the camp, and wonder what on earth the difficulty was. But they won't be there when a hurricane is blowing.

We went down by the western ridge of the amphitheatre. It was bad travelling—over large boulders half smothered in fresh snow—and the route up the face is much to be preferred, at any rate in ascending, but camp was regained in good time, before the impending storm had really set in, and we supped deliciously off a fool-hen, which Yates had killed on Sunday in the orthodox manner by throwing stones at it till he made a hit. Afterwards Inderbinen and I slept snugly in the small Mummery tent ; not so Yates and George (who had come up with us as porter and spent the day in a vain quest for caribou) ; they had only a lean-to in front of the fire, and passed a miserable night in the rain, snow and driving wind.

We returned to the main camp next morning. There was little temptation now to try the new way back to Jasper, with the prospect of having to travel in all weathers and no time for exploration or climbing. On Wednesday a long day's march brought us to the junction of the Whirlpool and the Athabasca, where we found our Norwegian friend, returning as unsuccessful as ourselves. Early on Friday, September 12, we were once more in Jasper. I could not get out of my head the words in which Edward Whymper once described an expedition to Dauphiné, ' They came, they saw, but they did not conquer.' However we did manage to see a good deal, and what we saw was largely new, and of special interest at the present moment owing to the fact that these regions have just been rendered easily accessible by railway. And I hope it will not be long before some other member of the Club is tempted to make, with happier fortune, a Trip up the Whirlpool river.

On the Outskirts—Mont Aiguille and Beyond.

By W. T. KIRKPATRICK.

(Read before the Alpine Club, June 9, 1914.)

IN making our plans for the season, Hope and I usually try to include some bit of country quite new to us, and have thus at least visited every snow-clad group from Dauphiné to the Gross Glockner. And yet, like so many members of the Alpine Club, we had often admired from a distance,

but never reached, the Viso. This neglect of a mountain, which surpasses in height all those in Tyrol save the Ortler and Königsspitze, and looks down on the well-known Arolla peaks, is probably due to its inaccessibility. We had also been deterred by warnings of the frightful heat we should experience so far south, but fortunately the summer of 1913 was exceptional in that respect, and there was only one day, in the town of Gap, that we really found it too hot to be pleasant.

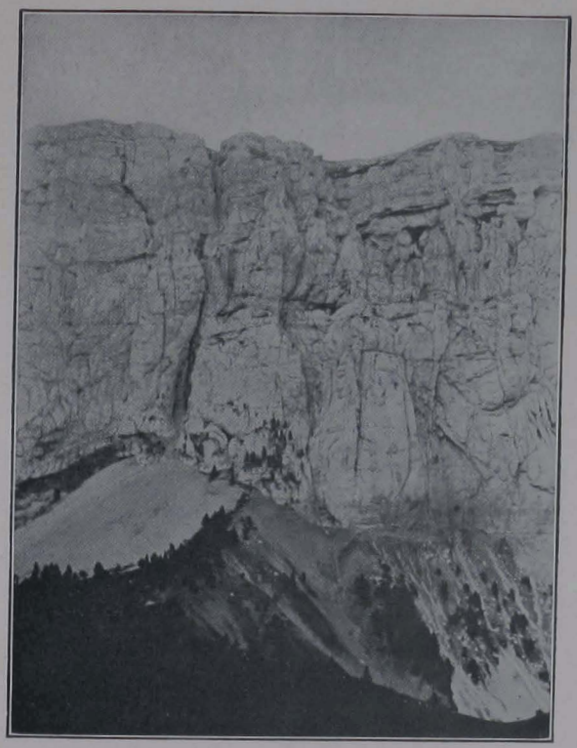
The long journey gave plenty of time for reading Ball's guide, and the description of Mont Aiguille suggested the idea of taking it on our way south from Grenoble, and so we alighted at the roadside station of Clelles-Mens. The change from the Hôtel Royal at Lyons to the rustic simplicity of the Hôtel du Mont Aiguille was rather sudden, but still there was not very much to complain of. Though the dining-room was the common drinking-place for the railway hands and navvies, and the floor impossible, the bedrooms were fairly clean, the people civil, and the food good, while the view of Mont Aiguille satisfied us that we had not been wrong in breaking our journey here. Only 6880 feet in height it is, I think, the most extraordinary mountain I have ever seen. A good photograph of it by Sir Alexander Kennedy was shown at the Alpine Club Photographic Exhibition in December 1912, and has been reproduced in the JOURNAL.* The base of the mountain consists of grassy slopes and scree, the lower parts well wooded, and above them rises a table mountain with walls of rock, almost perpendicular on every side, and looking quite inaccessible. In fact its name, prior to the first ascent, was *Le Mont Inaccessible*, and it can boast of one of the earliest recorded ascents in the Alps.

In 1462 Charles VIII. of France commanded his Chamberlain, Antoine de Ville, Lord of Domjulian and Beaupré, to try to climb this mountain, which he succeeded in doing 'by subtle means and engines,' accompanied by eight or ten persons, including a carpenter, a ladder-man, and two priests, who said mass on the top, and baptised the mountain, giving it the name of 'Eguille Fort,' in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

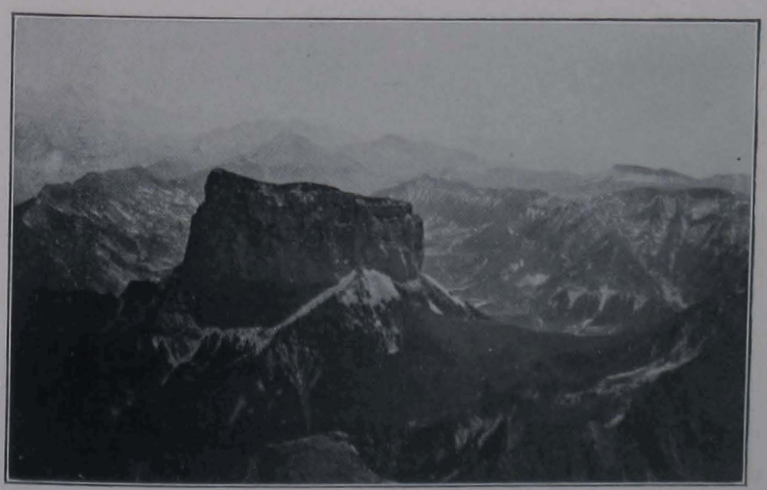
The Chamberlain, or some of his retinue, must have been good rock climbers, but we may fairly guess that in addition to the use of ladders, the carpenter was equipped with a hammer

* *A.J.* xxvii. 77.

MONT AIGUILLE.



Cheminée d'ascension.



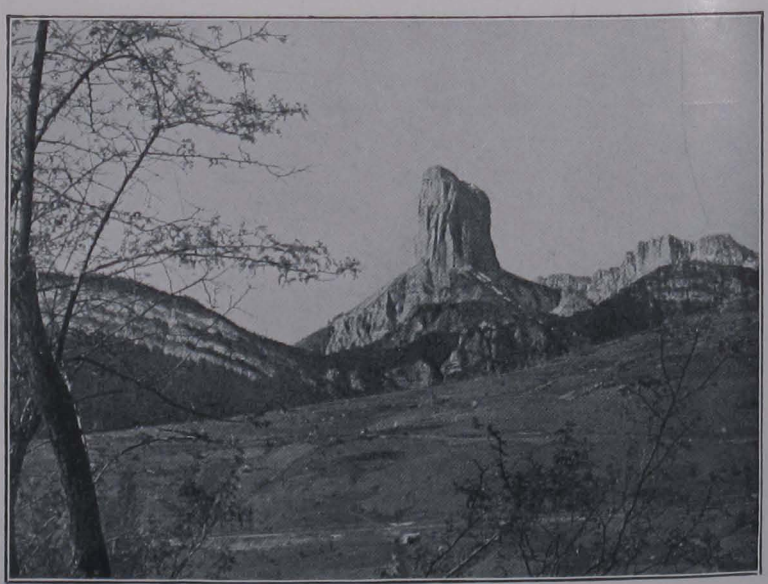
Henri Ferrand, photo. *Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.*

Vu du Grand Veymont.

MONT AIGUILLE.



Passage des Meules.



Henri Ferrand, photo. *Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.*

Vu du Fau.

and pitons. When Domjulian reached the top, he wrote and despatched a letter to the President of the Parliament of Grenoble, asking him to send a few people to see the party on the mountain, and stating that it was 'the most horrible and frightful passage that I or any of my company have ever seen.' The Parliament sent their Usher, the Noble Yve Lévy, to see whether the story was true, and he reported that he saw Domjulian and several others on the mountain, but did not attempt to climb it 'owing to the danger of perishing there, and by reason of the impossibility of getting there, for fear he should seem to tempt the Lord, since at the mere sight of this mountain everyone was terrified.' *

Among the documents which certify this ascent, and are preserved in the archives at Grenoble, is an account written by François de Bosco, Almoner to Domjulian and one of those who accompanied him on the expedition, in which he says that 'the mountain is covered with a beautiful meadow,' and that 'there is also a very beautiful herd of chamois, which will never be able to get away,' as also many birds of different kinds. 'One also finds there,' he wrote, 'a great quantity of flowers of various colours and various fragrant scents, and more particularly, lilies.' On this Mr. Gribble observes that 'the flora and fauna of the mountain-top, at any rate, seem to have been either hastily observed, or carelessly reported, by the ecclesiastic, François de Bosco'; and though we must agree that the chamois could never have got up any more than they could have got down, we certainly found on the top a great many flowers of various kinds, including a number of lilies.†

There was no further ascent of the mountain till 1834, when it was climbed by Jean Liotard, a peasant, who found the top covered with grass and flowers, but no trace of animals, living or dead. The first ascent by a tourist was in 1877, and in 1881 it was climbed by Mr. Coolidge, who declared, in a note in the ALPINE JOURNAL written in 1888, that it was 'one of the most curious and interesting ascents' he had ever made.‡

On July 20, 1913, our landlord drove us in a very rickety waggonette to the village of La Richardière, which is apparently the easiest way of getting at the mountain, and, in his farewell

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* *The Early Mountaineers*, Gribble, p. 31.

† We found a quantity of the white Alpine lily, and of Martagon lily, in a depauperated state.

‡ *A.J.* xiv. 217.

injunctions, warned us to be careful, as a man had been killed that year, presumably on Mont Aiguille ; but we learnt afterwards that he had been killed in a driving accident, so that the warning seemed to be one for our host to take to heart rather than for us.

We went up through wood, beech, box and fir, succeeded by sticky mud and grass, to the foot of the rocks, at their S.-W. end. Here we looked at the S.-E. face which is quite impracticable, and then went along the N.-W. side. About opposite its centre the débris slopes are joined by a grassy ridge to the main table-land lying to the W., and here the cliffs are less steep. Passing a little beyond this ridge, we turned up the rocks, having found an empty rucksack at their foot, which we thought might have belonged to the dead man.

The ascent, like most of the Dolomite climbs, began steeply from the scree, and led upward to the left for about a hundred feet, the rock consisting of rounded limestone. We were glad to find two pitons in place, but had so far underrated the climb as to bring only 40 feet of rope, which was about 10 feet too short for every pitch where it was needed. We then bore to our right and upwards for another 50 feet, after which a bit on the level brought us to easier ground, and we found ourselves at the lower end of the main feature of the climb. The rocks immediately above the grassy ridge, which I have mentioned, project in the form of a partially detached tower, and we were on the true right wall of the broad and almost vertical gully leading up to the gap between this tower and the mountain. The route lies up a ledge which rises for some 300 feet at an angle of about 30 degrees, its outer edge broken and sloping. Except for 10 feet at the top there is nothing more than easy scrambling, but the drop below appeared vertical and there are no good hitches for the rope. There is, however, a wire cable, and to this we held tight all the way. Without it, the place would have a reputation at Cortina as an exposed, but not difficult, traverse, and would have been decidedly trying for a first day's climb.

We were now at the gap above which the tower rose sheer. On the other side a broad gully led upward, and we were glad to find it considerably easier than we expected. We followed it up, and soon reached another cable which led us up the narrowing and steepening gully to an overhang, and in a few minutes we were in a meadow, so deep and luxuriant that we almost felt guilty as we waded through it. The plateau which forms the top of the mountain is about 500 by 100 yards,

and slopes gently from N.-E. to S.-W. and more steeply from N.-W. to S.-E., and was thick with flowers, of which we picked about twenty-five different kinds.* To the W. stretched a great table-land, and to the E. we got a fine view of the Dauphiné mountains. It took us about $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours to climb the rocks, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours to descend them, but it was our first expedition of the season. On the way back, we walked along at the foot of the S.E. wall, which in steepness is only equalled by the great wall of the Rothwand.†

After this diversion our object was to get to Monte Viso as quickly as possible. From Clelles-Mens we went by train to Gap, where we chose what seemed the least grubby hotel at which to lunch and leave our luggage, and then went on by rail to Mont Dauphin-Guillestre, about a mile and a half from Guillestre, where there is an interesting church porch. The narrow street was almost completely filled by the public motor-car, which took us to Abriès, an interesting drive. Looking back above Guillestre the road commands fine views of Pelvoux, and further on passes through a number of ravines, the best being that of Chapelue. At Abriès we engaged a carriage to take us as far as it could, and were turned out at La Chalp to begin the first grind of the season over the Col de la Traversette, which we found very irksome, especially Hope, who was suffering from a slight attack of 'flu.' Unfortunately we did not go through the very curious tunnel which pierces the mountain about 100 feet or more below the col, as it is said to be sometimes blocked at the other side, and we were already late, but when we got there we found it would have paid us and saved the last pull up.

When we reached the primitive Alpine inn on the 'Piano

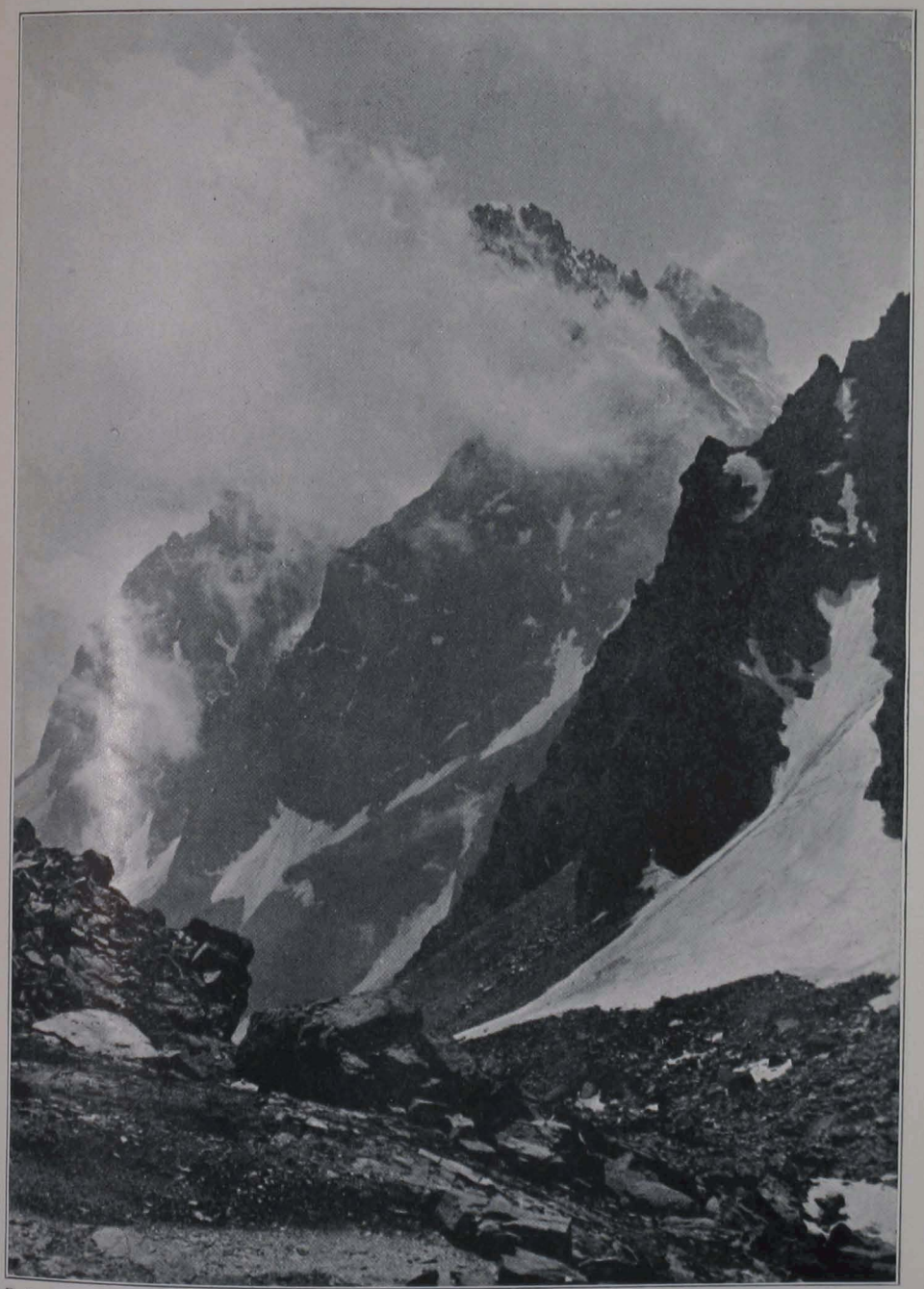
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* Including *Tulipa Australis, Phyteuma orbiculare, Orchis globosa, Nigritella angustifolia, Nigritella suaveolens Vill., Phaca frigida, Pedicularis verticillata, Alsine verna Bartling, Senecio doronicum, Aster alpinus, Carduus personatus, Lotus tenuis, Lilium Martagon.*

† On July 7, 1895, Messrs. Thorant and Dodero, having made the ascent by the ordinary route, descended by the N. face. They used a number of pitons, and left several spare ropes, taking 6 hours over the rock descent, which is about 1000 feet. On August 25, 1895, Messrs. Thorant and Chaumet ascended by the same route, making use of the ropes that had been employed in the previous descent. And on June 15, 1913, Messrs. Capdepon and Constant ascended the N. face in 6 hours.

del Re' at about 9 P.M., we thought we had not struck the right place, as there appeared to be no doors or windows in the house, and builders' débris of every kind lay scattered about. After making a complete circuit of this forbidding refuge, we shouted at the most habitable looking part. This caused a head to appear from an upper window, and we were soon ushered through the doorless entrance into the kitchen, where we supped frugally, a canvas sheet forming a very ineffectual protection against the wind. Hope, as the invalid, was given the only available single bedroom—truly a bedroom, for it contained a bed and nothing else, except some articles of feminine attire which hung on the walls, and it was certainly airy, as the window space was only filled with sheets of corrugated iron supported by wooden props. Consequently the hurricane which blew throughout the night produced a clanging like stage thunder with every gust of wind. In fact the iron was shifted again and again, and Hope had to get up three times in the first hour to prevent its being blown right in. I, in my turn, was shot into the dining-room, which contained four beds—three of them already occupied—and a miscellaneous collection of glass, crockery, household goods and merchandise. The three other occupants left early, and two tourists were shown in to drink liqueur before I was up, quite regardless of my presence, which, moreover, did not deter the ladies of the house from coming in and making the other beds. Washing arrangements there were none. I should add that the house was being rebuilt, and future visitors will doubtless find it a comfortable resting-place. It is curious that the strong winds which we experienced here, as well as at Abriès and Guillestre, and which would have meant bad weather in the Swiss Alps, in this district seemed to have no such result.

After breakfast we visited the source of the Po, which is quite close to the inn, and then walked over Col Viso to the Quintino Sella hut, a large four-storied building with room for over thirty people, and open as an inn in summer. A telephone was being installed, and Hope was called in to explain the connections which were marked in English. Unfortunately we both fell victims to the seductive charms of *Asti spumante*, and next morning felt unequal to trying the Viso by any but the easiest route. The weather also being indifferent, we started late and toiled over the fearful loose stones that lead to the Passo delle Sagnette. Descending the other side we made a *câche* not far from the old hut, and then attacked the S. face of the Viso, both of us going very badly,



R. L. G. Irving, photo. *Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.*

MONTE VISO,
from the North.

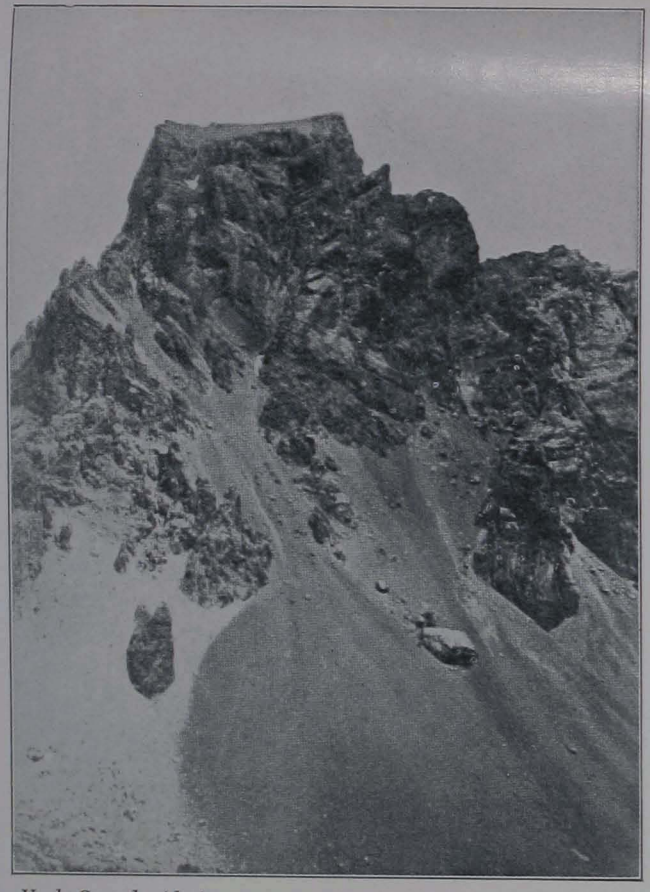
and feeling much the worse for our indulgence in the sparkling wine of the country ; in fact I had to draw on a tiny flask of brandy, which I had carried for years and never touched. Thus we crawled to the summit which we had so long desired, but the famous view was wrapped in cloud. We had done the Viso and that was all. Leaving the foot of the S. face at 6.30 P.M., we found no trace of anything like a path leading to the Forciolline glen, and after passing the lakes were overtaken by fog and darkness while still on the rocky barrier at the head of the glen. We tried to invert Ball's directions for the ascent, and so kept on the right bank of the stream, but after getting down some way we gave up the idea of his route, and took our own. Working back to our left to the stream we got into its bed below a fall, and found it rather a difficult bit of work with no light but the lantern. We then kept along stony slopes, traversing above the stream, and rolled down some stones, which indicated a steep drop. So we continued at the same level. The ground was steep débris, hard in places, with loose stones on top, and was not bad going even in the dark for a man with two hands for his axe, but for the lantern bearer, with only one free hand and a cliff below, far from easy. Finally we reached the top of a rock wall. We tried it in two places, descending 200 feet or so, more by feeling than seeing, and each time found a sheer drop below. So we went back a bit, and I let Hope down a rock and grass chimney with the lantern and 80 feet of rope. At the bottom he unroped and told me he was going on for a bit, after which I could hear nothing and was left waiting in darkness and uncertainty. Soon he came up again and reported further advance as just possible, but anyhow a good sleeping place, so we both descended and made ourselves as comfortable as we could under the circumstances. In the morning we saw that while the further advance would have been possible for 10 feet, it would have been no use, and we should probably have been unable to get up again. We climbed up our chimney with some difficulty and noted, not for the first time, what nasty places one can do in the dark. We then got down into the bed of the stream, crossed it, and having made as good a breakfast as the condition of our rucksacks allowed, descended the Vallante Glen to Castelponte, whence an hour's walk along a hot and dusty road took us to Casteldelphino.

Baedeker talks of the *Hôtel de France*, but there was nothing that could be justly dignified by the name of an hotel, and we walked two or three times up and down the village

street—eyed by gendarmes—trying to make up our minds which was the least unprepossessing of the half-dozen *osterie*. Finally we pitched on the Leone d'Oro, at the end of the village next the church. It was primitive but did us fairly well. Hope's bedroom was large, and contained one bed, about a dozen chairs, some old clothes, bacon, boots, dried herbs, wine bottles, and a quantity of household lumber, in the midst of which he slept peacefully. The day was Friday, and two peasant women at the table next ours dined off salad, followed by cheese, and I marvelled at the way they emptied the oil cruet on to the salad. In the evening we saw the bright light of many fireflies dancing about below the ceiling.

Next morning was brilliantly fine, and we had a pleasant walk up the Bellino Glen. It was St. Anne's Day, and above the hamlet named after that saint we met the whole population of the country-side coming down, and finally a procession of men and women in habits, carrying crosses and chanting prayers. Ascending to the head of the valley we went up to the Colletta di Chiapera, traversed on the near side of it, went up to the ridge again, and crossed the Col de Roure into the Val de Mary, where we talked with a herdsman who was in sole charge of 700 sheep. Descending to Maljasset or Maurin, a mere hamlet, we experienced the truth of Ball's assertion that 'the accommodation is not good,' a very euphemistic statement in my opinion.* We awoke next morning to find that the place had been invaded by a detachment of soldiers, and even if we had wished to spend a peaceful Sunday there, we could not have done so, as after breakfast we were accosted by a portly *gendarme*, and thought that at last the moment had arrived for producing the passports with which we had been careful to provide ourselves. But it was only to ask us if we wished to stay there, as Hope's bed, apparently the best in the village (he only *saw* two fleas), had been bespoken for the Colonel. So we walked down the dull high road to the point where the valley is almost closed by a rocky barrier, and the stream passes through a narrow gorge, 360 feet below the bridge, which we crossed on our way to Fouillouze, a nicely situated village, 6075 feet above the sea. We asked for quarters at the *Maison Meyran*, the house of the local guide, where a large family party met us at the door and assailed us with a torrent of questions :

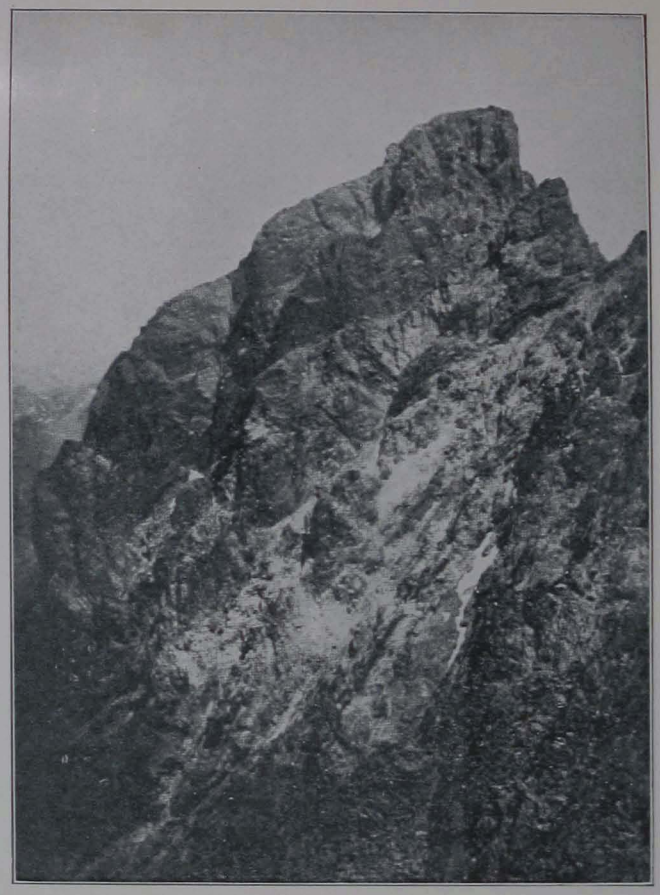
* The Col de Lautaret would have been a better route from the Bellino Glen to the Ubaye Valley than that which we followed.



V. de Cessole, photo.

From the Tête du Pissai.

BREC DE CHAMBEYRON,



Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.

From the Tête des Oupech.



V. de Cessole, photo. *Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.*

BREC DE CHAMBEYRON,
from the Tête de la Fréma.



P. Helbronner, photo. *Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.*

SIRAC,
N.E. face, from les Bans.

D'où venez-vous ?
Angleterre.
Qu'allez-vous faire ?
Le Chambeyron.
Qui vous conduira ?
Nous-mêmes.
Avez-vous déjà été là ?
Non.
N'avez-vous pas peur ?
Non.
Ah ! vous venez d'un peuple téméraire.

The *Maison Meyran* being full to overflowing we fortunately found good quarters at Mlle. Maurel's, and took an *al fresco* lunch in the meadows above the stream. Soon after we had finished, a bevy of girls came, stood and looked at us, laughed, and then plumped down on the grass a few yards away. They explained that they seldom saw any strangers, and that there was nothing to do on Sunday, so they apparently came to flirt with us, and proceeded to ask us many questions. When their curiosity had been partially satisfied, they departed up the hill, and returned to present us with a tricoloured *bouquet*, representing the colours of France, which, they said, they would not have given us if we had been Germans.

Starting at 3.30 next morning, we turned up the slopes above the village, and followed an old watercourse to the lakes lying between the Brec and the Aiguille de Chambeyron. Having crossed a col on the N.-E. arête of the Brec, we traversed on to its E. face, and went up a gully of loose and rotten rock again to the N.-E. arête, which we followed to the foot of the final rock wall. Thence we climbed straight up a gully in the rock face, which was blocked near the top by a stone, over which we had to wriggle, before emerging on to a scree slope just below the top. On the way up we had some nice views of Pelvoux, Monte Viso, and the Maritime Alps, but on the top were in cloud. On the descent when the time came to leave the N.-E. arête we looked down a snow couloir on the N.-W. face, and saw our breakfast place below us. It was too tempting and we descended about 1000 feet in fifteen minutes. The snow was good and the sun hidden, but the quantity of stones in the snow showed that the route was only suitable for a descent, and that in cold weather.*

Having said farewell to our friends at Fouillouze, we walked

* This couloir appears to be a new route.

down to St. Paul, where we again found soldiers in possession. We had intended to cross the Col de Var by the ordinary motor service next morning, and were told that the car would be there at 8.30, but at 8 o'clock we were suddenly informed that it was waiting, and were hurried out by the hotel porter to a large car occupied only by the driver and his chief. It turned out to be a pirate service which had started for the first time that morning at considerably reduced prices, and had left Barcellonette before the P.L.M. car. The latter was however a more powerful one, and as we looked down the winding road below us, we saw it slowly but surely overhauling us. The Pirates made every effort to keep their lead, looking back anxiously at every turn of the road, while our big empty char-à-banc rattled and jolted over newly laid stones and ruts regardless of springs and passengers, and the way we went round some of the corners, on a narrow road with a precipice on one side, was most alarming. At last we were overtaken, and had to let the other car pass, but when it stopped to do business at a village we took the lead again. Soon after passing the col, to the great disgust of our conductors we saw a column of soldiers, nearly half a mile in length, winding down the road below us. We passed them however at a dangerous pace, more than one man being very nearly hit by the handle of a motor bicycle which was strapped on to our runner-board. A little further on the bicycle broke away from its lashings, and was dashed on to the road. By extraordinary luck it was not smashed, and the Pirate chief proceeded to mount it, while we pursued our wild career.

Before we began the winding descent to Guillestre, Hope was seized with a desire for walking exercise, which the driver attributed to blue funk, and he and I were left alone. The descent was trying, but we drew up at the hotel door in Guillestre, palpitating but victorious. The driver took a hasty drink, and resumed his headlong course, absolutely alone.

From Guillestre we returned by train to Gap after a circular tour of eight days. The accommodation, at which we had rather turned up our noses before, now appeared palatial, and we thoroughly enjoyed the luxury of bathrooms, a square feed and clean sheets.

Next morning we took a carriage and pair over the Col de Manse to Les Borels en Champoléon, which lies a short distance from the southern wall of the Dauphiné mountains. At the col we stopped at the *Refuge Napoléon*, where the guardian, a tall, raw-boned, good-humoured looking man, was astonished

to see anyone hailing from England, and would apparently have liked to talk to us much longer than we could afford to stay. We had intended to go beyond Champoléon, but just as we arrived there a great thunderstorm began and lasted for some hours, so that we had perforce to stop at what Ball's Guide justly describes as the 'humble' inn. They said they could give us one bed in a room with others, but we insisted that we must at least have two beds and a room to ourselves. We could not face the atmosphere of the living room, and, notwithstanding many invitations to enter it, spent the afternoon standing or sitting in the doorway of the inn. During an interval in the storm an adder suddenly dropped from the eave gutter on to the road. The inn people said it must have come from the hay, which was stored in a loft at the top of the house, and as we expected our next resting-place to be a hay barn, we were not altogether pleased at the possibilities suggested by the incident.

Our host was an old guide, but, I should say, a purely local one, as he told us that the Sirac was harder than the Meije. He also warned us that a tourist had been killed on the Sirac not very long ago. Supposing we were killed, how should they know? Would we send a postcard to say if we succeeded and were still alive?

The following afternoon we walked up to Les Auberts, a miserable hamlet consisting of four dwelling-houses, with the usual barns and outbuildings Having discovered the house to which we had been recommended, we were received by an old couple who said that:—Yes, we could sleep in the hay; which was all that we aspired to, though we thought we should like to be guaranteed against snakes. The living room was very rough and dirty, and we entered it with some hesitation, but it was cold outside, and the old lady made an excellent omelette, and entertained us with much talk. They were the only family that stayed at Les Auberts during the winter, being too poor to go elsewhere, and they went down to mass at Les Borels every Sunday on snow-shoes. We must not think of going to the top of Sirac. A poor gentleman had been killed there two years before, and he too had slept in the hay. The way in which we were constantly reminded of fatal accidents, during our tour, was enough to shake the stoutest heart, but after the motor race over the Col de Var our nerves were steeled against any shock. Wishing to know what height we had to climb on the morrow, I asked our hostess how high we were above the sea, whereupon she entered into

a long explanation of how we must go to Gap, and thence by train to Marseilles before we could reach the level of the sea, with which information I had to rest content. When we retired to the hay we were escorted by the whole family, and as the barn was above the dwelling-house, we arranged to knock the floor with our axes when we wished to have the fire lit for our early breakfast, and, thinking of snakes, we went to sleep.

Next morning we started at 4 o'clock, up the desolate Issora Valley, from which there is said to be a path leading N.-E. We found none and had to climb up a horrible steep slope composed of greasy grass and rock, carrying luggage and extra luxuries for Le Clot en Valgaudemar, including butter and honey, neither of which was obtainable there four years before, but this time, having brought them, we found plenty of both. Thus we reached a fertile plain, above which rose a long level ridge of black shale, curiously fluted, and presenting a most gloomy aspect. We had thought of trying to find a sleeping place here instead of stopping at Les Auberts, but the only accommodation we could see was a dilapidated hut containing the remains of a departed sheep. When its comrades perceived us from afar, they tore down in hundreds from the surrounding slopes, and beset us in hopes of salt while we stopped to feed.

It was hard to decide which point on the long shale ridge was the Col Vallonpierre, so we kept in the direction in which we expected the Sirac to be, for it was still out of sight. After climbing a very steep slope of wet slippery shale, we struck the ridge above, and S.-E. of, the col, and made a descending traverse to our right to the snowy hollow S. of Sirac. We could see a snow gully coming down from the glacier, but it ended in a waterfall, which was not encouraging. However, the way up the wall on the E. of the stream was not so bad as it looked, and we reached the foot of the gully, ascended by loose stones on its left bank to the glacier, and traversed upwards by fairly steep slopes to the foot of the couloir in its N.-E. corner. The Climber's Guide tells one to climb the couloir or the steep rocks on its left bank. We used the latter to get over the bergschrund, and then went back to the couloir. The upper part was very steep, and we got out on the right bank where some rocks led up to the final chimney. These rocks were rotten and covered with wet fresh snow, while the holds were bad, with no possible hitches, and rarely even a good foothold for the leader. The nearer we got to the final chimney leading to the S.-W. arête the worse it looked, and as it was raining hard and we were in

thick mist, we turned back at its foot. It may be a route, but in its then condition it was an excessively nasty bit, and we were glad to get down the rocks into the couloir again, though it was steep enough to make us face the mountain most of the way down it, with one axe always firmly buried. So we descended to Le Clot en Valgaudemar, where there is a substantial hut belonging to the French Alpine Club, consisting of two large rooms with a number of excellent beds, and a living room, with kitchen downstairs. The drawback is that the guardian and his wife, who live in the neighbouring hamlet, sit through each meal, watching and appraising every mouthful that one takes, and appraising fairly high. But they do you very well all the same.

We decided to try the Sirac once more, as we might never be so near it again, though we did not much like the idea of the final chimney. Taking an off day, we walked down to La Chapelle for lunch, and on the way back had a talk with the natives at Rif du Sap, a village below Le Clot, who told us that we could not climb Sirac without guides; it was absolutely out of the question; we should fall and be killed. Thus encouraged we started at 3 o'clock the following morning, and walked up the valley to the plain near the Vallonpierre lake, gaining the glacier W. of Sirac by the rocks on the left bank of the tongue of ice which descends from it. This route looked shorter than our previous one, and would have been so, but that we had to cut a good many steps on the glacier, and owing to this possibility the other route is better. Having joined our old tracks we left the couloir about half-way up, and took to the steep rocks on its left bank, which soon became less steep, and led to a sort of terrace under the wall of the S.-W. arête, level with the col, and high above the couloir. In traversing to the col we had to crawl up a sloping ledge, which it was difficult to negotiate on the descent crawling down backwards, and if we had kept more to our right in ascending the rocks we should probably have found an easier way. We crossed the col and climbed easily up the S.E. face of the mountain to the top, whence we got a fine view of Pic d'Olan, the Meije, Ecrins, Les Bans, Chaillol, &c. Four years before, when crossing the Sommet des Rouies, we had been much impressed with the appearance of Sirac. The N. face, which is seen from thence, is something like the Dent du Midi, but is much finer. It stands up a great wall, seamed by steep couloirs, and presenting six summits, all very much on a level with each other. This face is quite impossible, and

the whole mass fully deserves the description given to it in Ball's Guide, as being 'a very grand mountain.'

We left Le Clot in bad weather, intending to cross either the Col Chalance or the Col de la Muande, and before long were in heavy rain and thick mist. The Climber's Guide describes the S. side of Col Chalance as easy, and does not mention any difficulties on the N., whereas it speaks of a 'steep ice or snow couloir' on the S. side of the Col de la Muande. So we decided to take the col that was at least easy on one side, but found that it was not easy on the N., though we could not see any distance ahead of us, and probably did not strike the ridge at the best place. As it was, we had to traverse along to the E. before descending at a point which was not exactly either the Col Chalance or Col de la Muande. The descent to the Muande Glacier required care, as the snow was steep and soft, and we had to traverse to reach a bridge over the bergschrund. On the glacier we came in for a snowstorm, followed by a bad thunderstorm, and were in some danger of falling stones. So we were glad to get on *terra firma*. We had once before walked along the abominable path through the La Lavey Glen in the dusk and darkness, and how we, or anyone else who has done so, should have chosen to repeat the walk is a mystery After crossing the Venéon we followed the track leading upwards to the main valley path, but it soon seemed to vanish in débris that became looser as we ascended. This last and unexpected discomfort was explained when we suddenly found ourselves on the new road which was being constructed from St. Christophe to La Berarde. It runs almost on the level into St. Christophe, avoiding the ups and downs of the old path, and we walked along it, in torrents of rain, to the Hôtel Turc, where we were no longer 'on the outskirts.'

[For the discussion of this article see pp. 353–4.]

Week-end Scrambles in the Kangra Himalayas.

By H. D. MINCHINTON.

In chapter iv. of *Twenty Years' Climbing in the Himalayas*, Colonel Bruce says that if one were to confine oneself to peaks of 20,000 feet one could enjoy oneself immensely. I wish to prove, in this paper, that even at a much lower elevation very great enjoyment can be obtained. Referring again