



Post 1 — Monday June 12th 1865
from Zermatt

The Matterhorn remains aloof

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 scribbles 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

I came first to Zermatt, as I fully expect this remote village in the thrall of the mighty Matterhorn to have an important role to play in the drama of 1865. I drink a toast to the coming season with Herr Seiler of the Monte Rosa hotel.



Zermatt's Monte Rosa Hotel →

The Matterhorn remains aloof

For a few days in 1864, Herr Seiler suspected the Matterhorn might, at last, allow the feet of men to its summit. Young Edward Whymper arrived in Zermatt with Mr Adolphus Moore on a mid-July evening.

They had made the first ever crossing of the Moming Pass from Zinal to Zermatt with their guides Michel Croz from Chamonix and Christian Almer from Grindelwald. Mr Whymper was all set to attack

the Matterhorn. His friend, Mr Adams Reilly, was en route with equipment. But suddenly Mr Whymper received a telegram. He was most distraught, Herr Seiler tells me, about a business problem and would return to London forthwith. Mr Whymper left bidding Mr Adams Reilly to have a go at the Matterhorn with Croz. However, rainy weather had left the rock covered in ice, and Adams Reilly determined to have nothing to say to it.



Michel Croz demonstrated his strength beating a way through the enormous wind swept snow cornice on the crest of the Moming Pass

Who will first reach the Matterhorn's summit?

Foremost contenders must be Charles Hudson, Thomas Stuart Kennedy and Joseph McCormick. Mr Hudson is an accomplished mountaineer with ten years of experience, be that mostly on snow peaks not rock. Mr Kennedy has been sniffing around the Matterhorn for many years now, and challenged all our presumptions by making an attempt in January 1862, arguing



Thomas Stuart Kennedy

Industrialist and perhaps the boldest of the English climbers

that winter's snow would make possible that which summer's ice prevented. Mr Kennedy was forced to turn back when the atrocious conditions almost

The atrocious conditions almost froze him and his guides to death.

froze him and his guides, Peter Perren and Old Peter Taugwalder, to death. The Reverend McCormick, a strong athlete, is going to enjoy a truly alpine summer,



Rev. Charles Hudson

English country vicar and ambitious mountaineer

having taken on the Chaplaincy at Grindelwald and then at Zermatt.

I believe John Birkbeck from Yorkshire will join them. The young man is following his accomplished father and becoming a mountaineer to watch, in spite of almost falling to his death on Mont Blanc in 1861. This was his introduction to the Alps, when he travelled with the Rev. Hudson, a friend of his father's. Young Birkbeck certainly showed he has courage.

Is this Edward Whymper's Summer?

But Mr Whymper must be a strong challenger. His achievements during his five year climbing career are impressive. Sadly, Mr Adams Reilly is fully occupied with surveys for his Alpine maps this summer, so will not be accompanying his friend on the campaign. I hear that Mr Whymper has managed to arrange an early release from his engraving work and is, as I write, travelling towards the mountains. His business ranks highly in his priorities,



Edward Whymper

Wood engraver who loves to draw the mountains as well as climb them



In the case of bad weather, protection is worn, such as the woollen headpiece on the left. In really extreme conditions, masks must be worn to protect the face.

so this summer's climbing must mean a lot to him. Such motivation surely magnifies his chances of success, or maybe reduces caution. Time shall tell. Mr Whymper

I would speculate he has in mind the unclimbed Ebnefluhjoch.

is starting his campaign from Lauterbrunnen so I would speculate he has in mind the unclimbed Ebnefluhjoch.

Adolphus Moore and Horace Walker are possibly two of the strongest of our British climbers in the Alps this season, and they have hired a guide whose talents are being spoken of with awe – Jakob Anderegg from Oberwil in the Simmental. But I have the impression that

the Matterhorn is of no interest to them. They are on their way to begin the summer in the area of Switzerland they call Graubünden. They are clearly seeking places that are, as yet, less explored. ■



Adolphus Moore

Harrow educated, skilled climber



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