleventh hour.

Three days later, on 17th July 1865, Jean-Antoine Carrel and Jean-Paptiste Bich set foot on the summit of the Monte Cervino, climbing from Breuil. It is called the "Becca" in the dialect of Valtounanche although nearly all English speaking people know it only as the Matterhorn.

[S.N.T.O.]

THE IMAGE OF SWITZERLAND IN THE WORLD

We are publishing a few more facts and figures concerning the Swiss community in Great Britain as presented in a report given by the Swiss Ambassador at a meeting at the Swiss Embassy early in the year.

There are three schools for Swiss students in this country run by Swiss organisations: The College of the Swiss Mercantile Society in London, which is subsidised by the BIGA (Federal Office for Industry, Trade and Labour), the European Language and Education Centres in London and Bournemouth, founded and administered by the Migros Company, and the Anglo-Continental School of English in Bournemouth.

There are two Swiss Churches in London, French- and German-speaking, and there is a Swiss Roman Catholic Mission. Welfare Work is carried out by the Swiss Benevolent Society, the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls in Great Britain, the Churches. There is the Swiss Hostel for Girls in London, and in Manchester, London and Scotland, Friendly Societies organise mutual aid among our compatriots. The Swiss Benevolent Society, the Welfare Office (with a representative in Folkestone) and the International Travellers' Aid receive subsidies from the Confederation. So does the French Hospital in London, and the Italian Hospital received a special grant on the occasion of its eightieth anniversary.

Two hundred-odd fellow countrymen in Great Britain have so far joined the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad.

Apart from welfare and similar organisations, there are twelve Swiss societies in London and others at Balloch, Birmingham, Dunfermline, Edinburgh, Guernsey, Jersey, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Norwich. The Presidents of all the Swiss societies, various committees (like 1st August), the Churches, welfare institutions, the Editor of the "Swiss Observer", the representatives of the Swiss communities in G.B. on the Commission of the Swiss Abroad and the delegate on the Solidarity Fund, together constitute the Presidents' Assembly.

The legal basis for the presence of the Swiss in Britain, permitting them to settle and work here and safeguarding their interests, consists of about fifteen agreements concluded between Switzerland and the United Kingdom since 1855. These deal mainly with questions of establishment,