



Newsletter

MATTERHORN 2015

Post 2 — Friday June 16th 1865
from Zinal

The Start of a Campaign

150 Years Ago — First Ascent of the Matterhorn

It is Summer 1865...

...and how many unclimbed Alpine peaks will have been conquered by the time the cool damp air of Autumn returns?

Mountaineers, many of them British, are planning their routes and engaging their favourite local guides to assist. So I, whose scribblings usually cover London society events and gossip, have packed my notebooks and pens with my climbing ropes and nailed boots. I will follow those

intrepid climbers, witness their achievements and post back my reports. Many of the summits of Europe have been conquered over the last fifty years, those left must rank as among the most challenging. Grandes Jorasses, Aiguille Verte, Matterhorn – who will be the first to set foot on your proud peaks?



The Story So Far

In Zermatt, Herr Seiler of the Monte Rosa hotel brought me up to date with Edward Whymper's aborted hopes for the Matterhorn last July. Then I received news that Mr Whymper's 1865 campaign is already underway and he was soon to reach Zinal. I came to learn of his plans.



Alexander Seiler

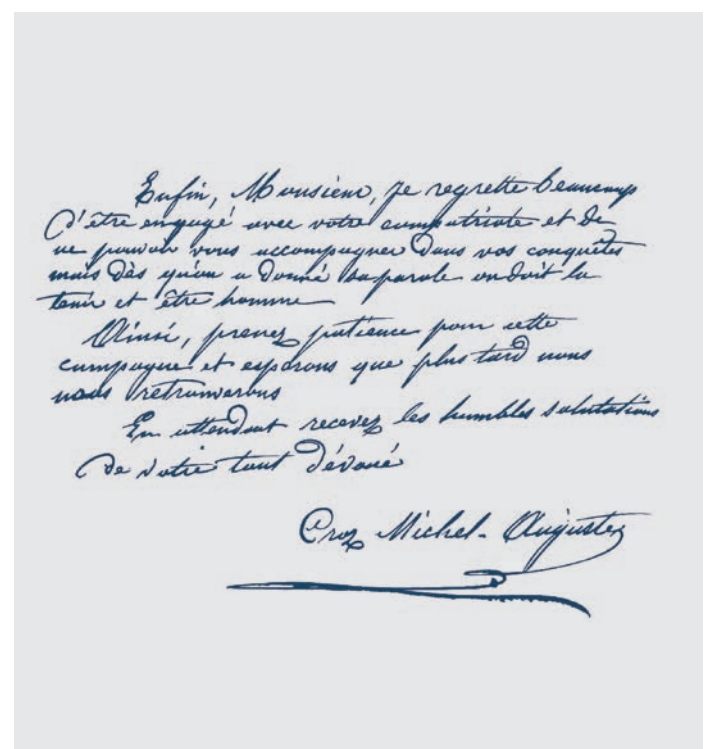
The Start of a Campaign

The village of Zinal perches on a high ledge, surrounded by impressive, unclimbed peaks. Edward Whymper arrived here yesterday. His meticulous mind is occupied planning routes and developing strategy to find the most effective, the most elegant, climbs across the Alps. I feel he has the skills and has the energy to confront some of the biggest

mountaineering challenges that remain.

The role of the mountain guide is changing

While these peasants were first of all mountain men who carried our equipment and provisions, cut steps through ice and snow and deployed their mountain craft to the service of our expeditions, some are now starting to excel as climbers in their own right. These are



Letter from Croz to Whymper

Mr Whymper is deeply disappointed.

the men whose mountaineering skills and their will to climb outmatch those of many of their peers. Michel Croz from Chamonix is one of those men.

So Mr Whymper delighted to be in the company of Croz but is deeply disappointed not to have his services for the whole summer. He regrets having made so nebulous an arrangement with the guide last year, a few snatched words when they parted at Visp. It is not to Croz' discredit that he accepted a firmer offer employment by Mr John Birkbeck from Yorkshire which begins on the 27th of this month.

As well as Croz, Mr Whymper has engaged two other guides who must be at the peak of the profession, Christian Almer from Grindelwald and Franz Biner from Zermatt. With so strong a team, I have a suspicion that some of the more stubborn mountains will be forced to shake off their cloaks of invincibility and surrender.

Next on Mr Whymper's list is the unclimbed Grand Cornier.

Or has that peak already succumbed? It's not entirely clear. When Mr Whymper reached



Christian Almer from Grindelwald

Zinal, he spotted in the hotel Guest Book an entry made by Mr Adolphus Moore, celebrating a first ascent of the Grand Cornier, with his guide – Franz Biner! Well, Mr Whymper turned in askance to the man. But Biner shook his head –

“Sorry Herr, we thought we had reached the top but now I am sure it was only a point along the way.”



Wind eaten ridge of Grand Cornier

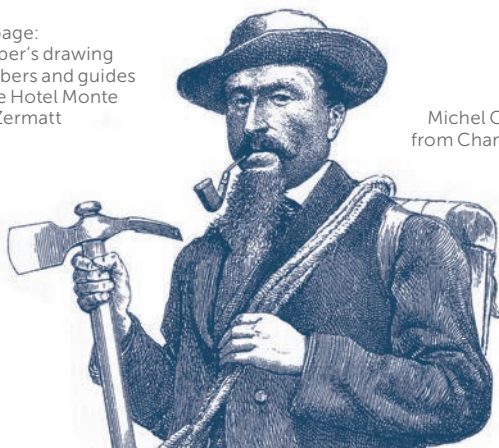
Whymper working closely with Italian guide Jean-Antoine Carrel



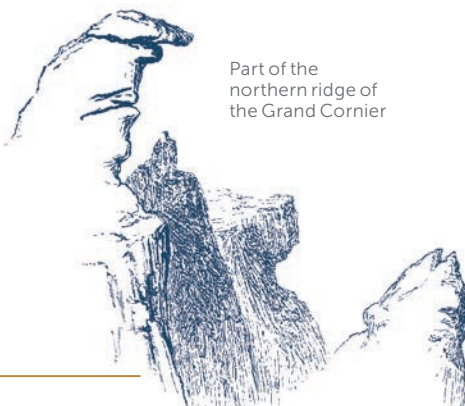
Their intention is to continue to Zermatt.

They left early, shortly after 2 am, this morning. I look forward to telling you the result of their attempt. Their intention is to continue to Zermatt, by some new and perilous route. Then, I am sure, Mr Whymper will be looking towards the Matterhorn. Good luck to them! ■

Front page: Whymper's drawing of climbers and guides outside Hotel Monte Rosa, Zermatt



Michel Croz from Chamonix



Part of the northern ridge of the Grand Cornier

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Experience the 1st Ascent of the Matterhorn "live" on the web.

Imprint

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