

and, following the path of the Goléon by Pramelier and Puy Goléfre, gained La Grave the same morning.

After some explorations chiefly in the range south of the valley of the Vénéon, we returned to La Grave on July 6, and next day crossed the Col de la Ponsonnière to Valloire. This pass is much longer and more fatiguing than would appear from Joanne's description. It took us  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hrs. walking from Le Lauzet to the top, and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  down to Bonnenuit; whereas Joanne only allows 3.20 for the whole distance. On the way some fine views of the Ecrins are gained; but from the actual col, the only one of the Dauphiné peaks visible is the triple-headed Crête du Glacier Blanc, which appears over the ridge stretching SE. from the Pic de la Ponsonnière. The French Government are making a good carriage road over the Galibier, but the lateness of the season had greatly retarded the works. On the whole, this pass cannot be recommended as a substitute for the Galibier; and is certainly longer as well as more laborious. Such up to the present have been the results of my exploration of this district. It can scarcely claim to be regarded as an independent mountain group; but it is attractive on many accounts, and can very well be visited on the way to or from Dauphiné. It would certainly be difficult to name finer views than those which may be obtained from its two highest peaks, which themselves form prominent objects in all panoramas from points to the north or to the south. It may, perhaps, be a further inducement to some climbers to learn that the district even now is but very imperfectly known.

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TRAVERSES IN THE EASTERN GRAIANS. By the REV.  
F. T. WETHERED.

WHETHER the Graian Alps will, in future, be frequented by mountaineers to the same extent as Zermatt or Arolla, remains to be proved. At present Val Savaranche and Val de Cogne appear to be regarded by our members as the extreme limits of Alpine civilisation. The Hôtel de la Grivola, at Cogne, is clean and well conducted, requiring only a little more steady encouragement than it has yet received to become a very good little mountain hostelry. But Val Savaranche can boast of no decent inn at all.

It was on one of the beautifully cloudless July days of last summer that I left Courmayeur, with my guide Laurent Proment of that place—in a one-horse carriage—for Ville-

neuve. The hot dusty road of the Val d'Aosta was not a little suffocating after the pure mountain air which I had lately been inhaling on the Grandes Jorasses and amongst the glaciers of the Mont Blanc chain, and I was right glad to alight from the jolting vehicle and find myself once more upon my legs.

I shall not easily forget the heat of that afternoon, as, after a short halt for luncheon at Villeneuve, we wended our way past the grimy iron foundry at the west end of the village, and up the incline connecting the Val d'Aosta with the foot of the Val Savaranche. Our programme for the next week was most indefinite, and our halting-place for the night, if possible, still more undecided. The Grivola from the Val Savaranche, and the Grand Paradis from Cogne, were the expeditions which I hoped to accomplish before again setting foot in the Val d'Aosta; but it was doubtful to us whether either of these ascents would be found practicable in the then state of the snow.

The Val Savaranche, though not more beautiful than many another better-known valley, is in itself well worthy of a visit. With a good mule-path, traced out by telegraph posts, along the right bank of the dashing stream, one might well imagine that its picturesque ascent would eventually culminate in some considerable Alpine village; but any such fond idea is in due course rudely dissipated, when the squalid-looking hamlet of Dégieux (or Val Savaranche) is discovered to be the capital of the district. The truth is, that stray wayfarers in the Eastern Graians are indebted for these beguiling marks of civilisation to the fact that Victor Emmanuel comes there for a short time annually to hunt his favourite game, the bouquetin. We had an excellent opportunity next morning of viewing His Majesty's exalted shooting-box on the opposite side of the valley whilst wending our way towards the foot of our peak. As we proceeded up the valley we fell in with a couple of keepers, who seemed to think that the snow on the Grivola was by no means in bad order; very little, however, was known about the ways and means for ascending it, since the mountain from that side had very seldom been even attempted, and its summit never reached by travellers. It was, in short, a 'mons incognitus' in the Val Savaranche.

After rather more than five hours' steady walking we had reached Dégieux, and, my mind being now fully made up to attempt the Grivola from this side, we determined to halt there for the night, and accordingly walked into the village inn. Whether the present house is the original 'Marmot's Hole,' so graphically and feelingly depicted by Mr. Ormsby,

in his amusing paper on the Grivola, in 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' I cannot say. There is now no 'Marmot,' and 'La Drèsse' is the name given by the proprietors to their dingy *auberge*. But its general aspect and high prices correspond very well with that gentleman's description of the inn he put up at when in the village in 1859. A few cranky wooden steps lead up to a doorway in a white-washed wall, surmounted by two specimens of local talent in the shape of frescoes. On one side St. Bernard, in full canonicals, is represented trampling upon his Satanic majesty, whom he holds chained to the wrist of his left hand, while the old gentleman's tail curls gracefully round the pastoral staff which the saint holds in his right. On the other, an equally artistic figure of St. Anthony of Egypt, with a flaming book in his hand, is backed by an animal apparently intended for a hog, which is evidently meditating a 'nip' at the devil's hinder-quarters. The presence of the pig in such good company—'on the side of the angels'—perhaps requires explanation. St. Anthony, as we know from the legendaries, was born at Alexandria in the lap of luxury, and, his parents dying while he was quite a youth, he suddenly inherited enormous riches. Always meditative and fond of solitude, he now became overwhelmed with fears for the future. Warnings from heaven led him to part with all his wealth, and to live the life of a hermit. Temptations sore, however, awaited him even in the desert. We have all learnt in picture-galleries how the devil, the world, and the flesh did their best to make a sinner of the devoted saint. St. Anthony, happily, was enabled to renounce them all, and in his hundred-and-fifth year was released from further struggle, his spirit being carried up by the angels into heaven. The crutch which is given him in representations marks his age and feebleness; the bell and asperges, or rod for sprinkling holy water, his power to exorcise evil spirits; while the hog at his feet, as at Val Savaranche and elsewhere, is emblematical of sensuality and gluttony, which he was successfully enabled to withstand by means of his devotion and piety. 'The ancient custom,' says Mrs. Jameson, 'of placing in all his effigies a black pig at his feet, or under his feet, gave rise to the superstition that this unclean animal was especially dedicated to him and under his protection. The monks of the order of St. Antoine kept herds of consecrated pigs, which were allowed to feed at the public charge, and which it was a profanation to steal or to kill; hence the proverb about the fatness of a "Tantony pig." In a picture by Rubens the pig is seen looking out from under the bed of the dying saint!

The internal accommodation of the inn consists of one large room, which does duty as parlour, kitchen and everything. Scarcely any light penetrates this dismal recess, which is about as cheerful, but hardly as well stocked, as a smuggler's cave. After a dinner, which was served outside on the top of the steps, a porter for the morrow had to be engaged. A certain flat-nosed, sturdy-looking fellow, named Jean Joseph Blanc, one of the *gardes chasse* of the district, volunteered to accompany us; he appeared to be well acquainted with the general topography of the valley, though he had never acted in any way as a guide. This local worthy demanded a prodigious sum for his services, which, however, he eventually consented to reduce by one half.

Then came the question of bed. I was shown across the village street into a room opening immediately from it, looking more like a deserted apple granary than a sleeping place for human beings, and experience certainly bore out my fears with regard to it. The *genus flea* has not deteriorated at Dégioux since Mr. Ormsby's visit; thirty-three minutes past two the following morning, however, released me from torture. Leaving the village behind us, we proceeded in an E. direction up the King's hunting path towards the foot of the Grivola, obtaining by the way a capital view of several chamois and a solitary bouquetin as we neared the rocks which form the NW. boundary of the snowy basin at the base of the W. side of the mountain at 6.5 A.M. An hour later we reached the névé, and a short halt was called for breakfast. We scanned the Grivola thoroughly from this point of vantage. The long, jagged, summit-ridge was immediately facing us, while on the right and left huge wings of rock and snow swept gracefully down, NW. and SW., towards the Val Savaranche. The face of the peak itself is a wild-looking rock-precipice, seamed with numerous couloirs, up one of which I thought we ought to find a way directly from the glacier to the highest point. This would, no doubt, have been our proper mode of attack, as I shall have occasion presently to show. Fearing, however, the quantity of snow on the rocks, we made across the snow-field to the base of the SW. ridge immediately over against us, and, in 1 hr. 9 min. from our breakfast-place, struck the arête itself, at right angles to our line of progress. Turning immediately to the left we followed the broad and easy snow-ridge towards 'La Blanche' (9,500 ft.), the crest of which we entirely traversed, descending on to the ridge or curtain which connects it with the peak of the Grivola itself. The knife-like edge of snow which forms the top of the Col de la Grivola re-

quired some care in passing; but, ere long, we found ourselves, without having encountered any serious difficulty, at the W. base of the final rocks, *viâ* the arête, at 10.50 A.M.

So far as I can judge from the rough outline given by Mr. Tuckett on page 309 of Vol. II. 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers' (large edition), we took to the W. face at about the point which he has marked 'halt' (12,459 ft.). Our progress was now by no means rapid, owing to the extremely shingly condition of the rocks and the coating of snow with which they were partly covered. At length, after bearing for some time diagonally upwards, we came to a very steep ice couloir, requiring a great amount of step-cutting on the part of Proment; by it we gained the foot of some wet, black rocks immediately under the serrated peak. Great caution was necessary in ascending these, I and Blanc being assisted up them with the rope attached singly to each of us. A few minutes more and we were in a notch in the summit-ridge, from which there was a view towards Cogne. Gigantic teeth of rock rose before and behind us as we sat facing northwards in the gap. The summit was more than 100 feet overhead and clearly inaccessible from the point we had attained; it was necessary, therefore, for us to descend to the top of the black rocks already referred to, and traverse them towards the north. After this all difficulty was over, and the stonemen on the top were reached at 3.15 P.M., an hour and a quarter from the notch. With the exception of the *garde chasse*, A. Dayné, who accompanied Messrs. Ormsby and Bruce from Dégioux in 1859, no one had ever yet gained the highest point of the Grivola from the Val Savaranche.

Our mutual congratulations and feelings generally may, therefore, be easily imagined, when, after more than 12½ hrs. of fighting with difficulties, at no time very great, but, between La Blanche and the top, oft recurring, we stood upon the summit. There can be no doubt, I think, that between 2 hrs. and 3 hrs. of valuable time would have been saved had we attacked the mountain directly from the glacier at its western base, as Messrs. Ormsby and Bruce appear to have done. The snow which had made us shy of it would probably not have been insuperable, and it is quite certain that our circuit *viâ* La Blanche and the Col de la Grivola was a very 'round-about' way indeed. The summit would, I should say, be always found to be inaccessible by the SW. arête, but, as I have shown, quite possible of ascent by taking to the face at the point we struck it. I strongly recommend the Grivola from the Val Savaranche in preference to the monotonous

climb from the Cogne side. While we were on the summit, Proment, who had led very well throughout the day, pointed out to me the route which, from observations made on the way up, he had formed a clear opinion was the best one to take; namely, after leaving the glacier at the mountain's base, up the rocks up the centre of the (west) face, and afterwards by the centre of three couloirs, with the stonemen on the summit directly above one.

After remaining a good hour on the summit, much too long so late in the day, we hastened downwards towards Cogne, which we did not reach until 10 P.M., losing our way in the dark on the slopes and in the forest below the Poucet châteaux. Never was I more glad to reach my sleeping quarters.

Mons. l'Archiprêtre Chamonin was, unfortunately, absent from home, at Aosta, and I had not, therefore, the pleasure of making his acquaintance. Mons. Carrel, the nephew of the well-known Chanoine, however, was most civil, and showed me, amongst other objects of interest, his raised plan of the Cogne District. My porter, Blanc, preferred to return home at once, so I paid him off and dismissed him. I can recommend him, to any mountaineer requiring his services, as strong and obliging.

Mr. Barlow's account of E. Jeantet's performances in 1872 had not prepossessed me in his favour; he had, however, made the ascent of the Grand Paradis from the Cogne side on the only two occasions the summit had been attained from thence, and was, therefore, qualified at least to show the way. In consequence of Mr. Barlow's experiences, I strictly questioned him as to his willingness to be roped; and, as he fell in with all the conditions required of him, I engaged him as second man for the ascent next day, and at 2 A.M. on July 20 we left the door of the Hôtel de la Grivola, hoping to return on the same evening to Cogne from the top of the Grand Paradis.

Mr. Barlow has so well, and so recently, described the ascent of this mountain from Cogne that I shall not attempt to give more than a very brief sketch of it. We followed his route, without any adventure, beyond a close encounter with three bouquetins, until we were on the Plan de la Tribulation, and approaching the base of the peak itself. Jeantet indicated the couloir by which they had mounted, until they gained the ridge which leads straight to the summit; but there was too much snow in it this year to allow of our benefiting by the direct route upwards which it presented. M. Frassy's route on the SE. was also out of the question, and we determined to make our attempt by a steep snow-slope,

some distance to the north of the fore-mentioned couloir. Accordingly we turned to the right, and, after walking about 450 yards, commenced to ascend the peak. A diminutive bergschrund had to be crossed, and then came a zigzag tramp up the snow; ere long we had crossed the slope to some rocks on our left, upon which, at 10.30, we halted for a second breakfast. The wind at that time was very fresh, and, had it much increased, we should have been obliged to retire discomfited; fortunately, however, it subsided shortly. Having gained the ridge we encountered some trouble in passing certain rocks on account of the hard ice immediately at their base, and once or twice I felt doubtful of success. At length all difficulties had been fairly grappled with, and nothing more remained but the snow arête leading to the unmistakable snow-crested summit, which we reached at 1.30 P.M., and, having remained a few moments upon it, withdrew to the first rock tower on the south side and lunched. The view towards Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn was clear; over Italy there was some haze, yet I could distinguish the Po meandering for miles along the plain, and see beyond it to where the low hills round Savona hid the Mediterranean. The hour being already late, and the snow in bad order, I gave up all idea of the descent to Cogne, and we made our way down the easy snow-slopes towards Val Savaranche. An attempt to reach Cogne by the Col de Lauzon was wildly proposed by Proment, when we were half-way down; not wishing, however, to sleep on the ice, I promptly snubbed the idea as perfectly impracticable. We slept at Dégioux, the curé courteously placing a comfortable bed in his house at my disposal. Next morning Jeantet and Proment made their way over a Col to Cogne, the latter going thither to pay the bill at the inn, and to fetch away the few things which I had left in my room. He met me in the evening of the same day (21st) at Aosta, whence we passed on to Zermatt, *viâ* the Val Tournanche and St. Theodule.

### LAGO D'ISÉO, LOVERE, AND VAL DI SCALVE.

(An Additional Chapter to 'Italian Alps.')

By the EDITOR.

**L**AGO D'ISÉO, despite the fair start for fame it made in the last century, has long been neglected for its western rivals. Not one in a thousand of our Alpine travellers has swum on