

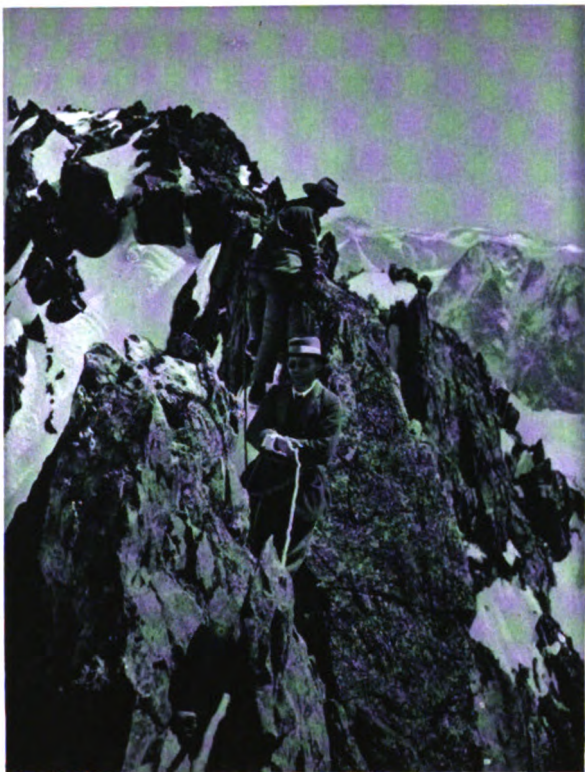
route was thoroughly sound, and the delicacy of the traverses won Knubel's warm approval. There remained the descent by the easy way, but this time—thanks to my previous misfortunes and to careful inspection from La Vachey—we made no mistake. Following the W. arête a good deal further than in 1911, we avoided the bergschrund and took to the rock rib at its highest point, descended the rib for some little distance, and then reached the middle portion of the Frébouzie glacier by easy rocks on the right. A couple of sitting glissades took us off the glacier in two hours from the summit.

By this route the traverse of Gruetta makes a delightful day and provides agreeably varied entertainment—a two hours' test of temper and lungs on the steep scramble up to Gruetta glacier, three hours on the glacier and couloir, three of excellent climbing on good rocks, and finally an easy way down. The rocks, owing to the steepness of Gruetta's walls, give the snow very little chance to lie, so that the climb is one that could probably be taken when other things are impracticable.

THE N.W. PEAK OF LES BANS BY THE N.W. ARÊTE AND THE
GRANDE CASSE.

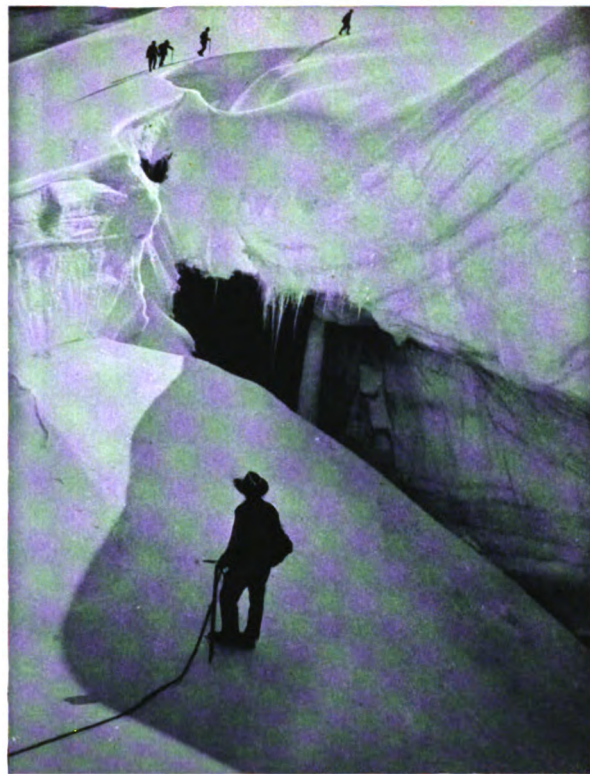
BY E. G. WELLS.

WE—our party consisted of Messrs. E. V. Slater, P. Scoones, myself, and Daniel Zurbruggen of Saas Grund—had settled down at La Bérarde with the fixed intention of attacking the Meije and the Écrins. But preconceived plans in the mountains are almost as uncertain of fulfilment as they are on the battlefield, and after several days of storm and rain the two great peaks seemed as distant as Paris and London are to the Germans to-day. We filled up two days by crossing the Brèche de la Maye and returning by the Col des Cavales, but from the condition of the latter it was evident that the rocks of the Meije would not be ready for some days, and, the writer having no more time, it was decided that the party should try their luck on a rather less lofty summit. The southern group of Dauphiné peaks had looked very inviting from the Cavales pass, all sparkling with a fresh coat of snow, and on reaching the hotel we found another party also tired of inaction, and so it was agreed that all should start on the morrow—August 16, 1913—for Les Bans. It is a long and rather dreary



E. S. Wells, photo.

On the N.W. Summit of Les Pins.



Swan Electric Engraving Co. Ltd.

A Crevasse on the Pilatte Glacier.

walk up the Pilatte valley from La Bérarde, and necessitates an early start, but the morning was beautifully fine, and when we reached the breakfast-place at the foot of the broad La Pilatte glacier, with its beautiful ice waves, and turned round to look at the Écrins towering up behind us in the morning sun, we felt that we were in for a good day's climbing at last. The new snow was not sufficient to make progress difficult on the glacier, and we reached the Col de la Pilatte about 8 A.M. in excellent spirits. Here we found the new snow had drifted heavily, and after fighting our way through it on to the ridge we came up with the other party, which had had half an hour's start. They told us, to our dismay, that the short ridge leading to the rocks was corniced and dangerous and might be impossible in the afternoon, and that the rocks on Les Bans were clearly in such bad condition that even if we could reach them we could not climb them. As they had two good local guides and we had only one stranger from the Valais, we felt obliged to follow their advice. But to go home on such a day was impossible. We must have some climbing, no matter how little chance of success. Accordingly we descended hastily about 1000 ft. by the way we had come, and then struck off to the left to the foot of a ridge that runs from the N.W. peak of Les Bans, almost due N. to the Pilatte glacier. This ridge is clearly seen in one of the pictures, leading to the right hand and lower summit. Hastening across the foot of a broad snow couloir, sometimes swept by avalanches, we easily crossed the bergschrund and in a few minutes found ourselves on the rocky rib between two ice-slopes. The climbing at once became interesting, and though we encountered no great difficulty, yet it always needed care. The rock was fairly firm, but the arête very narrow, steep ice-slopes coated with new snow reaching almost to the top of it on either side.

After 2½ hours of rather slow progress we halted for lunch in a most inconvenient spot, sitting astride the ridge one above the other. Such a posture is no doubt safe for the individuals, but most perilous for the tea and the sardines when they have to be passed down the line. However, after several anxious moments, we managed to convey more into ourselves than we consigned to the bergschrund at the bottom of the mountain, and continued our ascent.

After another hour on the ridge it began to lose itself in the N.W. face of the mountain, and we realised that we were only a short distance from the W. ridge, connecting our mountain with the Mt. Gioberney. We then struck off to our



*Ailefroide and Les Ecrins,
from the Glacier de la Pilatte.*



E. F. Wolff, photo

J. C. C. Co. Ltd.

*Glacier de la Pilatte: Les Bans en R.^e
Route of ascent marked with dotted lines
(Taken from Tête de Chénail)*

right towards it across one of those faces that always appear to me the most jumpy of all places in mountaineering, a mixture in equal proportions of ice, soft snow, and disintegrated rocks, the whole clinging to nothing and pitched at a steep angle. It was quite sufficiently thrilling for my taste, and much the hardest part of the climb. Our guide Zurbriggen cut excellent steps wherever there was anything firm enough to cut them in, and in about half an hour we began to ascend the broad couloir close to the W. ridge. Our view now changed, and we lost temporarily the enormous rocky mass of the Ailefroide, looking down instead into the less wild and greener slopes of the Valgaudemar. Turning straight up to our left, we found that the midday sun had almost cleared the rocks here of snow, which were facing W.S.W. Consequently the climbing was of a more straightforward nature, and one or two slabs and a long crack were quite enjoyable. The whole of the Cottian Alps were now clearly visible, with Monte Viso towering above the rest on the left, and seldom have I seen such a forest of little peaks as this part of France presents. Behind us, to the W., the Pic d'Olan rose from a thick bank of cloud looking almost as tall and solitary as the Matterhorn. In about half an hour we reached the summit ridge, and traversing to the S.E. we were soon at the N.W. summit seen in the photograph, which, to our sorrow, was evidently not less than two hours from the highest peak, was almost due E. of us and separated by a considerable gap. The time was now nearly 3 o'clock, and high time to be getting back, so in a very few minutes we were going down again by the route we had come. The first section of the descent needed a little caution to avoid falling stones; on the awkward traverse we were able to move more quickly, though scarcely more certainly, than on the ascent; and when once on the long rib of rock, progress began to be quite rapid, as an occasional plunge into soft snow helped first one, then another along. The Écrins and more distant Meije looked very attractive with the afternoon sun on their fresh powder of snow, but we had not much time to enjoy them, and hurried on to a good supper at the very primitive inn at La Bérarde after a delightful 16 hours of mountaineering.

On Monday, August 26, after a week of travelling, I found myself with a family party at Moutiers. We decided to spend the three days we had left in a short excursion to the Tarentaise. Not having secured places on the motor diligence, we hired a

carriage and spent a very hot day in crawling up the valley of the Doron to Pralognan. The scenery is in striking contrast to the bleak wild valleys of the Dauphiné. The first half of the journey we were among rich vineyards and big forest trees. Just beyond Bozel, at the junction with the Prémou, the beauties of nature have been lately obscured by the building of a large factory, but where the valley turns south we left the carriage and walked through the picturesque gorge of the Doron, coming out at the top into a beautifully wooded rich Alpine glen, with rich pastures that would rival the best in the Oberland.

The hotel at Pralognan is large and comfortable, but placed in such a situation that it just loses all the view. From a few yards away the Grande Casse presents a really magnificent spectacle. The Bec de Pralognan and two other sharply defined rock pyramids in the foreground form an excellent framing to the picture. Arriving at 5 P.M., in very promising weather, I at once looked for a local guide as companion and started out for the Cabane Félix Faure on the Col de la Vanoise, about two hours' walk, and a very comfortable mountain Inn. We started next morning, at about 3.30, for the Grande Casse, traversing round the base of the mountain on the west side to the Col de la Grande Casse, whence we had a most charming view of the Graians, silhouetted against the pink clouds just before sunrise. We had started early, as the guide said there might be considerable difficulty on the steep ice-slopes of the N.W. face; but we found that after the first twenty minutes of rock and ice there was no more ice, but excellent hard snow, and all the way we had the use of steps cut by another party the day before and still as good as new. I have never travelled so easily and rapidly up a snow-slope of such steepness as we did that morning, spurred on by a sharp north wind, and in three hours, including halts, we found ourselves at the summit. The mountain does not seem to be a favourite among English climbers, but it is well worth a visit if only for the view. Standing midway between Mont Blanc and the Pelvoux group, it commands an excellent panorama of the Graians to the E., and it is high enough to permit of seeing over and beyond all the other summits of the Tarentaise and Val d'Isère, and affords a splendid opportunity of studying the geography of the Alps of France. For those who like snow and ice work it is quite a good climb, and might at times be difficult by the route we took, but the descent by the ordinary route over the glacier on the S.W. face is very easy and dull, and one soon

gets tired of looking at the dreary snow waste of the Dôme de Chasseforêt, more dreary than the Plaine Morte glacier or the Diablerets. We traversed it, however, next day, and, dull as it was in itself, we enjoyed the advantage of leisure to take in the view practically all day long, which one so seldom has on a real climb. When the war is over, France will no doubt be more attractive to English climbers than before, and many might do worse than turn their attention to this district, which is reminiscent of the best Swiss scenery, though at present not marred by barrack-like hotels or mountain railways.

LES CHASSEURS ALPINS.

FEW of us can have remained unimpressed by the magnificent fighting qualities of the French Alpine regiments, upon whom the brunt of the desperate fighting in the Vosges has fallen.

It is very interesting to note that among the officers of the 28th Battalion, stationed at Grenoble, is the splendid veteran Captain H. Duhamel, so well known in connexion with Dauphiné and the Meije; indeed it is nearly forty years ago that he commenced his explorations in that district, and gave his name to the 'Pyramide Duhamel' commemorating one of the early attempts on the Meije.

His two sons and his son-in-law are also officers in the same corps and are with their regiments in the Vosges, where very severe fighting is continually going on.

The following is an extract from the *Gazette de Lausanne*, reprinted by kind permission of the *Daily Mail*:

' March 3, 1915.

' Serious engagements took place last week, principally on Sunday and Monday, in the Münster Valley, in the neighbourhood of Stossweiler and Sulzeren. The Germans are making great efforts in this neighbourhood, so as to be able when the spring comes to direct their principal attack towards the Stossweiler road and the Col Schlucht.

' Since the war began the Germans have had to face those admirable troops known as the "Blue Devils," otherwise the Alpine Chasseurs. For seven months the Chasseurs have regularly beaten the foe back and have broken down his attacks. By their stubbornness and methodical work they have transformed the Vosges into a country bristling with dangers. They wage a guerrilla warfare rather than war on modern lines. Their chiefs allow the men great latitude, but all important operations are carried out in a death-like silence.

' Like phantom shadows the "Blue Devils" glide through the forest undergrowth and fall upon their enemies in their hiding-places. Trained to the hour and in splendid physical condition,