

THE FÜHRERBUCH OF ALEXANDER BURGNER

By D. F. O. DANGAR

ALEXANDER BURGNER was born at Saas Fee on January 10, 1845. While still young he made his mark in the valley both as chamois hunter and climber. As early as 1865 he took Dr. Dübi and his companions up the Mittaghorn and Mattwaldhorn.

Burgner's first Führerbuch was either lost or destroyed, and the book under review was not issued until 1882. It was presented to the Alpine Club by the family of the late Herr Moritz von Kuffner of Vienna, who enjoyed a long standing friendship with his old guide, broken only by the latter's untimely death.

Before this date Burgner had already achieved a remarkable series of new expeditions made principally with C. T. Dent, whom he first met in 1868, and with A. F. Mummery. The second entry in the book is signed 'W. M. Conway, Zermatt, 4 Aug. 1882,' and gives a brief summary of his career up to the beginning of that year. It is transcribed in full, and I have added the date of each expedition, with the exception of those made with Mr. Purnell, about which I have been unable to find any information.

'I am very glad to take advantage of the opportunity which Alexander Burgner has given me to write him a most hearty testimonial. In my opinion he is one of the best, if not the best, guide in Switzerland. As a rock climber, I believe it will be hard for any man to surpass him. He is a first rate companion; his manners are of the hearty, boisterously merry kind—well suited to the mountains. I may say, tho' it is hardly necessary, that the jealousy which unfortunately divides the inhabitants of the two valleys into cliques, has been busy starting reports against the men of Saas, the whole of which are entirely without foundation. Alexander is a *thoroughly honest* man, as I have had more than one opportunity of discovering. As this testimonial is to take the place of the old book, now superseded, I append a list of the principal new expeditions in wh. Alexander led the way.

1870.	Sudlenzspitze	with Mr. Dent.
1871.	Portiengrat	„ „ „
1872.	Rothorn (fr. Zermatt)	„ „ „
1876.	Täschhorn (fr. Saas)	„ „ Watson.
	Aig. Impériales	„ „ Purnell.
	„ Rouges	„ „ „
	„ Floria (new route)	„ „ „
1878.	Aig du Dru	„ „ Dent.
1879.	Sonnighorn	„ „ Mummery.
1879.	Dürrenhorn	„ „ „

1879.	Matterhorn by W. arête	with Mr. Mummery.
1880.	Col du Lion	„ „ „
1880.	Aig. de Charmoz	„ „ „
1880.	Matterhorn (S.E. arête)	„ „ „
1881.	Barre des Ecrins from Gl. Noir	„ Dr. Güssfeldt.
1881.	Aig. Verte (fr. Gl. Charpoua)	„ Mr. Mummery.

He knows Dauphiné, the Graians, the Mt. Blanc district, the Oberland, the Engadine and his own mountains.'

To this list may be added :

1879.	Fletschhorn from the Laquin glacier with Mr. Mummery.
1881.	Aiguille de Grépon with Mr. Mummery.
1881.	Strahlhorn, variation on the North-east arête (descent) with Dr. R. von Lendenfeld.

In 1881, Burgener also made the second crossing of the Col du Lion, and the first passage from Breuil to Zermatt, with Dr. Güssfeldt. With such a record behind him, he was one of the best known guides in the Alps when his second Führerbuch was brought into use.

The opening entry, by Dr. C. Passavant of the Swiss Alpine Club, covers the period June 19–July 16, 1882, and records the first ascent of Mont Pelvoux from the east, an attempt on the Meije from the north, which failed because there was too much ice, and a new ascent of the Nadelhorn from the west, the party making a variation of their route on the descent. The entry concludes, 'Alexandre Burgener est le meilleur guide que j'aie jamais rencontré. Courageux sans être téméraire, d'une force herculéenne, aussi sûr dans la neige et la glace que sur les rochers, attentif à tous les besoins du voyageur, il ne sera jamais surpassé par aucun autre guide. Inutile d'ajouter d'autres recommandations.'

In August he was at Zermatt with the Prince di Tearno (later Duca di Sermoneta and a member of the Alpine Club) and his wife, and Dr. Güssfeldt. They went up the Matterhorn, Zinal Rothorn, and other peaks. '*Sans peur et sans reproche*,' wrote the Prince, 'pourrait être sa devise.'

The first entry by von Kuffner was written in July, 1883; he records ascents of the Finsteraarhorn, Piz Roseg, and Piz Gluschaint; this last was climbed by the North arête for the first time, with Clemenz Perren as second guide, in bad conditions. The weather deteriorated during the course of the expedition and the summit was reached in a snow-storm and intense cold, so that no halt was possible and the party descended by the usual route without delay. Thus began the long acquaintanceship of von Kuffner and Burgener. From 1883 to 1899 they were together each season, with the exception of 1884 and 1886 when Burgener was in the Caucasus.

Burgener then spent six weeks with Karl Schulz, in the course of which they made the following expeditions, with Clemenz Perren as second man :

July 27. Colle del Torrone. First crossing.

July 29. Piz Badile from Bagni di Masino, by a route of Burgener's discovery which Schulz describes as better and more convenient than those of Minnigerode and Lurani.

Aug. 2. Monte della Disgrazia from the Cecilia club hut.

Aug. 3. Pizzo Torrone Orientale. First ascent by the West arête.

Aug. 6. Piz Bernina by the Scharte. Second ascent by this route.

Aug. 14. Monte Rosa (Dufour Spitze) by the East face. Third ascent, and the first since the Marinelli accident in 1881. Left the bivouac on the Jägerrücken at 2.55 A.M. Summit, 11.30 A.M. Riffel, 4.40 P.M. The difficulties of this ascent evidently made a great impression on Burgener. Some years later, Dr. Kugy, then at Zermatt, was endeavouring to find a guide for an attempt on the East face of the Nord End but, 'Almost all the local guides, I knew, would decline such an undertaking. Including Burgener. He had once traversed the Dufour Spitze from Macugnaga with Professor Schulz and Perren, and would not look at it again.'¹

Aug. 18. Matterhorn traversed from Zermatt and returned over the Furggengrat reaching Zermatt at 6.50 the same evening.

Herr Braunstein relates ² that after dinner that evening, Burgener asked Schulz if he might have the next day free, as an English lady wished to traverse the Matterhorn with him. His new client was Mrs. Fred Burnaby (née Elizabeth Hawkins-Whitshed). They started at 11.30 P.M. and at 10 o'clock next morning Burgener stood once again upon the summit of the Matterhorn. There are thus grounds for thinking that Mrs. Burnaby was the writer of the entry preceding that of Schulz, but so faded is it now, that not all of it is legible, and of the signature, only the word 'Elizabeth' can be deciphered. The entry records a traverse of the Matterhorn and—'We returned by Col St. Théodule, having done the excursion without sleep either at the Zermatt cabin or at Breuil. Owing to the great quantity of snow & ice on the Italian side of the mountain, the descent was unusually difficult.'

On August 23, Schulz, with Burgener and Perren, made an attempt on the South face of the Bietschhorn. Starting at 2.15 A.M. from a bivouac in the Baltschieder Thal, they had reached, at one o'clock, a point 'where a ridge rose above them to the right which seemed to lead to the summit. Perren was sent forward to reconnoitre and declared it was impossible to proceed. Professor Schulz thought that Perren neither climbed in the right direction nor went far enough, and that the opinion would have been different had Burgener gone himself. He even proposed to continue the ascent, but Burgener replied, "You have heard that it won't do; we cannot go forward, and to-day we cannot go back down the couloir. We must sleep here." He also said he would give his whole guide's pay for the year to be safe down again.

¹ Julius Kugy : *Alpine Pilgrimage*, p. 259.

² *Les Alpes*, 1940, p. 55.

This from Burgener meant a good deal. Whilst making their preparations they observed that the couloir was in the shadow, and that the falls of stone had ceased, and Burgener thought they might venture. They started at 3.30, reached the foot of the couloir at 5.30; at 8.30 they finally left the ice, and at 9.30 they bivouacked, quite tired out.³

Schulz's estimate of the possibilities of an ascent from the south as recorded in the Führerbuch, was quite correct: 'Die Ersteigung von Süden erscheint möglich, ist aber sehr schwierig.' The following year he made the ascent with the brothers Zsigmondy and Ludwig Purtscheller.

Aug. 26. Sattelhorn. First ascent. Ascent by the South-west arête from the Sattellücke; descent by the East arête. Clemenz Perren did not take part in this ascent, the party being completed by Joseph Rittler. No details of this expedition having been recorded in the *Alpine Journal*, Schulz's brief account in the Führerbuch will be of interest: '*Sattelhorn* an der Lötschenlücke von Ried aus durch die Sattellücke. *Erste Ersteigung*. Aufstieg durch Sattellücke. Von Ried 4 h. 15 m. Gipfel 1 Uhr. Abstieg nach der Lötschenlücke wegen harten Eises nicht möglich, über den unbennanten Gipfel zwischen Sattelhorn und Aletschhorn [Klein Aletschhorn] nach dem Oberaletsch gletscher abgestiegen und über Beichfirn und Beichgrat nach Ried zurück, den ganzen Beichgrat mit der Laterne überschritten, 1 h. 50 m. in der Nacht in Ried, ca. 22 Stunden unterwegs.'

The entry describing these expeditions fills rather more than six pages of the Führerbuch. Schulz concludes: 'Auf allen diesen Touren hat Alexander Burgener seinen Ruf als vortrefflicher, ebenso unternehmender als vorsichtiger Führer bewährt.'

Maurice de Déchy, A.C., signs the next entry, dated Budapest November, 1884, and written in both English and German: 'Alexander Burgener accompanied me on a tour through (*sic*) the Caucasus. In the ascents of Adai-Choch and Elbruz he showed his high qualities of a first rate man on ice and rock, as a leader on difficult and first expeditions.'

Doubts were raised as to the identity of de Déchy's Adai-Choch, and it was not until many years later that it was finally identified as Mamison Khokh. P. J. Ruppen, of Saas, was second guide on this Caucasus tour.

The first entry for 1885 is by Moritz von Kuffner, written in German, followed by an English translation. Typical of von Kuffner's many entries in the book, it runs as follows: 'Alexander Burgener was in the month of July my guide and we executed the following expeditions: Wetterhorn, Schreckhorn, Laquinhorn (ascent from Simplon, new), Col du Lion,⁴ Matterhorn (crossed from the new Italian hut to Zermatt), attempt to ascend the Eiger over the Mittellegi (we reached the "Gabel" between the last gendarme and the last rock wall descending from the summit). Eiger from the Kl. Scheidegg and descent over

³ *A. J.* 12. 179.

⁴ In *A. J.* 39. 45, this expedition is stated to have taken place 'about 1891.'

the Mittellegi to the Eigerhöhle and Grindelwald. (The two last expeditions together with J. M. Biener of St. Nicolaus as second guide.) That we could execute all these expeditions in perfect ease and without any accident is, I think, the best proof of the first rate qualities of Burgener as a guide and leader of difficult expeditions. I am glad to give him my hearty thanks.'

Burgener thus took part in the first three crossings of the Col du Lion. Von Kuffner had Alois Kalbermatten as second guide for his passage, and Kalbermatten also took part in the expeditions on the Eiger. Kuffner's attempt to ascend the Mittellegi ridge took place on July 29. Gaining the crest of the arête at 3.30 A.M. he and the guides found themselves after nine hours' climbing at the very foot of the final wall. Although they could see no way up it, they thought it might be possible to descend and leaving a rope on the 'great gendarme,' they returned to Grindelwald. Two days later the same party succeeded in making the first descent of the Mittellegi arête. Having reached the top of the Eiger by the usual route at 7.20 A.M., they remained there till 8.10 and reached the upper edge of the great rock wall at 9 o'clock. 'The first bit of the descent was not difficult, but matters soon changed, and at 10.45 they came to the first of the "places on which we let ourselves down by the rope." This proved, perhaps, the most difficult bit of the entire descent, as the foot-hold was very bad. Three in turn were let down holding on to the doubled slender rope (which was fixed to the rocks) and tied to a Manilla rope, Burgener (the last man), helping himself by a rope which he had secured above while the others held the end below. This process was repeated, and finally, after many difficulties, they succeeded in reaching at 1.45 P.M. (after $4\frac{3}{4}$ hours' work), the deep depression in the ridge just W. of the great gendarme.' They left the arête at 7.15 P.M. and passed a wretched night in the Eigerhöhle 'without blankets or food, save a soup prepared by Burgener from the bits of tobacco, salt, pepper candle and dust which he shook out of his knapsack, added to a little water.'⁵

When the first ascent of the Mittellegi ridge was made, thirty-six years later, Burgener's axe was found 'at the top of the steep pitch which is the crux of the climb.'

Burgener finished the season at Grindelwald, traversing the Wetterhorn and Jungfrau and taking the Duchess of Sermoneta up the Schreckhorn. 'Alexander was, as usual, perfect in every respect.'

Next year Burgener paid his second visit to the Caucasus, with C. T. Dent and W. F. Donkin. 'It is now some years,' wrote Dent, 'since I have done any mountaineering with Alexander Burgener; and I considered myself fortunate in obtaining his services for a tour in the Caucasus. I found him to possess all the good qualities which I have many times praised in this book.'⁶ In addition, he showed himself at

⁵ *A. J.* 13. 554. See also *A. J.* 41. 282-284. The footnote on p. 284 should be deleted.

⁶ This is the only entry by Dent in the second Führerbuch.

all times throughout our tour a cheery companion, a good cook, washerman and valet (essential requisites in the Caucasus) and altogether an invaluable associate. In the first ascent of Tau Tetnuld,⁷ (*circa* 16,500 ft.) & other glacier expeditions I found that his mountaineering qualities were as good as ever. I could say nothing better of him in this respect. Only exceptional guides could come out of so trying an ordeal as a Mountaineering Tour in the Caucasus so satisfactorily.'

The single entry over the signature of A. F. Mummery, with whom Burgener carried out some of his greatest expeditions, is dated July 19, 1887: 'Alex. Burgener has accompanied me in the ascents of the Jungfrau, Dreieckhorn, Rothorn, Matterhorn & Taschorn (*sic*) (first ascent by the S.W. ridge). In every instance he has shown himself most daring, determined, and withall prudent; no better guide or cheerier companion could be desired.'

On the termination of his engagement with Mummery, Burgener spent three weeks with von Kuffner in the Mont Blanc district. They made a new route (South-east arête) on the Aiguille des Glaciers and were the first to ascend Mont Blanc from the Col de la Tour Ronde over Mont Maudit. This was, in truth, a tremendous expedition, and the summit of Mont Blanc was only reached at 4 P.M. on the third day after leaving Courmayeur.

C. A. C. Bowlker records an ascent of the Grandes Jorasses in August: 'a sudden & violent snow-storm rendered the descent very trying, but owing to the skill and courage of Alexander, we accomplished it without mishap.' The same month there were ascents of the Zinal Rothorn and Matterhorn with Hiatt C. Baker. The last entry for 1887 is over the signature of O. Eckenstein: 'Alexander Burgener acted as my guide in a new ascent of the Dom by the couloir on the S.W. side. In my opinion he is certainly the best guide to be found anywhere.' Herren A. Seiler, jr., and von Mallinckrodt with their guides completed the party. Six-and-a-half hours were spent in ascending throughout its entire length the dangerous couloir which seams the South-west face of the mountain—'of which the upper part consists chiefly of loose stones bound together by ice'—and for nearly half of the time, snow was falling. So hazardous an ascent, under such conditions, would have seen Burgener at his best! Doubtless the lion's share of the work fell to him; history does not record the names of the other two guides.

Von Kuffner's entry for 1888 is headed 'Auf Verlangen englisch' and records a tour in Dauphiné during the month of August. They went up the Meije and Ecrins and ascended the Pelvoux from the glacier des Violettes; Burgener had made the first ascent from this side with Dr. Passavant six years before. The two other entries for this year refer to expeditions made from Zermatt and Saas Fee. Bowlker, after an ascent of the Täscherhorn could not 'speak too highly of the skill and care with which he conducted us to the summit,

⁷ Gestola.

though the amount of fresh snow rendered both the slopes & the arête more than usually difficult.'

In 1889 Burgener was with Bowlker for a month; their expeditions included the Dom by the West arête, the Dent Blanche, and the first ascent of the Staffelhorn. Bowlker also claims to have made the first ascent of the Fletschhorn from the Rossboden Pass; this route had been taken on the descent in 1880. 'On every occasion he shewed himself a most skilful, *careful*, and determined leader, and is always a most cheerful and pleasant companion. It is impossible to overestimate his excellence as a courageous & prudent guide, alike on glacier & rock.'

In August, 1890, A. W. Andrews and a friend were taken up the Zinal Rothorn by Burgener. Mr. Andrews tells me that this was his 'first big mountain and first experience of snow and ice in the Alps.' A beginner's impression of the great guide are thus recorded: 'We cannot praise too highly his skill and care. He was at all times a most pleasant companion and his prudence and care on glacier and rock cannot possibly be overestimated. We should recommend him *most* highly as a daring guide for experts and an excellent teacher for novices.'

Other entries for 1890 record ascents from Zermatt with A. Carson Roberts, T. L. Kesteven and A. H. B. Richardson, and Hiatt C. Baker, all members of the Alpine Club. Baker, climbing after a spell of bad weather 'had an opportunity of seeing the extreme care & judgement with which Alex. Burgener acts in cases of difficulty & danger. In fact, with him I feel perfectly safe & only regret that the bad weather has prevented our doing more together.'

In July, with his old friend von Kuffner he made a new route on the Portjengrat, P. J. Ruppen being second guide.

There are but four entries for 1891. Demeter Diamantidi, A.C., records ascents of the Untergabelhorn ('with a new descent by the North couloir to the Trift Hut'), Zinal Rothorn and Mont Blanc. 'Diesen ausgezeichneten weltbekanntem Führer besonders zu empfehlen ist wohl überflüssig.'

The following year von Kuffner and Burgener made the second ascent of the East face of the Bietschhorn, with Alois Kalbermatten as second guide. Burgener then had six weeks with Eugène Vail, A.C., and his wife, at Zermatt and Saas Fee. Weisshorn, Zinal Rothorn, Matterhorn and other peaks were climbed. 'The only thing that we have to regret,' wrote Vail, 'is that our climbing is over with him for this year, as we find him entirely up to his reputation. With a lady, he is most safe and careful, and, in fact, altogether satisfactory. As second guide, he took his son Heinrich.'

The year 1893 found him in the Engadine with von Kuffner; Morteratsch, Palü (three peaks), Bernina by the Scharde and Disgrazia. Returning to Zermatt, he had a few days with Dr. Julius Kugy; 'Alexander Burgener führte mich auf *Weisshorn* und *Dent Blanche*. Ich bin dem ausgezeichneten Manne für seine Führung in hohem Grade dankbar.' The Dent Blanche was climbed in brilliant weather with one of the

Supersaxos as second guide. Kugy relates elsewhere ⁸ that 'Burgener staged the ascent in a peculiar manner. "Herr, we are on the Dent Blanche," he called to me at each big step. Perhaps he saw with what reverence I had approached the mountain which Whymper describes in such thrilling words.' In the course of the hot summer's day, a thin layer of covering snow had melted, and on the descent the party found ice where, in the morning, there had been snow. Much step cutting was necessary and they had to spend the night on the Wandfluh rocks. Kugy endeavoured to secure Burgener for the following summer, but found that he was permanently engaged to other climbers, and thus was only free in the absence of one of his regular employers.

Dr. Hummel records an exciting day on the Weisshorn in August, 1893, when both the guides were struck by lightning on the summit but 'Burgener, in spite of the difficult conditions, storm and fresh snow, led the expedition admirably.'

In 1894, after being with von Kuffner for most of July and making some ascents from Zermatt with other travellers, Burgener went to the Cogne district with Hiatt C. Baker and F. W. Oliver. They ascended Punta Garin and Punta Lavina by new routes, the only new expeditions made by Burgener in that region. When Baker had left the party, Oliver and Burgener made a number of ascents from Zinal, Zermatt, and Saas Fee. 'It is hardly needful to add that Alexander Burgener showed himself an accomplished guide.'

The next two entries, for 1895, are signed by Herr and Frau von Kuffner. After some ascents from Pontresina, and that of the Laquinhorn, von Kuffner records an ascent of the Täschhorn, with descent by the Teufelsgrat.

The season of 1897 finds him for the second and last time with Dr. Kugy. 'Col d'Argentièrre—Aiguille d'Argentièrre—Col du Géant. Ich war zufrieden wie immer.' Kugy was impressed by the bergschrund on the Col d'Argentièrre: 'The cleft was wide enough to hold a many storeyed house. We climbed into it from the lower lip, cut in the ice, jumped over boulders, broke down rows of icicles as thick as a man's arm, till all the twilight space rang with their fall; we traversed the face of towers, balanced across narrow ice bridges, scrambled over water worn slabs, making, indeed, a whole subterranean climb. And when at length we stepped into the light of day beyond the upper lip, I was amazed that such labour had brought so little progress.'⁹ Kugy's connection with Burgener came to an end in rather unhappy circumstances. Impressed by the powers of his guide, he accepted Burgener's offer of his services for the following year. Arriving next summer at the rendezvous at Courmayeur, Kugy found not Alexander, but Heinrich and Alois Burgener. He was told that Alexander was ill and had sent his son and his brother in his place. Later, at Zermatt, Kugy learnt that Alexander had not, in fact, been ill. His 'old Viennese employer' had unexpectedly required his services and

⁸ *Alpine Pilgrimage*, p. 258.

⁹ *Alpine Pilgrimage*, p. 266.

Alexander, instead of asking Kugy to release him from his engagement, had sent his relatives as substitutes.

Dr. Bröckelmann records an ascent of the Matterhorn, and F. G. S. Clerihew, A.C., of the Obergabelhorn, evidently in August or September 1897, though neither entry is dated.

Von Kuffner's entry of September 11, 1897, covers two seasons: the Oberland and Pennines in 1896; the Engadine—and Königsspitze—in 1897. 'Er war wie immer ein ausgezeichneter Führer und treuer Begleiter dem ich besten Dank sagen.' The following year they had nearly six weeks together in July and August and covered a lot of ground, their ascents including the Altels, Monte Leone, Piz Tschierva and the Ortler.

A young Swiss beginner, conducted by Burgener to the summit of the Dom, records that he found him a 'sehr treuer, aufmerksamer und behrender Führer.'

The year 1899 brings von Kuffner's twelfth and final entry. The extent of ground covered in that last journey was almost worthy of Tuckett! Starting with the 'Mont du Tacul (Chamonix),' they went on to Zermatt (Allalinhorn, Castor, Pollux) then the Galenstock, Piz Tremoggia, Bellavista, Piz Palü (East peak) and Cevedale. The ascent of the East peak of Piz Palü with Martin Schocher as second guide was the first to be made by the great rock and ice ridge falling from the summit to the Pers glacier. The remaining entries for 1899 record ascents in the Zermatt district. G. Mackenzie, A.C., mentions a traverse of the Rimpfischhorn in August; 'Much fresh & bad snow. Burgener proved a first class man.'

Two Swiss climbers, after ascents of the Zinal Rothorn and Dent Blanche under bad conditions in September 1900, pay this tribute: 'Er ist immer noch derjenige Führer allerersten Ranges der ihm seinen Weltruf gegeben hat.'

An entry by J. Eberli, later a member of the Alpine Club, describes some expeditions from Chamonix in July 1901, including 'Mont Blanc, under very exhausting snow-conditions requiring the highest endurance and energy on the part of the guide (9 hours fr.G.M. to the summit). Aiguille du Charmoz, which tour enabled me to compare A.B.'s knowledge of mountain craft with that of another guide who was leading a second party. . . . In all these ascents A.B. has done full justice to his high reputation.' Here it may be mentioned that in the previous year. Eberli and Burgener had ascended the Balfrinhorn by following the North-west ridge in its entirety.

Alexander, at the age of 57, was busy in 1902. The thirteen entries for that year refer to expeditions in the Valais, mostly from Zermatt. There was little new that his clients could write of him, but one and all endeavoured to pay their tribute. After an ascent of the Matterhorn: 'Seine Führung war, wie nicht anders zu erwarten, vorzüglich.'

Four climbers led to the summit of the Dent Blanche thought that 'to add any praise in respect of one so well known would be superfluous.'

The entry of Dr. Biehly must be one of the shortest ever recorded in a guide's Führerbuch: '*Lyskamm, weitere Empfehlungen überflüssig.*'

H. W. C. Bowdoin, A.C., records an 'ascent of the Balfrinhorn (by the N. rock arête) and of the Ober-Gabelhorn. I need only say that he fully lived up to his great reputation.' Another of our late members F. G. S. Clerihew, went up the Weisshorn with Burgener: 'The mountain was in a very bad condition & another party on the mountain would not proceed unless we went first, & it was only his great knowledge of ice craft that enabled us to get to the top.'

In 1903—three entries only—traverses of Mont Blanc and of the Grépon may be mentioned. In the entire Führerbuch there is but one entry by French climbers: their impressions of Burgener, after an ascent of the Dent Blanche on August 20, 1904, are thus recorded: 'Nous avons été enchantés de ses soins attentifs, de sa surêté, de sa prudence et de sa connaissance approfondie de la montagne. Nous avons été particulièrement heureux de faire cette belle course avec Alexandre Burgener, qui fit le premier le Greppon (*sic*), Rothorn, Teufelsgrat, et tant d'autres grandes ascensions qui le rendent à jamais célèbre.'

On September 4, Montagu F. Tilleard 'traversed the *Balfrinhorn* from Huteck to St. Niklaus with Alexander ascending by the N.N.W. arête (1st ascent). The conditions were exceptionally bad, & the ascent occupied exactly 12 hours. Descent by ordinary route in $4\frac{3}{4}$ hours. We afterwards (7/9/04) attacked the Weisshorn, but were compelled to retire owing to bad weather on reaching the arête.'

This ascent of the Balfrinhorn is recorded in the *Alpine Journal* as having been made by the North-east arête.¹⁰

The following year, Eberli records several ascents from Bel Alp and in 1906 Burgener had a successful three weeks with Dr. Bergmann, climbing, among others, the Dent d'Hérens, Lyskamm, Aletschhorn and Bietschhorn. In August Herr Frankstorfer mentions a 'Neubes-teigung' of the North face of the Balfrin, alone with Burgener. This face had already been descended in 1902 by Dr. Blodig and three companions, one of whom was E. T. Compton.

Old memories may be revived for one of our members by the next entry: 'Alexander Burgener was my leading guide for the ascent of the Dent Blanche (ordinary route) and the traverse of the Matterhorn from Zermatt to Breuil, and he fully justified his great reputation. Zermatt, Aug. 23rd 1906, J. E. C. Eaton, A.C.'

In 1907 there were ascents of Mont Brûlé, Grand Paradis, Monte Viso and the Barre des Ecrins with Swiss climbers, and of the Lyskamm with F. G. S. Clerihew: 'I believe that no other ascent has been made from Zermatt on the same day owing to the bad weather. It is always a pleasure to climb with him.'

In June, 1908, he ascends Rimpfischhorn, Dom and Monte Rosa with Dr. G. Müller, whose entry concludes: 'Vorsicht, Ausdauer u.

¹⁰ *A. J.* 22. 392.

Kraft. Er war stetsfort der Alte, ein Vorbild für manchen jungen Führer.' The third and last entry for 1908 is over the signature of a Russian, S. Toeplitz, with whom Burgener had had two previous engagements. They ascended the Aiguille de la Za and traversed two peaks of the Aiguilles Rouges.

The last season to be recorded in the book—1909—opens with an engagement with Herr Alfred Kühn of Strasbourg, who was to perish with Burgener the following year. In July, they climbed the Nadelhorn, Dom, Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn, all under difficult conditions. In August, A. G. Whitting, A.C., records an ascent of the Dent Blanche: 'I was very glad of the opportunity of seeing this great guide at work, & I shall hope to have other climbs with him.' It is fitting that the concluding entry bears the signature of Stephan von Kuffner, the son of Burgener's old friend and patron; it records an ascent of the Valluga on August 30, 1909: 'Für die ausgezeichnete, in jeder Beziehung tadellose Führung spreche ich diesem trefflichen Manne meinen herzlichsten und wärmsten Dank und zugleich die Hoffnung [to climb with him for many more years.] . . .'

The end came on July 8, 1910. Burgener and his sons Alexander and Adolf, with Herren Kühn and Barthold, Fritz Brawand and two porters, were ascending the Bergli rocks en route from the Eismeer station to the Bergli. Within a few minutes of the hut, the party was swept away by an avalanche and carried down some two hundred metres. Fritz Brawand and Burgener's younger son, Alexander, were the only survivors; Christian Bohren, guardian of the Concordia Hut, who was descending to meet the party, also lost his life.

So perished Alexander Burgener, in his sixty-sixth year, within sight of the scene of one of his greatest exploits, his strength and endurance still unabated. How cruel a stroke of fortune that the man who had three times escaped from the perils of the terrible Col du Lion should thus meet his death, on easy ground, whilst on the way to a hut!

Burgener's place in history is secure; in the great revival of mountaineering in the 'seventies and 'eighties he played a prominent part. The leader of Dent and Mummery, of Schulz and von Kuffner, and of Güssfeldt, he will long be remembered as one of the boldest and most intrepid guides of all time.