Cross-country Gleanings in 1913.

By J. H. CLAPHAM.

(Read before the Alpine Club, April 7, 1914.)

I DO not know how it may be in other parties with an old-established nucleus, but in ours there is a time of pleasant uncertainty—in June or July—when interrogatory postcards go to and fro: postcards of this sort—'? an approach from Glarus and a start over the Tödi.' '? an approach through the limestone Alps of Savoy and an attack on the Col Dolent.' '? get out of a Mont Cenis express at Modane and start north.' There were private reasons in favour of Modane in 1913. To the weight of these was added that of a public reason—the horrible accounts of weather in the higher Alps which began to come through in July. For instance, in the *Morning Post* I fancy it was, an amiable person who thought that if you wanted quiet you should go to Zermatt had explained what July weather was like along the Central Pennines. Then, as I travelled from Cambridge to London on August 5, I met—and as it were wept with—a man returned from one of his very earliest seasons who had spent three desperate weeks in the company of Josef Knubel and in the clouds. When three of us reached Modane next evening we were met by a newly-joined member of the party, Muir, who had got wet to the skin that day on the lower slopes of the Aiguille de Polset. So, with a feeling that perhaps after all we were doing the wrong thing, we started up the high road about noon of the 7th.

The most important southern buttress of the main block of the Vanoise mountains stretches for miles, in an almost straight and a very even line from the summit of the Dent Parrachée to where it pens the Arc into a gorge on the S. side of its own valley. I imagine, judging by the forts along its lower crest, that this ridge is a considerable defensive position for the mouth of the tunnel. Above the forts there is, in August, a chequer-work of dusty fallow and red-gold patches of bearded wheat which toss in the airs that come up from the valley or down from the heights. Above the corn the village of Aussois in a cool meadow. Then a belt of pine-wood; then the upper meadows; then the unharvested alp, the stones, the ice, the crags, and the corniced snow-crest of the Parrachée. In these upper meadows, when the sun had

already gone down, we met men and women returning from work and asked our way to Fournache. Fournache proper, which lies in a high coombe on the E. of the ridge, we learnt was no longer used, but we were offered lodging in the highest summer homestead on the ridge itself. The people were very kind, the more so, I think, because one of us knew the prices of sheep and cattle in England, but the night was bitter cold.

Starting a little before 5 o'clock, we paid the penalty of the guideless in the matter of path-finding and the penalty of the season on a slope of small frozen scree, so did not strike the S.W. ridge of the Parrachée until 8.30. Our knowledge of Vanoise geography was inadequate and the maps are bad. I had a notion, based on memories of a walk though the district fourteen years earlier, that Vanoise glaciers had no more vice in them than the icing on cakes (this is true of some of them), and that we ought to climb the Parrachée and get over to Pralognan in the day. I dare say one could, but hardly on a first day or in 1913 weather. From the ridge this was pretty clear; for below us was a deep bay, the gathering-ground of the Glacier de la Dent Parrachée, in which clouds began to form early. To reach Pralognan we must either follow the ridge over several summits round the S. end of the bay, till it turned N.W. and then N., or we must drop and rise again over the main watershed where it runs N. and S.—its ice-cap, we now saw, was not entirely innocent—and find our way down the unknown W. side. We had not realised how completely the Parrachée is an outlier from the mass that culminates in the Dôme de Chasseforêt. So when our climb was done, a climb of which the main feature was some 60 yards of uncommonly narrow final snow-ridge, whose crest you kept sometimes under your armpit and sometimes between your legs, we cut and scrambled down into the bay and followed our peak's own glacier N.E.-ward downhill in the cloud. Our map said that there were chalets below on the Arpont Alp.

On the whole we were rather fortunate in hitting off a house which the maps called the Chalet du Mont but its owners Hell's Combe, some time late in the grey afternoon. On its roof is a stuffed suit of chalet clothes to keep eagles off the chickens—a thing which it fails to do—and its master is an old soldier of the Empire, who was through the war and the Commune and served under General Boulanger. So he says, and I believe him, though, as we found out later, his local nickname is Charles the Rotter, and his reputation that of

telling you 'one truth for every two hundred thousand lies.' His chalet we judged uninhabitable, but his stories kept us so long that it was dark, and misty into the bargain, before we were received into the more possible home of one of his neighbours.

They were having a wretched sunless time up at Arpont, and were full of complaint and bitterness. The morning came wet and sleety, so we left our hay late and started about 9, in broken mist, with the vague idea of working N.-ward under the glaciers, along the terraced alp above the gorge of the Leisse, towards the Col de la Vanoise at the N. end of the chain, and so perhaps to Pralognan. Towards noon we struck the E.-flowing stream of the long Pelvoz glacier, which came down from an obvious though cloud-covered col—something well under 11,000 feet—between the Mont Pelvoz and the Dôme de Chasseforêt. I was still rather obsessed with the idea that Vanoise glaciers were all easy and the col was clearly a short route to Pralognan; so after lunch we started up to it in a brisk snowstorm with a compass at the tail of the rope. The ascent was easy, and on the descent our luck held. After being headed off by an icefall in the mist, we hit a slope of rock and rubble between two rather ugly glacier snouts, which brought us down below the clouds. Looking back I retracted my doctrine of the Vanoise glaciers, but I fancy that without it we might not have come over. After that, track-finding on steep ground with shocking rain and mud in the forest were the only troubles. By 5 o'clock we were in the sodden Pralognan meadows among the pensionnaires who had just come out under hoods and umbrellas.

After several years' more or less involuntary experiment, a little of it in Norway, I am now clear that you get satisfaction out of ordinary cross-country work in something like the inverse ratio (as we dons say) of the amount of detailed knowledge with which you start. With the ripening of this opinion I find my view of climbers' guides changes. It is of course convenient to know that peak X has been climbed from Y, by way of its P.Q. ridge; to know, say, about as much as you can find in Ball and carry—for a whole tour—on the back of a postcard. Yet the days on which such scraps of information failed or were misunderstood are often the best of all. As for the dotted lines on diagrams, the 'conspicuous red towers,' the 'second couloirs on the left from the Col des Chamois,' and all that race—no doubt they have their uses, especially for the greater mountains or when you

are trying to get off the unknown side of a peak towards evening, but they are uncommonly hard to identify, especially if you only get up under your mountain the night before the climb. Of course, if you go short of facts and do very little prospecting, you will shorten your list of peaks. Sometimes, perhaps, you will get on to the wrong peak, as has more than once happened to our party. This annoys you at the time, but is very pleasant in retrospect. As a compensation you suffer very little from that dreary feeling of artificiality which comes over most of us, I suppose, when reading in one of the more specialised climbing journals how the third hand-hold in the final chimney of Smith's climb has of late become greasy.

This excursion was suggested by the necessarily rather impromptu style of much of our climbing last year: we started ill-prepared and the weather drove us into some unexpected places. The Grande-Casse from Pralognan, however, was in the original programme; so on the evening after our mud-slide in the forest—a fair Sunday evening—we moved up to the Felix Faure inn on the Col de la Vanoise. There we learnt what we should have known before, but didn't—that to cross the mountain from the N. was an excellent climb for a cold season. So we went to find the way to it by candle-light. The slopes up from the beautiful little Col de la Grande-Casse are steep, and the rock, where it came through its sheathing of firm snow, was mostly rotten. In a good season I should expect plenty of ice and loose stones: in 1913 you had both, but in no great quantity. We spent a good part of our three hours on the face in kicking with the toe straight uphill. There were several parties on the mountain before us that day—one on our own route who nearly killed us with stones—but they had all been driven down by a wind which was still searing the ridge when we got there at 8.20. Happily it fell soon afterwards and we were able to get half an hour on the summit in niches scooped in the snow.

As a set-off to its gift of improvised routes, 1913 robbed one of much good bathing. Here we had been five days on foot without a single bathe in the open. Descending from the Casse we found sun on the Lac Long, just below the moraines, so went into it; but there was a fitful piping wind, and the sky was already being blurred over for rain. The rain began towards night when we had moved on an hour or two to Mme. Richard's inn at Entre Deux Eaux. We were indifferent, for Madame had brought over the passes a particular still Asti—not too sweet—and her cooking was adequate.



C. F. Bennett, photo.

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Grande Casse, from the West.

Next day it rained as it rains on the Sty Head, only not so salty, and we came down with full boots, seeing nothing, to Termignon on the Mont Cenis road, the winter home of Charles the Rotter, of Hell's Combe. There another Mme. Richard—the widow—at the sign of the Departure for the Vanoise, took us in and dried us like a mother. She discerned in me the sympathetic householder, so, when the others had gone to bed, we two sat late together and talked like the wearisome grown-ups in Heine —

Wie Lieb und Treu und Glauben
Verschwunden aus der Welt,
Und wie so teuer der Kaffee
Und wie so rar das Geld!

Only the dear thing is not coffee but firing, when you have no man to cut it for you in the woods of the Commune: "and what they make me pay for charcoal, sir, you would never believe."

Some twenty-eight hours later—at 3.10 A.M. on the Thursday—we left Bonneval-sur-Arc with perfectly open minds. The Wednesday had been spent, half in a cold motor-diligence and half prospecting about the village. We felt that we must get over into the warm light which I always connect with the Italian side, and generally find there. At the worst, we thought, we could cross the Col du Carro, at the best the Levanna itself into the Val d'Orco—a new valley which is always good. When we came to the parting of the ways at 5.0 it appeared safe to follow the Arc up towards the glacier of its source and the Levanna. If no summit of the Levanna would take us we might hit the Lost Col which lay, as we had read, between the central and E. summits or the Col de Girard at the S.E. corner of the big névé. As we came over the swell of the glacier we could identify the notches of the Col de Girard, but the Lost Col we never saw until we walked into it. All about the crags of the Levanna, and over the upper névé, lay one of those white viewless clouds that you can hardly distinguish, when you are in them, from the clean snow of a wet season; so that at times you only know by the feel whether you are walking up hill or down. We took a rough bearing by map from the highest identifiable rock on the glacier bank and crept on in the cloud for over an hour. We knew that our col should be a marked gap, through which most winds must suck, and we agreed that the wind-marks

on the face of the snow should lie with their axes pointing towards it. It may have been sound argument, helped by the compass, or it may have been luck: anyhow at 8.30 we came right on to the col—it is perhaps 200 yards across—and peered over through the mist, which was shallow on that side, down what seemed an endless couloir running steeply into the sunlight below. As the cloud showed no sign of lifting, we abandoned the peaks and began to cut warily over the lip of the couloir. We cannot have gone down many hundred feet when the slope eased, the snow softened, and we found we could glissade. For almost 1000 feet we glissaded on the rope. Then we halted to lunch on a warm rock-patch beside the couloir. That was a very long halt. Then we went down each for himself. Below the true couloir a practicable snow-tongue ran to the upper edge of the pines on the cattle alp, ending at a point about 3000 feet by aneroid below the col.

We gave thanks, though our shin muscles were tired, and ran down to bathe in a pool, just within the edge of the woods, looking out over meadows through which the Orco runs—a stream of living water—by isolated substantial farmhouses; a contrast as clean as you could desire with the village of Ecot on the French side, the highest village in France, which crouches in gregarious poverty among the rocks.

From Ceresole (in the Val d'Orco) to the Piantonetto hut at the back of the Cogne peaks is a good day's work, however you take it. Although the Colle Perduto had been an easy day, we failed to start next morning before 8.30: we only got to the Piantonetto—not the easiest hut in the Alps to find even if you have been there before—about the same time at night. It is a walk on the King's tracks most of the way. You rise sharply from Ceresole and then coast round the heads of two or three glens almost on a level; rise 1500 feet over a ridge; drop 1000 to the Alp of Gaÿ, climb again and lose the track at the foot of a 1000-foot snow gully leading up to the little Bocchetta della Losa, which is first cousin to a Dauphiné brèche. Fortunately, memories of 1899 helped us to identify the Bocchetta, otherwise we might have missed our climb on the Saturday. But it would have been worth it, for this Friday's walk, until boredom set in at the gully, was one of the great things of the season. The air was alive with light; as each steeply-falling ridge was turned from glen to glen, you looked out deep into the haze of the Piedmontese plain; and the day ended with just such another view—out



C. F. Bennett, photo. Swan Electric Engraving Co. Ltd.

The Levanna, from Ceresole.

into the moonlight over Noasca and the lower hills from the door of the hut itself.

As we got to bed rather late and had not many thousand feet to climb over the Grand St. Pierre, we were content to get away at 5.30. We soon fell into impromptu again, missing the easy way up the rock-wall which supports the Teleccio glacier, and making a rock-climb out of it. Werner said I did it on purpose to illustrate some point in the use of the knee about which we had differed in a recent argument; but this was not so. In sunshine on the glacier-edge, with the S. rock-face of the St. Pierre right ahead, the postcard of condensed climbers' guide came out and we argued again. As usual, we couldn't fit the guide to the face. To put our route into guide-book form, I should say that we climbed the face of the W. ridge and a few hundred feet of the ridge itself up to the summit; straightforward, interesting climbing all the way, warm rocks, and very little ice. There was some good work towards the finish, though how a narrow ridge came to provide what one would call in Cumberland a two-storied chock-stone pitch, with an iced chock-stone, I can't quite make out. But there it was, and a very neat place too.

On top of the St. Pierre I made the acquaintance of Josef Knubel, who, with Todhunter his employer, had just been driven off the Chamonix Aiguilles by bad weather, for the second time during the season in Knubel's case. It seemed that people were flying S. just as we were moving N. Cogne was full. Was Yeld there? How should he not be there in the second week of August? Then, since we meant to stay out so long as there was any daylight, would Todhunter and Knubel, whose intentions were different, beg Yeld of his charity to make his Cogne provide beds for four? They would: so that was all right, and we could dawdle for an hour on top, go slowly over the snow-powdered slabs of the N. ridge, work at leisure down doubtful rocks on the W. face, lunch without hurry on the moraine, wash linen—that is, handkerchiefs—in the Valnontey torrent when we got to it, and yet not be late for dinner.

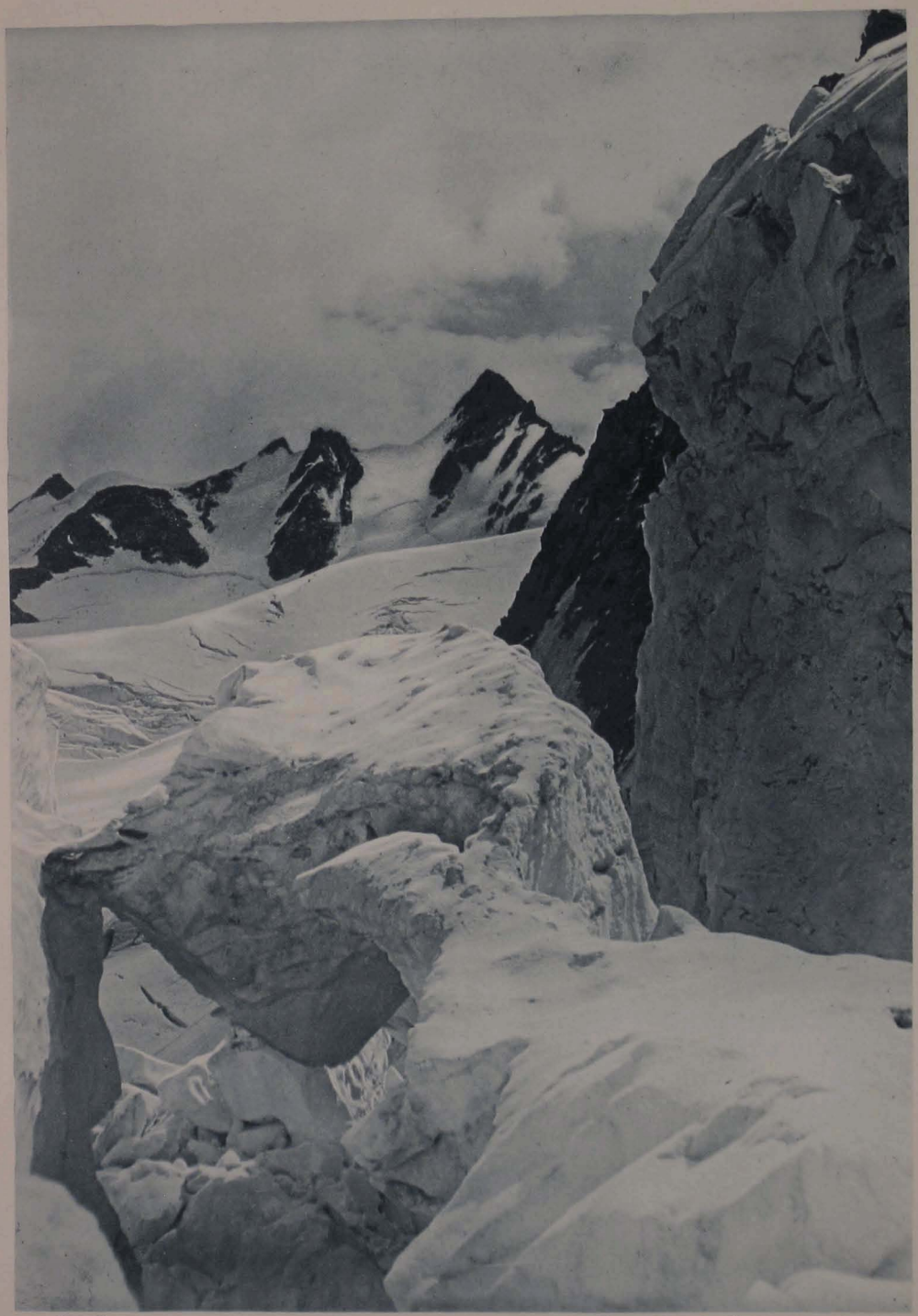
Besides Yeld there were other friends at Cogne. We spent a whole Sunday there, and on the Monday climbed Mont Emilius by mistake on our way to Aosta. It was this way: we had got over the edge of our good maps, and I had based a dogmatic (and false) opinion on a hurried look at a bad one. We meant to climb the Becca di Nona, which is 1400 feet lower than the Emilius, but only discovered our mistake when we got on to a col S. of the Emilius, itself higher than the Nona. We had

started after 5.0 : we had dawdled : I had put my head into a cool stream at 7 A.M., and we had had a long discussion as to where we would breakfast—both bad signs. So when the mountain began to seem improperly distant, high, and laborious, we had credited it to vice and a late start. We came up the easy S. ridge tired and empty ; the summit breaks away in tremendous cliffs on the N., and there, nearly two miles below us and five miles away as the crow flies, was the market-place of Aosta. That kind of view from the high places over " the realms of those below " is extraordinarily moving. When I am asked the impossible question, " But what is it you climb *for* ? " I am now half ready to say, " I climb in order that once in ten years I may look down 10,000 feet into the market-place of a favourite town." It would be as true as any other short answer.

Over the way slow thunderous clouds shifted heavily on and off the summits of the Central Pennines ; except the Matterhorn, we saw them all as we rested by the statue of the Virgin on Mont Emilius. They were not welcoming : their thunder rain caught us once not far below the rocks, once among the upper villages, and once again on our last half-mile into Aosta, between 7.0 and 8.0 at night, when all along back streets we dodged the foul Aostan waterspouts.

Our chances of a climb on the main ridge of the Alps seemed poor, but there was no harm in going to look at the S. side of the Matterhorn. The nucleus of our party is incredibly ignorant of the Matterhorn. Werner and I had talked about the Italian side, on and off, for twelve years ; but as we had almost always declined to sit under a peak until it got tidy, so far it had escaped us. It escaped us again in 1913. We got to Valtournanche on the Tuesday night ; started on Wednesday morning with the notion of taking the Château des Dames on our way to Breuil ; were caught in a fine rain before 6.0 in the morning ; became desperate, and crossed the Théodule in cloud that afternoon. At Zermatt—it was August 20—we were told that no one at all had been up the Italian side ; so it was just as well that a party, three of whom were quite ignorant of the Matterhorn except from below, had been conducted away from it.

Day after day we had discussed the chances of a final collapse of our season ; now we thought the collapse had come. People in Zermatt were depressed, those who had come from the Oberland still more grey. But our very first morning was so fine that we began to say " Just a little col over to Saas, and hang the snow-plunging." Reade, who was at the Monte Rosa



C. F. Bennett, photo. Swan Electric Engraving Co. Ltd.

Grand St. Pierre,

from foot of N. face of Roccia Viva

out of a job, let us know that he too would like a walk. We went together to the Fluh Alp that evening. Someone said he had got a climbers' guide from his bag in Zermatt—we had been free from luggage since Modane—and that there was a face climb on the Rimpfischhorn from the Adlerjoch. It is always pleasant to make these striking discoveries about populous districts. We agreed to keep that up our sleeve ; but by the time we got to the Adler, after a moonlight ascent of the glacier and a clean dawn, it was the recognised day's programme. If there had been no climbers' guide we should, I believe, have got to the top sooner, but after a much less interesting climb. All day we were trying to be correct, and all day we were making variation routes. Reade and I were at the head of the now rather long party—five is many on iced rocks—and we agreed that the proper thing was to climb up direct from the col. Anyone who has made the climb or recalls the profile of the peak will realise that, after a certain point, this was a mistake. The tail of the rope realised it while I was pawing about on the face, but it was too well-bred to say much. Reade and I made two false starts, and then, moving a little to the right, but not enough, attacked an iced gully in the belt of cliff above us. It steepened as we went up it and ended in a chimney and a 12-foot iced wall, which was really troublesome, because the point of attack was a slab—not horizontal—covered partly with ice and partly with loose snow. However, the leader could belay while he cleared the slab and wall, and after some twenty minutes of cautious work he got up. The tail of the rope said it was cold, and that this was all very well in Cumberland. After that we went pretty straight up steep snow, broken by transverse walls of rock, some of which took a little climbing. The guide said we must not get mixed up with the left or S. summit, but I have never found it a simple matter to locate summits from a really steep face below them. In fact we got left of the left-hand summit at a point where, to gain the ridge, you had to pull over a little rock cornice. We thought of following the crest, but were checked by a steep bit which a leader could not climb alone. As between Reade and me it was clear who must stand on who, if it came to manœuvring, and when after consultation Reade said that, in his judgment, tricks of that sort were out of place—in which he was quite right—and quoted accidents in support, we crawled round the flank of the summit on to the ordinary route and so came on top, $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours from the Adlerjoch.

On the descent Reade led down a much improved line : but still our long party took nearly four hours over it. I

understand that the face has a reputation for falling stones. None fell in the ten hours of our wanderings there. This was one of the good things of the season.

It was 7 o'clock before we left the col, and 9.0 when we tumbled up to the Britannia hut. The Britannia hut, as we found it, might well be used as an argument against climbing in a civilised country ; there were fifty-four people inside and for my part I preferred to roll up outside in my spare clothes, and a blanket when I could get it, until the Strahlhorn parties began to vacate bunks in the early morning.

After lunch at Saas a question of principle arose. Reade had some peaks on his private list, 4000m. peaks I think they were, over which he suggested we might well go if we wanted to get back to Zermatt. He said that in two or three days the Schalligrat might be clean if the weather held. He pointed to a hut " sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill " above us as the jumping-off place for his peaks. Reade then went out and we debated the matter. It was suggested that the hut was far and the day hot, and that we, like the man who shot the hare, had heavy packs ; it was indicated that most of us had never seen the S. face of Monte Rosa and that the next few days were our chance ; it was passionately contended that a prompt return to Zermatt would be a concession to ' centrism,' and that Italy was calling over the Monte Moro. The coalition of passion and idleness won ; Reade hurried off to catch his train at Stalden ; we slept that night at Mattmark and took a quiet walk over to Macugnaga next day. As you come down the Monte Moro towards the bottom, go right into the bed of the stream, and if you do not find the best bathing pool in Italy it is not my fault. The pool has a waterfall, a drying slab, and every convenience.

They told us at Macugnaga that the Sesia-Joch and the Parrot-Spitze, of which we had been thinking at Reade's suggestion, were none too safe, so we decided to push over to the Col d'Olen on Monday, follow the observatory porters up to the Punta Gnifetti on Tuesday, and then see what could be done. Sunday night was stormy and from 3.0 to 5.0 A.M. on Monday we could not tell from minute to minute how the weather would go. Most of us admitted later on that a dozen fair raindrops would have sent us back to bed, since we were in arrears of sleep. That was when we were trudging up from Macugnaga towards the Petriolo Alp and the Colle delle Loccie, bound for the Val Sesia. The Loccie was reputed a crampon climb and we carry no crampons, holding that for real continuous cross-

country work their weight is prohibitive. As things were in 1913, however, snow-plunging even on that final slope, which in nine years out of ten must be ice, gave us more trouble than step-cutting. The pass is superbly placed: from it you rake both the E. and S. flanks of the monster above you. We left about noon to strike across country beneath the S. face, contouring as high as we could towards the Col d'Olen. But below the glacier we were driven down into lost valleys and struggled up over stony wildernesses. I think we added that afternoon quite 3000 feet of ascent to the 6000 or 7000 feet of the morning.

On the Swiss side a good supper and a good bed at the height of the Col d'Olen would probably be marred by extortion, but it is different in Italy. I have kind recollections of the place, though they are mixed up in my head with the talk of a physiological friend who once spent a month between the col and the top of Monte Rosa, studying the gases in people's blood. He will try to pull you down from heights of remembered mountain ecstasy by explaining that, to the physiologist, all emotion at high altitudes is a form of incipient drunkenness. I will risk that explanation of my memories of our last day's climbing, on a porters' highroad be it remembered. As you are on the crest of a N.-running ridge in the early morning, the whole of the dawn is enacted on your right hand. Higher, as you top the Lysjoch, you break suddenly through the circle of peaks which stands about one of the most splendid, if one of the most familiar, of the high snowfields in the Alps. The sporting element came for us in the traverse from the Punta Gnifetti over the Zumstein Spitze to the Dufour Spitze. A sudden gale got up on the narrow and in places icy ridge of the Zumstein Spitze: the rope stood out and between us and hummed, and we had to climb with care. By the Grenzsattel and up over the comb of the Dufour Spitze, fresh snow added a little difficulty and interest to the rock-work, as it did again on the ordinary way down in the afternoon. After that, hot snow-plunging which needs no description. When this was over, every man did as he pleased. I, having taken tea, slept on the stones of the Obere Plattje and delayed the party half an hour while Bennett did something photographic. Werner complained that there had been no bathe since Sunday, dived into one of the ponds on the face of the Gorner glacier at or about 7 P.M., and stood on the rope to dry. Muir began a calculation, which had been threatening for some time, of the number of hours' sleep that he had got (*a*) on an average of the whole tour, and (*b*) since we left Zermatt on the Thursday.

The physiologist of whom I have spoken says he has established and explained the fact that arithmetic is difficult above 8–9000 feet. This may be why the calculation was only completed on the Lake of Geneva. It appeared then that there was no case against the management of the party under (*a*); if there was something of a case under (*b*) there were also points for the defence. We had played a game against a bad season, and we had won. So at least we thought, and so thinking were perhaps a little disposed to make fun of the misfortunes of better men who had played a better game and yet had lost.

A Playground at the East End.

Rambles in Japan.

By DOUGLAS W. FRESHFIELD.

MR. BAKER'S account of his walks in Japan, published in your last Number, incites me to send the JOURNAL some notes of my own excursions in that country during the past autumn. With the help of the Siberian Railway, Japan is hardly further from London than the Selkirks, and has come well within the range of our more 'eccentric' members.

On first landing in early September I found the weather so broken and the mists so constant that, acting on the 'best advice,' Mr. Walter Weston's, I gave up my intention of climbing Fujiyama and went to Pekin. On my return to Japan in October all the huts on the mountain had been closed, and, again acting on Mr. Weston's advice, I substituted a flying visit to the more remote Japanese Alps for the continuous and monotonous climb of 10,000 feet up the famous volcano, one of the chief interests in which to me would have been my fellow-pilgrims.

Like Mr. Baker, however, I paid a visit to the admirable hotel which adds to the picturesque merits of Miyanoshita. This mountain village, now established as a Tourist Resort, lies high in the centre of the Hakone hills, a group standing apart, separated by a broad level from Fujiyama, and washed at their eastern base by the waves of the Pacific. Their tops reach about 4500 feet, but the valleys are high and the scenery recalls at times that of the Cumberland Lakes. Here too are bright streams, picturesque woods, copses rich in ferns,