

A propos

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GRISONS.

A burglar, who was disturbed when on the premises of the "Co-opérative" in Klosters, fired a shot at his would be capturer and killed him outright. He was then shot at by one of the pursuers and received a wound which has since proved fatal. The dead man, an Austrian subject, was responsible for various burglaries which had occurred in the neighbourhood during the last few months.

SOLOTHURN.

M. Otto Haefeli, a member of the Board of many important industrial concerns in Switzerland, has died at the age of 78.

M. Haefeli was a member of the "Kantonsrat," over which he presided in 1903.

A PROPOS.

Ein englischer Arzt hat neulich in einer medizinischen Zeitschrift berichtet, es sei ihm gelungen, eine unfehlbare Methode zu entdecken, um Flöhe zu fangen. Sobald er sich gebissen fühlt — zufolge einer besonderen Veranlagung, über die er sich zu Beginn seines Artikels wehmütig beschwert, scheint ihm das häufig zu passieren — trinkt er die Stelle seiner Kleider, wo es ihn juckt, mit Chloroform. Dadurch werde der Floh eingeschlafert und lasse sich leicht fangen.

Die Sache ist ein wenig umständlich, aber wenn der Mann Freude daran hat, soll man sie ihm nicht verderben. Nur sollte er noch herausfinden, wie man die lästigen Blutsauger einschläfert, wenn man kein Chloroform zur Hand hat. Wenn ich wieder einmal in den unangenehmen Fall komme, der dem sanftmütigen Mediziner so oft Beschwerden macht, werde ich versuchen, dem Floh einen schweizerischen Wahlauftritt vorzulesen. Es kommt nicht so sehr darauf an, von welcher Partei, denn erstens lauten sie alle ziemlich ähnelnd, und was zweitens ihre narkotische Kraft betrifft, so ist auch kein grosser Unterschied vorhanden, denn — man darf das ja schon ganz leise sagen —, es gibt wenig Stimmberechtigte, die den Wahlauftritt selbst der eigenen Par-

tei vom ersten bis zum letzten Wort lesen. Vielleicht hängt es mit dieser einschläfernden Wirkung zusammen, dass so viele in diesen Schriftstücken enthaltene Versprechungen in Vergessenheit geraten.

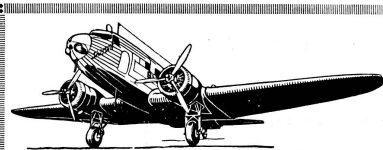
Die Zeitung, der ich den Bericht verdanke, hebt neben der wissenschaftlichen Umsicht des medizinischen Flohfängers die Humanität seines Verfahrens lobend hervor. Ich gestehe, dass meine Humanität gegenüber den heimtückischen Angriffen der Insektenwelt nicht standhält. Da erfüllt mich reine Rachelust, und der Gedanke, etwa einen Floh oder eine Stechmücke erst einschläfern zu wollen, bevor ich sie töte, hat mir tatsächlich bisher gänzlich ferngelegen. Aber vielleicht tötet der sorgsame Erfinder der neuen Methode die erbeuteten Tiere nicht einmal, sondern wirft sie nur in des Nachbars Garten oder verkauft sie an einen Flohzirkus, wobei man sich freilich fragen müsste, ob das humaner wäre. Es ist mit der Ethik, soweit sie unsere Stellung zur Tierwelt betrifft, fast noch problematischer bestellt, als mit den Regeln über unser Verhalten zu den Mitmenschen. Der berühmte, auch von vielen Europäern fast blind verehrte, Gandhi hat neulich erklärt, lieber würde er selbst in den Tod gehen, als eine Ratte zu töten. Auch ich habe nicht die geringste Lust, eine Ratte zu erschlagen, aber ich kann mir denken, dass es Fälle gibt, wo diese grausige Tat mir geradezu als Pflicht erschiene.

Das Bezeichnende an der Geschichte des englischen Arztes ist das umständliche Phlegma, womit der wackere Mann auf den Stich des Blutsaugers reagiert. Ich fürchte, der Floh wird in den meisten Fällen kaum mehr an der Stelle des Stiches anzutreffen sein, wenn er sich nicht geradezu toll und voll, und vor allem faul gefressen hat an dem Blut seines Opfers. Aber vielleicht wirkt der Genuss so phlegmatischen britischen Blutes an sich schon seelisch ansteckend. Heutzutage wird so viel von der Mystik des Blutes behauptet, dass eine derartige Freismystik schon geradezu alltäglich glaubhaft wirkt. Dann wäre aber das Chloroform am Ende gar nicht mehr notwendig gewesen.

Leider ist die britische Reaktion auch ausserpolitisch ein wenig langsam. Wenn England auf die italienischen Flohstiche etwas früher und mit weniger Chloroform reagiert hätte, ständen wir heute nicht vor einer so bedrohlichen Situation.

Salander.

(National Zeitung).



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THE MATTERHORN.

By JOHN. BARTROPP, Author of *Barbarian*.
(*Chambers's Journal*).

I.

It is probably fair to say that the Matterhorn has for several generations excelled all other mountains in general interest. During the past seventy or eighty years the fame of no other peak has spread in quite the same way beyond the boundaries of its own district and country. What, then, is there about the Matterhorn which gives it such notoriety, such world-wide reputation? Not merely its height, for, though it boasts the very respectable altitude of 14,705 feet, there are at least five loftier summits in its own immediate neighbourhood. It is its unique and stupendous shape — it stands quite alone, and not, like most mountains, as part of a range — combined with the dramatic quality of its history ever since men began to try to climb it, that has caused the Matterhorn to be regarded in general with a mixture of curiosity and awe. And it can be said at once that its reputation rests on no insecure basis. It is undoubtedly the most fascinating of mountains.

Yet there is probably not one amongst the thousands of summits in the Alps, or in the world for that matter, which is the subject of so much ignorance and misunderstanding. One hears the strangest variety of remarks concerning it, from — 'That terrible mountain!' 'The most difficult peak in the world.' 'It's very dangerous, isn't it?' down to — 'Nowadays it's considered ridiculously easy.' 'Oh, you know, the Swiss side is called the *Route des Vaches* because you could almost drive a cow up it,' and so on. What is the truth?

As regards position, the Matterhorn is situated roughly in the centre of the Pennine range of the Canton Valais in south-western Switzerland. This range is disposed on each side of a number of beautiful parallel valleys leading south from the great Rhone Valley, and contains several of the highest and finest mountains in the Alps. The Matterhorn stands up like a gigantic obelisk at the southern-most end of the Zermatt valley, or *Nikolaithal*, so called from St. Niklaus, its capital. The large village of Zermatt, sometimes, and with reason, called the Mecca of mountaineering, lies at its foot, the Swiss-Italian frontier line passes east and west across its wedge-shaped summit, and on its southern side lies the valley of Valtouranche, with the village of Breuil forming the Italian counterpart to Zermatt. It was in a great degree its position on the border of the two countries that gave such dramatic quality to the mountain's history.

In shape the Matterhorn is an immense four-sided pyramid, standing over 14,700 feet above sea-level, of which about 6,000 feet represents the height of the actual rock peak above its supporting base of grassy alps and snowy glaciers. Its

appearance has been variously likened to a rearing horse, a cobra about to strike, and a huge wave curling over to break. None of these descriptions is entirely apt, though there is certainly a strong element, both soaring and intimidating, about the mountain. The truth is that no simile is ever likely to be found to do justice to its immense size, its solitary grandeur, its purity of outline, and a certain character both sinister and menacing. From the final chapter of Edward Whymper's classic *Scrambles amongst the Alps* — the book which tells of his many efforts to climb the peak in the sixties of last century — a paragraph may well be quoted.

'The time may come when the Matterhorn shall have passed away, and nothing, save a heap of shattered fragments, will mark the spot where the great mountain stood; for, atom by atom, inch by inch, and yard by yard, it yields to forces which nothing can withstand. That time is far distant; and ages hence generations unborn will gaze upon its awful precipices and wonder at its unique form. However exalted may be their ideas and however exaggerated their expectations, none will come to return disappointed! No man loved the mountain more or had more cause to fear its power than the writer of those solemn lines.

II.

Of the four faces which rise to the summit, the East, or Swiss, and the South, or Italian, are the most frequently climbed, and formed the ground on which the great struggle for the honour of the first ascent was fought out seventy years ago. The East face looks down on Zermatt. It seems to tower over the collection of old chalets and modern hotels, and at a distance appears quite smooth and alarmingly steep, though in reality this is something of an illusion, for the angle up to the Shoulder, or for about three-quarters of its height, is not more than forty degrees. Above the Shoulder the mountain steepens sharply, and much of the upper face is nearly as vertical as it looks. The first ascent was by a route upon this side, close to the ridge between the East and North faces, commonly called the Swiss ridge. In a normally hot summer, the mountain shows itself as a pure rock peak, dark-brown or nearly black in colour. But from September to June, or at any time after a serious storm or snowfall, it suddenly becomes white with the ice and snow which cling to its isolated crags. At such times the mountain looks more formidable than ever, and the wise man will admire its beauty but not set foot upon it.

The Italian side is considerably larger and more complicated and cut-up than its smooth-looking Swiss counterpart. At the foot is a subsidiary peak called the *Tête du Lion*, above which a well-defined ridge, usually known as the Italian route, leads upwards to within about eight hundred feet of the summit, where there is a long, narrow, almost horizontal ridge ending in the

final peak, corresponding roughly to the steep part above the Shoulder of the Swiss side. It was this final peak on the Italian route which baffled most of the early explorers of the mountain, and though, for reasons which will be explained later, it was until its final conquest attacked almost entirely from Italy, there is no doubt that greater difficulties are found here than on the Swiss side. For some years after the first ascent there were more expeditions from Italy than from Zermatt, probably because it was on the Swiss side that the famous accident on that first ascent occurred. Later on, ropes were fixed on the steep upper part of the Swiss face, and by far the greater number of ascents are now made by that way, partly because it is easier and shorter, and also because of the superior attractions and ease of access of the Swiss village over its Italian neighbour.

The North face, the least extensive of the four, is exceedingly steep and repellent of aspect. It was down this almost vertical precipice that, in 1865, four of the party of the first ascent fell, and it was until lately regarded, with good reason, as inaccessible and unjustifiable of attempt. Two young Swiss climbers, however, reached the summit from this side about a year ago, after a day and a night of intense danger, but the achievement is not likely to be often repeated.

The West, or Zmutt, side, shows the outline of the mountain at its finest, though it is the least seen or known, facing as it does a great mass of mountains and glaciers, and being out of sight of any village, Swiss or Italian. A route was forced up this side, called the Zmutt-grat or ridge, in 1879 by the two independent English parties of Mummery, the most famous mountaineer of his day, and Penhall, with some of the most enterprising of the Valais guides. This climb was then considered the last word in difficulty, and is even to-day regarded as a very fine expedition, in favourable weather probably the best of the justifiable routes up the mountain. There are no fixed ropes on this side of the mountain, so that the natural difficulties still exist in their original form.

The westerly ridge, called the Furggen-grat, is tremendously steep and contains one long overhanging pitch. It was once attacked in the early days by Whymper and his guides, who did not, however, get very far. Mummery climbed the greater part of it after immense difficulties in 1880, but had to leave it and turn over to the Swiss ridge above the Shoulder. In modern times, several Swiss and Italian parties have made the complete ascent by the Furggen-grat, but the final part has in most cases had to be negotiated by means of fixed ropes or ladders let down from the summit. Like the North face, this is not generally regarded as a straightforward expedition.

(To be continued).