



AIGUILLE DE PEUTERET, FROM THE COL DU GÉANT.

From a Sketch by Mons. G. Leppé.

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TWO NEW PEAKS; THE AIGUILLE DE PEUTERET AND JUMEAUX OF VALTORNENCHE. By LORD WENTWORTH.

AT a quarter before twelve in the night of August 4, 1877, I left the Hôtel de l'Ange at Courmayeur with the two guides, Emile Rey, of La Saxe (near Courmayeur), and Jean Baptiste Bich, of Valtornenche, to attempt the ascent of the Peuteret. We climbed up the rocks of the Fauteuil des Allemands near the waterfalls by moonlight, arriving at the plateau known by that name soon after four in the morning of the 5th. Here Rey's brother, who had come so far as porter, left us, and after a halt for breakfast we went on, ascending some avalanche snow-slopes to our right as far as the foot of the rocks, then for three-quarters of an hour up rocks and patches of grass to the lower end of a broad slanting couloir of rock leading in a straight line to our left in the direction of the highest peak. Soon after entering the couloir we came to a small cavern in two chambers, evidently much frequented by chamois, which would make admirable sleeping quarters. This I propose to call '*La Balme des Chamois.*'

After going up the couloir for two hours with no difficulty, we arrived at an absolute precipice at the foot of which we had to search for two hours before finding a chimney, or rather a succession of chimneys, up which we climbed with some difficulty; one place in particular was somewhat unsafe, a slanting ledge of rock with imperfect hand and foot-hold. This place I would call '*Le Mauvais Pas.*' By about midday we got to the level of the ridge separating the Fauteuil des Allemands from the Glacier de la Brenva, whence we turned away again to the left and ascended, with no great difficulty but with many very long steps, till we reached a sort of shoulder, on our right an extraordinarily steep snow slope falling down to the upper Brenva glacier, to our left a vertical precipice dropping down to the Fauteuil des Allemands. This crest might be called '*La Neige de l'Épaule,*' it is distinctly shown in

M. Loppé's beautiful sketch of the Peuteret Needle, being, except the very summit, the only point of our route visible in his drawing, which is taken from the Col du Géant, while our course lay within the vast rocky hollows over the Fauteuil des Allemands. We went along it for about fifty yards till our progress was stopped by the final peak. Fortunately we perceived some ledges to our left that traversed the face of the great abyss. We crept along them with little actual difficulty, though hanging on over sickening precipices. This place I would call '*Le Passage du Grand Gouffre.*' Thus we got to the side of a small snow-slope near the top on the south-east face; thence looking up we saw the two summits, the lower one to our left, very difficult, probably impossible of access, the higher to our right perfectly easy, and we reached it soon after two in the afternoon.

We immediately set to work to plant a flag, the St. George's cross of England, and to baptise this point, which, according to the aneroid, was 2,600 mètres above Courmayeur. I named it, to distinguish it from the lower or southern summit, '*Aiguille de la Yola,*' after Madame Caccia Raynaud, an intrepid and accomplished Italian Alpinist then staying at Courmayeur.

The summit, on which there is plenty of room, consists of two short ridges at right angles, one in the direction of Mont Blanc, the other toward the lower summit.

The view of Mont Blanc, and of the glaciers of Brenva, Fresnay, and Brouillard is magnificent. These form together the principal feature of a superb panorama. I saw the track of Mr. Eccles's party on the steep snow-slopes below the precipices of Mont Blanc, which he had scaled a few days before, I believe. Another charming part of the view is the glimpse down the valley of Morgex.

At three yards from the summit of the Aiguille de la Yola I noticed a mountain rat, which slipped into a cleft of rock as soon as it saw me. Equally close to the summit I gathered some moss with pink and white flowers, then in full blossom. Fifty yards lower I found some ranunculuses, also in flower, at the height of upwards of 12,600 feet.

After a stay of a little more than an hour we started on our way down, and before night we had descended all the difficult places. At 9 P.M. we reached a little ridge (3,000 mètres above the sea) with some snow lying on it, and jutting out from the great couloir three-quarters of an hour above the '*Balme des Chamois.*' Here we passed the night, and I propose to call it '*Le Reposoir.*'

Next morning, August 6th, we started at 4.30 A.M.

and reached Courmayeur at nine. In descending we used the rope in five difficult passages, two of which were below the Fauteuil des Allemands.

This ascent is the most difficult climb up steep rocks with which I am acquainted, though the Matterhorn would be far more formidable without its ropes; but of danger there is little or none with good guides to a practised climber.

From the Fauteuil des Allemands there are seven hours of rock-climbing to the summit of the Yola, and quite as much for the descent. Some might, perhaps, do it in less, but others would take longer. It would be best to sleep in the Balme des Chamois, whence the summit can be reached easily in six hours.

On Thursday, September 6, I left the Hôtel du Mont Cervin, at Breuil, at a quarter to two A.M., with the same two guides. In a little more than an hour we came to a ch^âlet, which, like some others in Valtorrenche, is a very long vault of masonry immensely thick, and with a great mass of earth on the roof. The interior is like the tunnel of a railway, and in its great length must hold 100 cows. There was no one there; it felt quite warm within those walls, thick as a mediæval castle. We lit a fire in one end, where the cowherds have their beds (*ou la couche de l'honnête homme, de la paille, vide la Périhole*), and make cheese. We waited for an hour, for Bich said we should get to the rocks otherwise too soon; we must have daylight, not merely our lantern. Leaving this cow *cellar* (as I must call it, rather than stable) before four, we went up some steep grass slopes and rocks to the foot of the first cliffs, where we arrived at five, just as the day began. It was bitterly cold till we warmed ourselves by drinking rum, but clear and lovely weather—a few autumnal mists in the valley and the last tiniest scrap of a moon in the midst of the dawn, so clear that I saw the man in the moon in the black part of the moon. There were some sheep here that followed us over a patch of snow to the foot of the cliff, up which we went, slanting to the right for several hours easily—here and there a steep place—till we crossed a couloir, and for an hour went straight up extremely steep, smooth, difficult rocks, till we came to a towering wall, which forced us to turn to the right into an extremely steep couloir, which ascended first straight, then slanting round to the left behind the lofty wall. Up this couloir we went, over steep slippery slopes of rotten rock, and now and then a few steps on a steep patch of snow. By ten o'clock we got to the top of this horrid couloir, and found

ourselves on the ridge which divides Valtornenche from Valpelline. Here we were at the foot of the Punta Sella of Les Jumeaux (which had been before ascended by Corona), over which we intended to go to reach the virgin summit of the Punta Giordano. We ate some breakfast and then started for our two summits, which are so nearly the same height that I do not know which is higher; we were, at our eating place, only 100 mètres below them. First for a short distance up a little ridge and slope of snow, as we thought, but it turned out to be ice hard as rock; fortunately Rey had only to cut perhaps twenty or thirty steps, the rest of the ridge was easy rock up to the top of the Punta Sella, which we reached at eleven, and found the names of Corona and his guide and a little flag placed by them. Corona has twice been up the Punta Sella, but both times failed in his object—to scale the Punta Giordano. There is a fearful abyss between the two, but Rey went down first a little way to look, and finding a place, which though perfectly vertical for six mètres, had some corners for hands and feet, called to me and Bich to descend there after him. Then we went along a ledge for about ten mètres, overhanging a gulf almost as terrible as that of the Yola; then we turned a corner and went down to the left or west of the ridge, down another steep rock, and we were in the col between the two Jumeaux, and up we went to the summit of the Punta Giordano, finding only one difficult place, a vertical rock four mètres high, which we turned in descending. I arrived first at the summit. I may add that Rey thinks it is eight or ten mètres higher than the Punta Sella, but of this I do not feel quite sure. The first thing we did was to break off the highest point, which was very difficult, it was so hard; but at last we succeeded, and it fell into my handkerchief.

Then we fixed the English flag, which Bich had carried with much difficulty, for the pole always caught in difficult places in the rocks. When the flag was fixed tight, the pole leaning coquettishly on one side towards the valley, and a boisterous wind blowing it out, it seemed to us the prettiest banner we had seen—the guides also exclaiming how charming it looked.

Bich baptised the point '*Punta Giordano*,' with the full and proper formula, pouring wine instead of water, and then we had to hurry back. In an hour we reached our breakfast place and lunched there very pleasantly; at two we began descending the dreadful couloir. Rey was last; in one place a great rock gave way under him and crashed down close to me; I was able to spring into shelter; it cut the rope between Rey and me, he had to hold on for his life by his fingers, as his feet

were in the air; had he fallen, Bich and I could not have saved him, for the rope was broken. Lower down, just before we got to the narrow mouth of the couloir, down there swept through it a volley of blocks of ice, which made us tremble as we passed through it five minutes later.

After leaving the couloir, we found a steep cleft to the side of the smooth, difficult, steep rocks by which we had mounted; so we went down this cleft instead, and found it much better. When we had passed the last bad place, so thick a fog came on that we had the greatest difficulty in finding our way down the lower cliffs, which however, with the help of occasional traces of our footsteps in the morning, luckily we did, and we reached the snow, where the sheep were in the morning, by 6.30. Thence, we went down pretty quickly; as we were going down, our friends the sheep kept throwing stones down upon us, but we were not hit. We reached Breuil at a quarter to eight, where the hospitable and obliging landlord gave us an excellent supper.

My two guides deserve the highest praise for skill, courage, and all the other virtues of their profession. Rey, though only thirty, is the best guide I am personally acquainted with. I feel that I must explain to my readers the egotistical character of this account of the ascent of the Jumeaux. It is taken almost verbatim from a letter I wrote to a friend two days after, with no idea of its being ever published. I wrote nothing else about it at the time, and can only send it as it stands with a few corrections that occur to me in the course of copying. But I hope it may contain all the facts likely to interest the climbing world.

I may take this opportunity of mentioning an ascent I made of the Grand Paradis in July 1877, with Laurent Lanier and Emile Rey. Our route is perhaps already known, but I have not been able to learn. We went in an almost perfectly straight line from the glacier of La Tribulation, up the rocks and ice wall to the summit, about half-way, I think, between the other two routes I have heard of from the Plan de la Tribulation. It is, I think, shorter than any other, and though perhaps steeper, probably easier.