Matterhorn.' This route will be without doubt the most interesting way of ascent.

About a week later, on August 11, after a bivouac on the S.W. face, Mr. Darling and Mr. MacCarthy, with Schauffelberger and myself, traversed over to the head of the Lake Kinney Valley. We did not expect to reach the summit of Mt. Robson because the weather was very bad, but we gave it a try, and found the ridge [marked by the . . . line] very easy except on one dangerous traverse under an overhanging glacier shown in the picture. I believe that this dangerous traverse can be avoided by going around on a big rock ledge. Then we went over rocks that were not very hard, and got up to the plateau that comes over from the Shoulder [S.S.E. arête]. From there we traversed to the right and struck the route we used on our successful climb. We were very sorry that we had to turn back, 500 ft. under the summit, on account of a blizzard. We went down by the way we had come up.

There is no doubt that this ridge will be the future route to ascend to the summit of Mt. Robson. But the climb cannot be done from Lake Kinney in one day. It will be necessary to build a hut at the head of the Lake Kinney Valley. The snow conditions on the highest peaks in the Canadian Rockies can never be compared with those in the Alps, as there are more avalanches in the Rockies on account of the dryness of the atmosphere, which leaves the snow powdery and unpacked. And so I may say that Mt. Robson will always be a risky climb, even on the easiest side, on account of avalanches.

[Conrad Kain is the permanent guide of the Alpine Club of Canada, and has taken a prominent part in Mr. Wheeler's exploratory expeditions. He comes from Nasswald, a village at the foot of the far-famed Raxalpe, and was well known in Switzerland as well as Austria as a guide of very great promise. He is now in his thirty-first year.]

La Sengla.

[Ascent of N. Summit from the Col de la Reuse d'Arolla.]

By A. STUART JENKINS.

WHEN it comes to finishing up a district, the enthusiastic climber generally remembers that his favourite playground is beset with mountains of the Cima di Jazzi and Strahlhorn category—not to speak of climbs on distant border

lines—which have not been conquered by his ardour. All the best expeditions belong to the good old days, and the present and future offer only the snow grind, which had hitherto been consigned to winter sport. Yet, if the ground be dear to him, it is hard to leave a stone unturned, a mountain untrodden. The energetic day comes sooner or later, and the proof of the climber's sentimental weakness is furnished by the exertion patiently endured on the everlasting *névé*.

Such was my situation in the Arolla district, a couple of years ago. From every summit ascended and reascended, the Tête Blanche and Tête de Valpelline would stand before me, the very expression of remorse, resulting from unaccomplished acts.

The Tête Blanche was not altogether unknown to me: I had been within twenty minutes of its topmost extremity, when I once returned to Zermatt, from a precocious ascent of the Bouquetins. The flank of the snow hump was skirted and the possibility of its ascent even suggested; but, after short deliberation, the relative firmness of the Z'mutt moraine seemed irresistible, compared with the snow conditions we were in, and our party desisted.

The Tête de Valpelline, also, once afforded us an experience. Local information made us try its S.E. cliffs, by way of a short cut from the cabane Bertol to the Dent d'Hérens. After two hours lost in inextricable couloirs, we found it quicker to go down to vegetation and then reascend the Za de Zan Glacier.

We then swore we would never try either of these climbs again.

But at that time another mountain, also strange to us, attracted our attention a deal more. Between the Col de l'Evêque and the Bec d'Epicoun, a section of a long frontier ridge separates the Arolla and Chanrion mountains from Italy. The highest point of this arête is the Sengla (3702 m.), an imposing rock structure, coated with ice on the Swiss face and prolonging itself to the S., in an uninterrupted succession of large gendarmes, two of which, I afterwards found out, bear the names of Central and South Sengla, and the last one of Bec de Blancien. All these summits had been climbed, though very seldom, and the history of their conquest is brief.

The supposition that in 1866 G. E. Foster ever made a climb on the Sengla from the Col de la Reuse d'Arolla has to be abandoned,* and the first attempt on the mountain falls to

* *Alpine Journal*, xix. p. 370, and xxvi. pp. 342–4.

F. Hoffmann-Merian, with Justin Felley, who, in August 1867, ascended a part of its N. ridge from the Otemma Glacier. They were driven back by a severe snowstorm. Two weeks later, Dr. A. Baltzer and C. Schroeder, with Séraphin Bessard, were more fortunate. Starting likewise from the Otemma Glacier, they attacked the mountain by its western rock face and ascended the central and N. (highest) peaks of the Sengla. The first party to visit the S. Sengla was represented by SS. E. Canzio, F. Mondini, and N. Vigna, with a porter. Starting from Prarayé, they ascended their peak by an eastern rock ridge coming almost to the Combe d'Oren.

As to the Blancien, the last prominence of the great rock wall, it was first inspected in 1879, when A. Cust, with Jean Martin and Pierre Beytrison, made so many explorations in that neighbourhood.

All this latter information was unknown to me in June 1911. We had only, hitherto, observed the frontier line from neighbouring mountains and had no *idea* of a *right way* up any of the peaks contemplated. It was decided, however, we should try a climb from the Col de la Reuse d'Arolla, also known as Col d'Oren, where a sharp fascinating ridge rose to the N. summit of the Sengla.

The project seemed promising—at all events, in adventure—and this expedition had to figure with honour as my last climb in the Arolla district.

A great many will object that distance hardly allows it to rank in the latter district at all. But, then, to what district should the mountain belong? Chanrion is too insignificant a place to claim it, and Prarayé—notwithstanding its hotel—too humble to be considered a district; for that very word evokes, at least, a score of certificated guides, loafing in front of the climber's hotel, and everybody knows that at Prarayé the only available being, willing to carry a rucksack, is the shepherd.

My party was a model one (as far as numbers go), two long-tested Valaisan guides, Jean Bournissen and Jean Gaudin, with their faithful 'voyageur.' Joining forces at Evolène, we bound ourselves by a fifteen days' contract, with the intention of making Prarayé our headquarters. But the trans-alpine season, we were told, had not yet begun, nor was anything provided for the early visitor. Wise from anterior experiment of the shepherd's *polenta*, we decided to take house and roof along with us, ready to drop everything at the foot of a chimney if the burden became too cumbersome. So on



F. Mondini, photo

THE EAST FACE OF LA SENGLA.

Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.

the evening of June 26, 1911, abundant provisions, Mummery tent, and elaborate camping paraphernalia, were packed and corded and equitably distributed in our rucksacks.

The ensuing morning, the old Arolla pines in front of the Kurhaus were white with snow, newly fallen, and we found nothing better to do than to perfect our hands in the art of pitching the tent in front of the hotel.

The next day, however, was cold and clear, and at 1.50, as the poet would say, we set our faces to the star, which is the star of morning. Notwithstanding its guidance, the lantern came in handy to see us over the Zigiorenove Glacier. The moraine leading to the Pièce Glacier ruffled up our temper. Its larger stone elements were hard frozen in the gravel, and the pressure of our confident, drowsy footsteps constantly tore them out of their bedding, to roll with them, a pace or two downward. My rucksack pulled heavily on the shoulder-straps, and I mournfully worked out the problem of how much weight I would have had to carry, had an absent porter taken in charge a third of our total luggage. My guides had evidently been drifting in the same sea of thought, for, after an hour's constraint, they did not conceal their displeasure, although it was framed in *patois*. But for all that we certainly were not going to fetch the porter down at Evolène. We were to deposit our load at the foot of the Sengla, four hours further on ; till then, we would make the best of it.

The Glacier was good, and the well-hardened fresh snow facilitated our last hour to the Col de Vuignette.

An evenly-tinted dawn, promising a thoroughly fine day, served as a red background to the higher summits, still blue with night. But, I am sorry to say, we did not admire it long. The cold spurred us along the broad and flat Otemma Glacier towards the Col de la Reuse d'Arolla. What a voluptuous feeling, to stretch at a quick pace our muscles, contracted by three-and-a-half hours of steep uphill work !

At 8 o'clock we threw down our baggage on the Col and then sat ourselves down, relieved at the thought of leaving everything there, until the climb was over. The breakfast indulged in was a cold one. Seated, partly sheltered behind a boulder from a bitter north wind, we crammed with trembling hands into our mouths what our chattering teeth would not masticate. Meanwhile, the ridge, which was to lead us to the top of our mountain, could be observed. It was jagged and rose abruptly in a westerly direction from the Col to a minor snow-capped summit, and thence turning southward, with loss of inclination,

formed several gendarmes, the relative height of which our observation point did not allow us to ascertain. Our task seemed none too easy. At a glance it was evident the rock was not sound, and moreover, the wind had beaten the snow against the N. flank of the ridge, covering every slab and filling every available handhold and crevice. From projecting crags hung long icicles. The sun, now well above the neighbouring mountains, seemed to have no effect on this wintry scene, and in fact the north wind was becoming so violent that we abandoned the idea of waiting for later, warmer hours, and hastily began the climb.

The line of ascent was, with slight excursions to the right and left, mainly that of the ridge. The looseness of the rock compelled us to move slowly, often one at a time, where, in other conditions, such a precaution would not have been necessary. What, however, annoyed us above all was the cold. The wind, catching the snow in its vortex, drove it blindingly into our faces. Every handhold had to be cleared from snow, and our gloves soon became wet and frozen in the task. Frequent halts became necessary in order to blow on our numbed fingers, stamp our feet, and uncoil the stiff rope.

The short slope of hard snow, underlying the first summit, seen from below, was hailed with delight. Quick strokes of the axe, executed indiscriminately by amateur and professionals, restored a good blood circulation and brought us in no time to the second section of the arête. Three hours had been spent from the Col to our present standing point, and from the stretch which now separated us from what we thought was the highest tower it was obvious we had not done half the work. So far, we had noticed no nail scratches on the rocks, nor any other sign of a previous climb, and the observant eye could not fail to understand that, if this was not a new way, it certainly could not be the easiest one.

We now followed the ridge in a southerly direction, over and around a number of crags of good sound rock, which offered more or less difficulty. The asperities of the latter were mostly turned on the S. side, comparatively free from snow.

After nearly two more hours of this work our hearts suddenly sank. Behind the gendarme we had long taken to be the summit, appeared another rock peak, which seemed to surpass it in height. The gap separating them was deep, and this second summit horribly distant to our eyes. For a moment we hesitated as to what we should do. It was then past twelve, and, if the second tower was the real one, it was probable the

success of the climb would cost us a cold night, spent on our return to the Col de la Reuse d'Arolla. Was it worth while to climb the first gendarme only to retreat after the effort?—for we foresaw that this first obstacle would not be easy to surmount. The S. flank of the mountain being quite sheer, the eye had to find a way up the N. face, over a succession of slabs, very much iced and covered with snow.

We debated the question, huddled together in a rock-niche. Meanwhile, pocket provisions were produced, which restored much our stomachs and somewhat our *moral*. The day, after all, was very young, and there was no immediate reason why we should not venture a couple of hours more from our base, so we made straight for the slabs on the N. face of the gendarme. They were iced, but also covered with snow, firm enough to carry one's weight. With a cautious tread, we climbed them with ease, and long before we expected were on top of the Sengla, for the other peak that had frightened us was decidedly lower.

The gale had not ceased for a moment since morning, and had now reached its climax. We stayed but a few minutes on the summit, just enough to search the horizon in a circular glance. The sky was perfectly clear, and the atmosphere so pure that we could see mountains in the furthest distance. The Sengla, like many mountains on the frontier of Switzerland and Italy, affords in its view the happy contrast of light and colour in the immediate foreground, due to the unexpected conjunction of the verdant Italian pastures with the white and blue snowfields of the more northern country. Below, at a distance of some three thousand feet, the narrow Combe d'Oren, taking birth from the precipitous slopes leading to the Col de Collon, ran down peacefully from a yellow-green turf above to greener meadows below.

Before descending, we had a look at the breach which separated us from the more southern tower or Central Sengla. It was about a hundred and fifty feet deep, and, under present conditions, of a most uninviting appearance. Its traverse would have taken, perhaps, a couple of hours; but with less snow, of course, it would be much easier, and we then and there nourished the hope of returning later in the season, to try a complete traverse from the Col de la Reuse d'Arolla, over the three summits of the Sengla and over the Bec de Blancien to the Col de Sassa. All these peaks really form but one mountain, and are, as I have said before, the gendarmes of one long continuous ridge, and given the required good climbing conditions we saw no impossibility in the realisation of our hope.

For the present we could only contemplate a hasty descent. It was a little past 2 P.M., and there was not much chance of our recovering our rucksacks on the Col before 6.

There is little to say about our return. We carefully retraced our steps of ascent. An extra rope was brought out on several occasions, to spare time and half-frozen fingers. As the day advanced, a few clouds seemed to quicken its decline by hiding the sun from us. But these were only passing; the wind had torn them to shreds, and was scattering their long fragments over the more southern mountain tops by the time we got back to our abandoned baggage.

The descent took four hours of continuous going.

With the camping paraphernalia once more on our backs, we ran down rocks, slipped over a small glacier tongue, and stumbled over loose moraine to lower regions. In the Combe d'Oren, a flat island of gravel, embraced by two arms of a divided stream, offered a propitious place for pitching the tent. Our reason for not seeking soft turf below was that we intended to climb the Bec de Blancien the next day, and we held fast to the principle that one hour saved in the morning is worth two at night.

The necessities of camping occupied us severally each according to his capacities. Whilst one of us spanned the tent between two ice axes and fastened it laterally to stones by means of strings, the other built the hearth and exhibited his culinary talent. For my part, being a singer, I made use of my cultivated breath by inflating two pillows and an air mattress. In the mountain-climbing business every trade faculty comes in handy, even that of the ventriloquist. A hearty meal was soon smoking at the door of our tent; but to enjoy it we had to retire within, the cold being unbearable. Through the slit opening of our improvised shelter, a mysterious arm brought forth, at even intervals, a hand armed with a spoon, dipped it in the vessel, and returned with equal mystery to its hidden owner.

The night was not a pleasant one. We were much cramped. A space four feet wide for three persons banishes all idea of luxury. It was decided one would lie on his back and the two others sideways. Once a position taken, it could hardly be modified without upsetting the whole combination; so individual tastes had to be consulted, once for all. As Bournissen suffered from an incurable snoring habit, he was granted no choice in the matter; he could not occupy the back position. I took it myself, sacrificing the guides to my comfort. The wind howled during the night and shook

our roof, till we expected at any moment to see our shelter collapse.

By and by, a discreet crepitation against the stretched canvas attracted our attention. Could it be snow? One of us restlessly crawled out into the open to make certain, and instantly came back with the news that the sky was overcast and a very fine snow, driven by the blizzard, was falling and already lying on the ground. It was only midnight. We had time to wait. But at dawn there was no improvement. The fallen snow did not amount to much, but the wind and cold were so intense that we gave up all idea of ascending the Bec de Blancien.

At 8 the weather was again clear. We looked at the mountains and wondered whether we had made a mistake in not starting. It was late, and, besides, we had lost all taste for altitude that morning; so, after gathering up our things, we set out for the first *Alpe* in the Combe d'Oren.

I never go down this narrow valley without giving it my whole tribute of admiration. The contrast of the dark chaotic rock overthrow of its upper part with the calm, warm colouring of the lower vegetation zone is striking. The flowers, modestly disseminated at first, seem to possess warmer hues than elsewhere, a colouring reminding one that this valley belongs to Italy.

We found the *Alpe* empty; the shepherds had not yet come up with the cattle. There was no hurry to get down to Prarayé. We had abandoned our new idea of bivouacking that same day for the Jumeaux, on the W. bank of the Za de Zan Glacier. After all, starting from the valley itself would only give us a couple more hours' work in the morning, and they certainly were worth a good sleep, buried in the hay of the shepherds' barn. So we lingered about, cooking, wading in the clear icy stream and then basking in the sun, stretched out at full length on our stomachs, with our faces hidden in the soft grass. The day was so lovely, and our *far niente* so pleasant, that we did not leave our halting-place for hours.

Prarayé was reached at sunset, just as the cows were let loose in the meadow. Before retiring to rest, we enjoyed the calm poetic enchantment of this remote corner, where pastoral life, with its infinite charm, is still to be found. The sky was cloudless; from all sides came the sound of cow bells, mingled with the calls of shepherds and the barking of dogs, and night crept up slowly, and quenched the last golden lights on the highest peaks.