The Brahma Peaks of the Pir Panjal Range.

By Dr. ERNEST F. NEVE.

THE name Brahma, as applied to groups of peaks, is not uncommon in those parts of the Himalayas inhabited by Hindus. To the east of Kishtiwar there are three charming summits bearing that name.

The Pir Panjal Brahma Peaks are three graceful points which stand out conspicuously at the S. end of the valley of Kashmir. The western summit, which is the highest, has been determined by the Trigonometrical Survey as 15,523 ft., which is almost exactly the same height as Mt. Tatticooti, the ascent of which I described in the Journal, vol. xxi. no. 155.

To the N.-W. of the three peaks, and separated from the valley of Kashmir by a northern spur, lies the lake of Konsa Nag.

Kashmir legends tell of the time when the goddess Parwati used to sail in a pleasure boat from her mountain home on Haramouk in the N., across a vast lake, to Konsa Nag in the S. And in her honour this great sheet of water was called Satisar, the lake of the chaste lady.

Konsa Nag is three miles long. It is the source of the Veshau river, one of the main tributaries of the Jhelum. Its shores are very steep. They are indeed precipitous in places.

The northern aspect of the Brahma Peaks, which overlooks the vale of Kashmir, holds out but little inducement to climbers. Small valleys, the heads of which are filled with glaciers, lead to continuous and formidable-looking precipices. The summits are joined by a jagged arête which on the N. side appears to be inaccessible.

The following is a brief account of a first attempt to reach the summit of the highest of the three peaks. Accompanied by Professor Cox, of the Indian Educational Department, I went to the village of Manzgam, which is about four miles below where the river Veshau debouches in the valley. Here we arranged for transport and supplies, and formed our depot. On June 25 we crossed a ridge about 2000 ft. high, immediately to the S. of Manzgam, and, making our way round the N. spur of the Brahma Peaks, we followed up the Veshau river to Konsa Nag. On June 27 we marched along the S.-W. border of the lake. This involved some steep climbing to avoid precipitous scarps. That evening we pitched our base camp

about a mile above the lake on a turfy patch in the middle of snow. We were able to obtain juniper for firewood from the slopes above. On June 28 we took with us twelve porters with light loads, and pushed up for another 2000 ft. Here we pitched a Whymper tent on the névé just below the rocky face of the peak. A snowstorm came on, and the weather appeared so unsettled that when it cleared at 10 A.M. we decided to make our attempt at once.

There were two possible routes. One, a very steep couloir running up for 1500 ft. to a point about 400 ft. below the peak on the N.-W. arête. This would have necessitated step-cutting up the whole length of the gully. The other line was about 300 yards to the E., where there was a fault in the strata and an oblique ledge leading up quite in the right direction. This ledge had caught the snow, which formed steep patches. But some parts were clear, and in others we were able to scramble along a fringe of loose stones or rock below the snow, so that the amount of step-cutting was greatly reduced. The face of the mountain was composed of great sheets of polished rock, sloping down at an angle of 60° to 80°. As we rose there was an increasing depth of precipice below, and the snow patches became more vertical. Finally, at a height of about 14,500 ft., we took to the rocks above, and were then compelled to make for the arête to the E. of the peak.

The formation was trap of the Pir Panjal volcanic series. We were rather troubled by loose rocks. Wherever there was water, there were clusters of the beautiful purple *Primula Stuartii*.

We reached the arête at 2.45, a four hours' climb from our shelter tent. We found that it fell as an almost sheer precipice on the opposite side, and we were unable to work to the left owing to unclimbable rocky buttresses.

The peculiarity of all three of the Brahma Peaks is that they appear to have only two faces and two arêtes. The northern face is precipitous, and the southern aspect presents a smooth polished surface exposed by cleavage and with few cracks. The arêtes are very broken and do not look practicable.

From our farthest point, which was about 15,000 ft., we were near enough to obtain, with binoculars, an excellent view of the summit. The last 300 ft. did not present a very encouraging appearance.

If an ascent of the final peak is possible, the last snow slope of the ledge will have to be ascended, and then there are only

two routes that are in any degree possible : to the left up a little snow gully, and then by cracks round on to the N. face ; or to the right of the base a snow-filled crack runs obliquely upwards, beyond which it might be less difficult to advance than it looks.

The climb is worth repeating under more favourable weather conditions, and with, therefore, more time at our disposal.

IN MEMORIAM.

SIR ALFRED EAST, R.A.,

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF BRITISH ARTISTS.

THOSE who climb may do so for scientific purposes, for the sake of adventure, or simply because it is the finest and most health-giving exercise in the world, but whatever other motives they may have, the love of grand and inspiring scenery is common to all mountaineers, and it is natural that the Alpine Club should appreciate the art of landscape painting, and should welcome landscape painters as members of the Club. Sir Alfred East was one of the most distinguished of those who have been elected more on an artistic than on a climbing qualification : his love of travel and his interest in the scenery of many lands were quite in harmony with the spirit and traditions of the Club, and his death removes from its ranks an artist of world-wide fame. In his rendering of nature Sir Alfred was more interested in pictorial possibilities than in topographical facts, but wherever he was painting he never failed to give a true impression of local atmosphere and colour. For many years his pictures have been admired in all galleries of modern art, and perhaps those on whom the task of arranging exhibitions has fallen know best how their decorative qualities enhanced the value of any wall on which they were hung. It was never difficult to find a place where East's pictures would look well ; their masterly design and fine colour, combined with a simplicity which was attained by the careful elimination of facts which were not essential to his scheme, gave them great distinction, and they were a welcome relief to the eye among works attempting to give the infinite detail of nature. His impressions of the peaceful beauty of the Cotswold country, the soft brilliancy of Japan, and the rich colour of Spain will live in our memories among the best work of our time. In addition to his great artistic qualities Sir Alfred was possessed of untiring energy, and spared himself no