Parbat. It was hoped that conditions would be somewhat better and that the sun might have consolidated the snow. The fresh snow commenced above Camp II and grew steadily deeper. The labour of track-making became intense; with great exertion they reached Camp IV on the 30th. Nine porters went sick on the following day. The snow was terribly unstable and the cold great: all progress was stopped, as even on the flattest parts fresh snow lay 3–4 ft. deep, attaining 4–5 ft. on the steeper slopes. This entailed, naturally, grave avalanche danger. Moreover there was always a fresh crisis with our wretched coolies; only two had ever reached Camp VI, of whom one went sick. Very few had gone further than Camp IV.

With heavy hearts our comrades determined on retreat. It was too late in the year, the sun had no more power to alter snow conditions and, in such circumstances, any further advance became impossible. We were unable to evacuate the higher camps, as fresh snow fell every day. Retreat began on September 2, which, with the exception of a bad fall into a crevasse by one of the Sahibs, was excellently carried out. I had returned one day earlier after my operation in Gilgit, just as the others came down from Nanga Parbat and informed me of the futility of any further attempt for this year. We all returned accordingly to Srinagar over the Kamri Pass.[3]

Once more a Himalayan giant had proved stronger than mere man.

[We must express out warmest thanks to Herr Kunigk for the interesting narrative, which he was good enough to write for the JOURNAL during the voyage home from India.—*Editor.*]

SOME GUIDELESS CLIMBS.

BY J. L. LONGLAND.

(Read before the Alpine Club, April 5, 1932.)

WHEN the Honorary Secretary asked me to read a paper I was at once honoured and bothered: bothered because, on looking through the chequered record of six Alpine seasons, I could discover no one expedition which could without the

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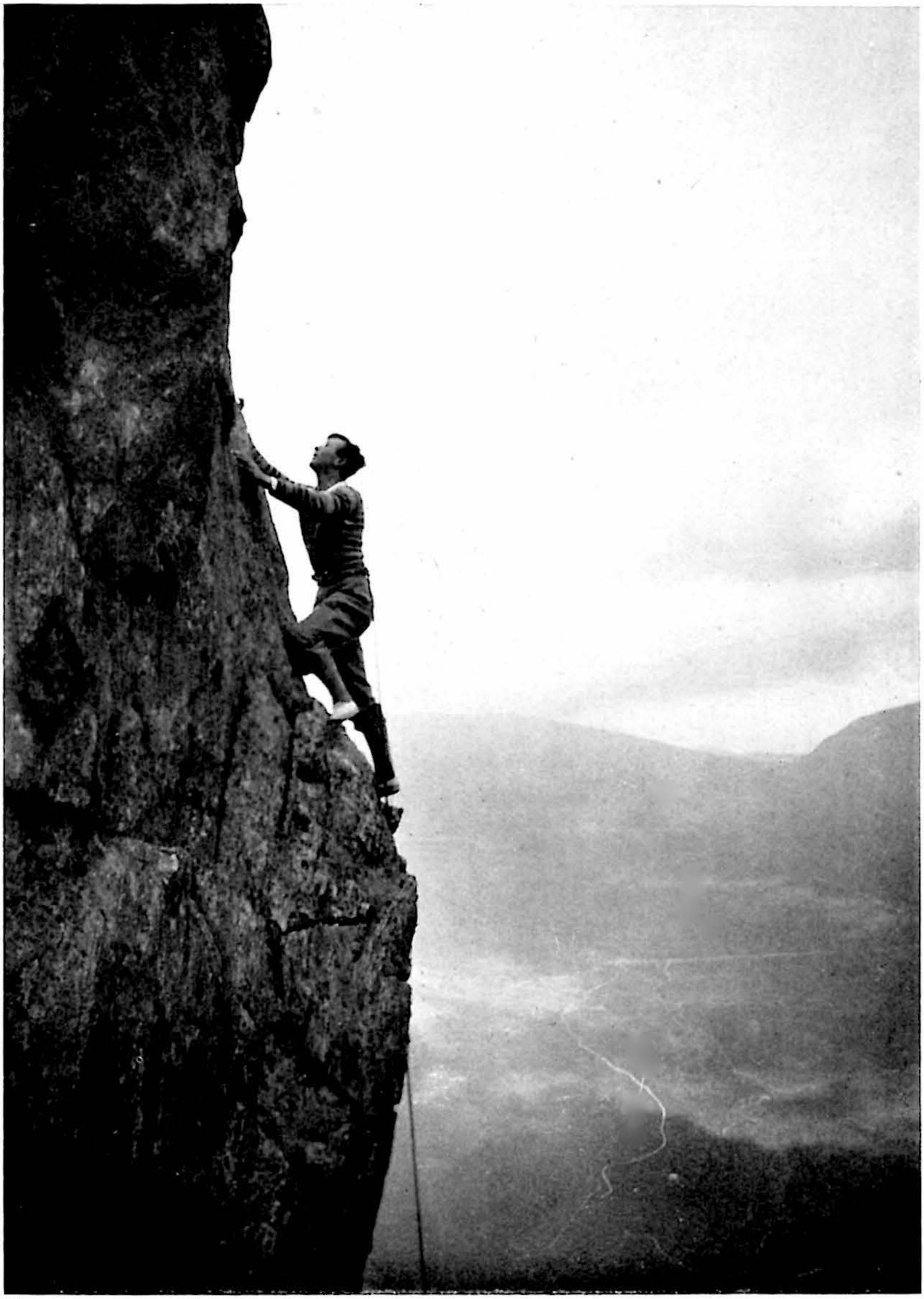
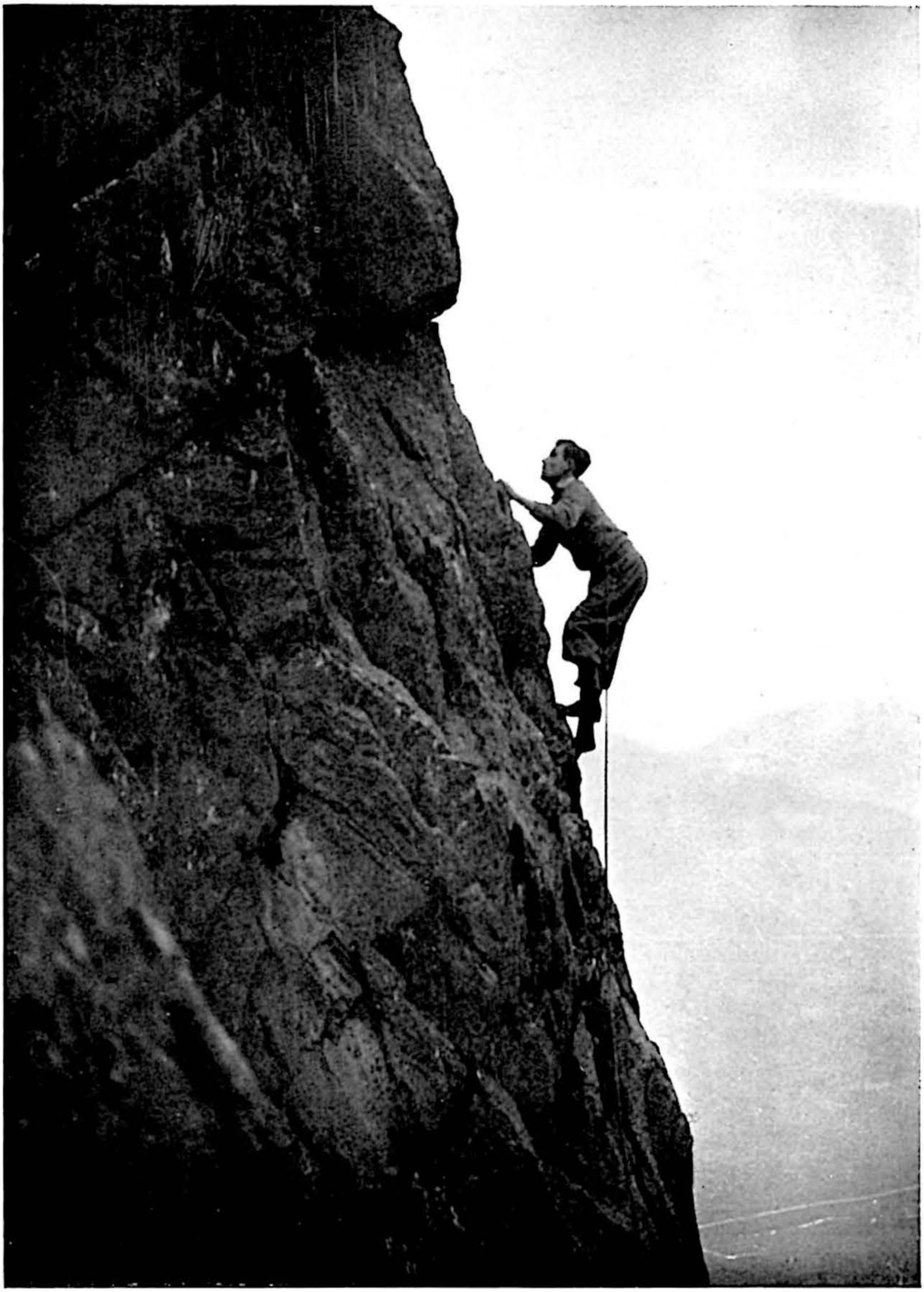
[3] See in general Survey of India map, No. 43 I, *Gilgit*; 1:253,440 (or 4 miles to 1 inch).



Photo, J. L. Longland.]

BELLE VUE BASTION.
(Mr. C. H. S. R. Palmer.)

[*To face p.* 200.



Photo, J. L. Longland.]

'EXPLORING' BRITISH ROCKS.

Taken in the course of the ascent of a new climb, Belle Vue Bastion, on the N. Buttress of Tryfaen (Mr. I. M. Waller).

most shameful padding fill a whole paper and some minutes of your time this evening. Turning to a chaos of past failures and successes, there appeared at first no continuous thread strong enough to bind a few scattered happenings together. After some thought, however, it seemed that a certain coherence might be given by setting climbs taken almost entirely from one district, Dauphiné, against the background of the gradual attempt by a climber who had, until last season, never had the fortune to climb with guides to learn a little about his craft. This tenuous excuse is the only apologetic I seem able to offer for the desultory and discursive character of the account I want to give.

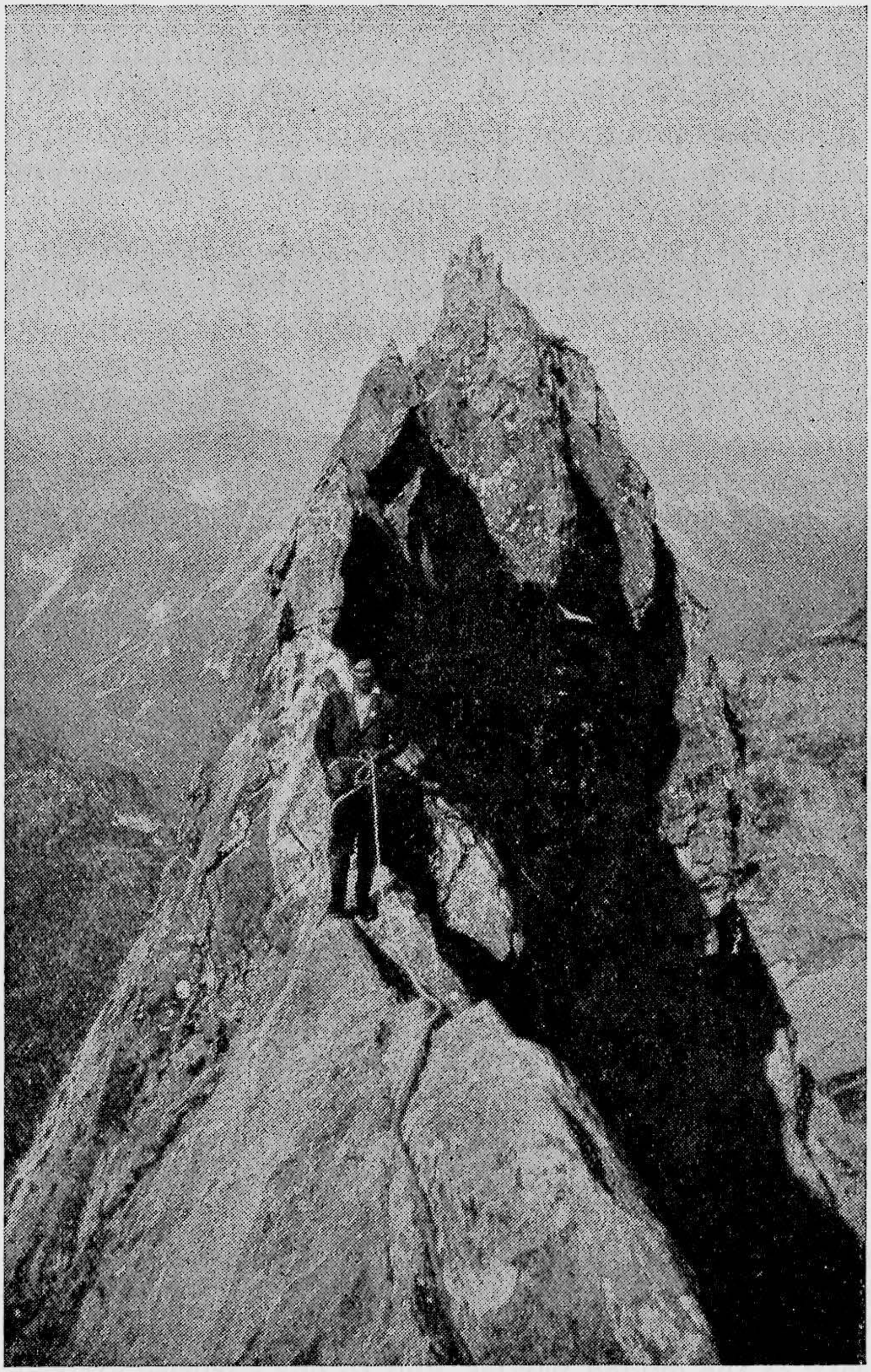
Those of us who, by one chance or another, became members of the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club after the war, were fortunate in having easy entry into what may not too fantastically be called one of the chief schools of English guideless climbing. Those who, like myself, joined the club under the presidency of the late Stanley Van Noorden and made their first Alpine expeditions under his surveillance were doubly fortunate. In that fostering atmosphere of enthusiasm and example, every branch of mountaineering flowered happily in day-long discussions—as at the Sunday mountaineering breakfasts which would begin decorously at nine and find themselves mysteriously prolonged until the party had to test its theories by diverse routes out of College in the late evening. In fact, the collateral sport of roof-climbing—a sport with an ancestry as dignified as that of mountaineering—flourished surreptitiously under the practical tuition of officials of the C.U.M.C. at the time when they were most vociferous in denying that the club had any connexion with these nocturnal operations. And for occasional week-ends and the shorter vacations there were the magnificent opportunities for learning to climb rocks which the situation of Cambridge, almost equidistant from North Wales and the Lake District, uniquely affords. The Cambridge Club has not underestimated, as many mountaineers seem rather hasty to underestimate, the value of the training that British rock-climbing can give. A climber who has led not only the standard routes in England or Wales under most conditions, but who may also have taken part in the exploring or forcing of new climbs up some of the few square feet of British virgin rock still unaccomplished, will be able to approach Alpine rock with the knowledge that he is unlikely to meet on standard routes any step that is beyond his powers. And I believe that by this training the capacity for route-

finding—that bugbear of guideless parties—is stimulated. In the most recent British climbs it has not been mere gymnastic virtuosity that has succeeded so much as the experienced instinct for linking a frail chain of possibilities in unchancy circumstances. And a distinguished member of the Club has told us that Scotland can give even finer preparation: 'Ben Nevis, in March or April, in wind or cold, can be as severe a test as is generally found in the Alps.' This Easter we saw no reason for disputing this remark, and I personally found that a seven-hours' climb of the N.E. buttress, up rocks smothered in ice and snow, was as exacting in the ascent and, I am sure, would have been as difficult to descend (had we been forced to turn back) as almost any mixed ridge I have climbed in the Alps.

But the obvious disadvantages of a mere British rock training we carried with us to the Alps in our first seasons. The main danger was pointed out in a recent number of the ALPINE JOURNAL: 'Too many persons who have successfully climbed Welsh, Lakes, or Saxon Switzerland boulders in rain imagine that serious expeditions may be attempted with similar impunity in the High Alps.' But I really believe that our worst disability in early days was exactly the opposite. I know I was far too frightened for several years to fall into presumptuousness, outside the narrow sphere in which we felt capable. In consequence, at the 1926 Meet in the Evettes district—to which by now the Cambridge Club must have almost a proprietary right!—I remember that we romped safely over the rock ridges of the Aiguille de la Vanoise and the difficult N.-S. traverse of the Pic Regaud, while on the Ciamarella we made fantastic détours to avoid a simple snow ridge, and on the larger mountains would tend to scuttle away for home the moment a single cloud, much smaller than any infant's hand, appeared on the ultimate southern horizon! The danger of the young British-trained climber is far more frequently that he carries about the Alps a load of misplaced caution and misapplied safety technique which he only gradually learns to shed. One of the most pitiable sights I have seen was a party of English rock-climbing experts slowly advancing one at a time, taking enormous belays, on an Alpine ridge of the most moderate difficulty.

In consequence, while I was particularly fortunate in beginning to climb at home and abroad almost at the same time, the early expeditions which I want to mention contain scarcely a single reputable ice-climb. It is only in recent seasons that

one has turned more and more happily and confidently to climbs which offer the greatest possible contrast to British



Summit Ridge of Aig. de la Vanoise (1926).

rock. Our early frolics on Alpine rock ridges, and tentative caution in the simplest snow couloir, might be defined as a less reputable inversion of the considered judgment of Whymper,

by which he carefully avoided ridges in favour of faces, and, in general, rocks for snow. A swing back to his position can be traced to-day, since the heyday of Chamonix pinnacle exploration by the G.H.M. shortly after the war; now the younger foreign climbers are turning back to the mountain faces, in scorn at the easy allurements of rock gymnastics which led their immediate predecessors astray, and perhaps in admiration of the Alpine patriarchs and their frequently desperate preferences for ice walls, séracs, and corniches.

But with us the lesson of our lack of glacial experience was repeated with frequent humiliation. In 1927 Lawrence Wager and I set out proudly from the Mountet to attempt the ascent of the Grand Cornier, unreassured by the cheerful statements of Dr. Dübi that the icefall under the Col de la Dent Blanche was conquered sometimes on the left, sometimes on the right, and occasionally in the centre! In the middle of that simple glacier we wove Penelope's webs, and unwove them toilfully once again, advancing no nearer to that easy col. And then we spied indisputable tracks—that shameful refuge of the guideless—well away to the S., under the Dent Blanche and, moving in that direction, retreated precipitately before an avalanche which to our disgust afterwards proved superficial and entirely harmless. We lessened our humiliation quite typically by traversing all the spiky rock points of the insignificant Roc Noir which just emerges from the glacier close to the Mountet. Looking down last year from the *Viereselgrat*, it seemed incredible that we could have made such mistakes, but at the time the first lesson began to become increasingly clear: that for a guideless party, inexperience can be minimized by one thing only—previous reconnaissance. That 1927 season was a record of unexpectedly easy successes and absurd mistakes, although still the mistakes of caution rather than temerity. A day traversing the Ober Gabelhorn reinforced all the points I have been trying to make. We made a great reconnaissance from the Trift the evening before, and in our innocence decided that the best approach to the Wellenkuppe was up the Gabelhorn Glacier from the S. We conscientiously set off next morning before the majority of the guided parties, and to our surprise arrived on top of the Wellenkuppe about three-quarters of an hour before the first of them. Well, for once it was to the babes and sucklings that the truth had been revealed. All the other parties had taken the now usual route of approach close under the Triftjoch and up the Wellenkuppe from the N.E. And all

of them had wallowed in trap-crust after a mild night, while we walked in unwitting triumph up a firm moraine. Our triumph was short ; we went slowly and carefully up towards the big gendarme and the Ober Gabelhorn—the other parties raced past us on snow and ice in easy mockery. Still something of satisfaction remained. We went down by the route where British training stood us in best stead, the firm rock of the *Arbengrat,* and so succeeded in passing two of the guided parties, almost persuading ourselves that we really *were* guideless again, as we most certainly were (all the other ropes having trailed off on the Zermatt side) on the steep bit down from the Col Durand towards the Mountet ! Next week we had three consecutive days of rather unsatisfactory success. We traversed the Aiguille de la Tsa up the face from Arolla, and in trying to force a new finish to the very top of that face, found that our experience of the possible varieties of loose Alpine rock was not yet comprehensive ; the second day we traversed the Dent Blanche from the Bertol to the Schönbühl ; the third, the Matterhorn by the Z'mutt and Swiss ridges. These two days were marred only by the presence of very helpful guided parties on the same ridges as ourselves, so that in spite of our careful reconnaissance we could not be *quite* sure whether we should have got up so easily had there been no professionals on the mountain. We felt fairly certain about the Dent Blanche, because nobody could miss the route from the Bertol to the Wandfluh, and thereafter there are few alternatives. Besides, we had worked our way down alone from point 3912 m. to the Schönbühl, and congratulated ourselves on finding a relatively safe midday route down that messy face. But we could not honestly be certain if this were really guideless climbing, and so began to search for another method. We had to wait till the next season to put it into real practice, and we finished off 1927, after two days on the crowded Monte Rosa ridges, with an equally crowded ascent of the Dom from the Festijoch—a day enlivened, however, with the last triumph scored that year by observation working on native innocence. It was on the way down, where you can break out on to the N.W. face and leave the ridge. Three other guided parties shot past us, running down the easy slopes, their crampon points kicking back the snow in our faces. We, cramponless, descended more cautiously, somewhat surprised to see them veering in a great northward traverse towards the Nadeljoch. Left to our own devices, we worked down more directly to the Festijoch, shooting the last 800 ft., in company with a neat

little avalanche, in a sitting glissade past a place where I had noticed in the morning that the great bergschrund was interrupted. The other parties, taking the wide détour of tradition, found us still basking on the Festijoch an hour and a half later. We were happy.

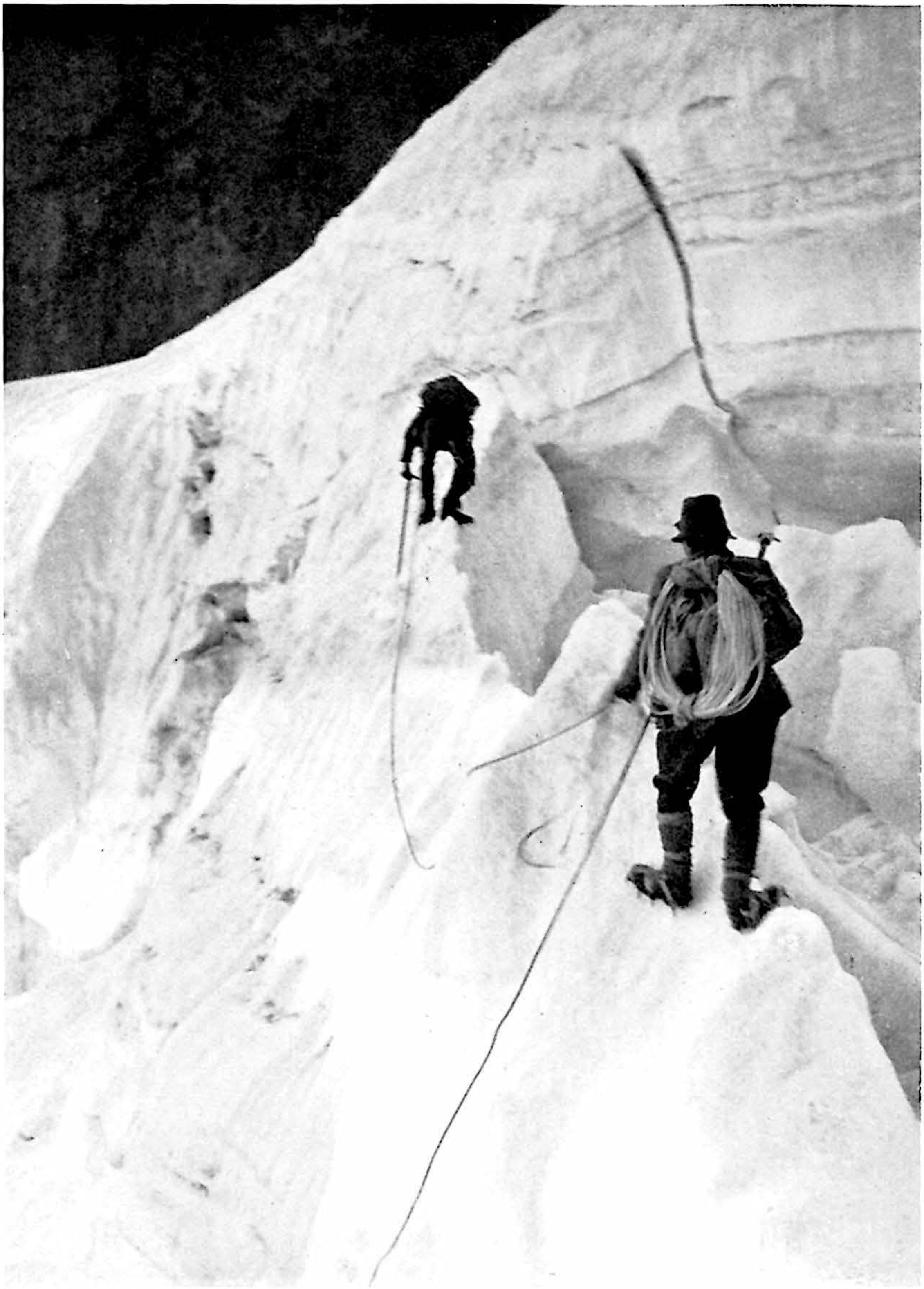
But for 1928 we early decided to begin in Dauphiné. We had been there before in 1926, and in our recollection it wore an appearance better suited for guideless climbers who wanted honestly to climb on their own. The mountains were not crowded, guides were comparatively few, maps and guide-books were not exactly explicit, and sometimes attractively at variance, and the climbs were neither too long nor too exclusively ice and snow work. It seemed even a district where a party of limited experience, but possessing the advantage of a previous visit, might work out unusual routes or new traverses. Unwittingly, once more, we were following the example of more distinguished guideless climbers. *La Montagne* puts it as succinctly as usual : ' Alpine climbing to-day seems to be evolving a new method ; more and more the climber devotes himself to a single massif, where he digs about, and careers over it in every direction rather than devoting himself, in one valley after another, to a series of disjointed expeditions. He abandons more and more to the swarm of Alpine novices the ordinary routes up classic peaks, in order to specialize in some secondary mountain group, to search out unexpected routes on lofty faces, and the lonely isolation of remote arêtes.' I am grateful to know that our Dauphiné antics are so much in the most reputable modern tradition. And seriously I believe that some such specialization is necessary for British guideless parties who wish to raise their standard year by year. I know no other method which enables such a party to hold its own against the many brilliant ' week-end ' parties, Swiss Academicals and the rest, who can keep in constant practice the year through. We cannot all imitate the Μεγαλοψυχία of the brothers Schmid, whose climb of the N. face was their first ascent of the Matterhorn, and who consequently found some difficulty in finding the way from the summit to the Solvay hut !

Our 1926 visit to Dauphiné, while not impressive in its results, had at least given us the general lie of the land, the best routes to huts, and occasionally the easy way off a mountain. In 1926 we had crossed the Brèche de la Meije, been too timid to try the Meije traverse, and started very late for Pic Gaspard, from the Promontoire hut (*not* the best starting-

Photo, J. L. Longland.]

MR. L. R. WAGER CUTTING HANDHOLDS, ETC., ON UPPER BERGSCHRUND OF THE COL DES BANS (N. SIDE), 1926.

[*To face p.* 206.



Photo, J. L. Longland.]

BERGSCHRUND BELOW W. SIDE OF COL DE LA CASSE DÉSERTE (BETWEEN GRANDE RUINE AND PIC BOURCET), 1926.

point), arriving at the Col des Chamois in brilliant sunshine and ludicrously late to attempt Pic Gaspard, which is, anyway, extremely stiff from this side, as we learned in 1928. We were only partly consoled by an entrancing valley mist view, and the ascent of a minute rock tooth, the Pointe des Aigles, near our col. Our 1926 Dauphiné visit was all rather like that—Great Expectations and Hard Times : we set out to climb the Grande Ruine from the Étançons valley, chose a bad route, nearly followed an enormous boulder into the valley, and, chastened, worked over the Col de la Casse Déserte instead, with the astonishing wall of the Pic Bourcet above us, dropping down the most purgatorial valley in all Dauphiné to the Chalet de l'Alpe. We came back, really over the summit of the Grande Ruine this time, took a foolish traverse on the lower ridge, and were brilliantly extricated from it in a violent hailstorm by Lawrence Wager. When we finally climbed Les Bans we thought we really had made a faultless expedition. We had the new Pilatte hut to ourselves, made a prolonged reconnaissance, started heroically betimes, and, although choosing the more difficult Col des Bans, managed to keep our noses in front of a French party who had gone round by the obviously easier way to the Col de la Pilatte, thanks to an inspired piece of cutting, handholds and letter-boxes, by Wager on the upper lip of the schrund. From the col we romped up the ridge to the summit of Les Bans in 35 minutes, and felt really pleased. We took $2\frac{1}{4}$ hours to get down the same stretch of easy ridge, not having noted sufficiently the mode of our hasty ascent, and had the mortification of seeing the other party well ahead on the snow ridge between the Cols des Bans and de la Pilatte. Next day we crossed the Col de la Pilatte, and, with Edwin Kempson picking out a good way down the rocks into Vallouise, wondered hubristically why Whymper had chosen the *farouche* couloir at our side during his famous crossing.

The year 1928 saw us begin at St. Jean de Maurienne once more on the way for the first familiar landmark, the Aiguilles d'Arves. We had walked all the way from St. Jean to the Rieublanc chalets in 1926, but of late years we have grown more sybaritic, and so took the 'bus up to Entraigues. As before these three magnificent peaks appeared through the clouds at intervals, and, in 1928, we had more leisure to watch for them, as we let a mule carry our sacks, swollen with three days' provisions. But no mule has yet been constructed that will ascend the interminable shale slopes from Rieublanc to the Col Lombard, at the S. foot of the southern Aiguille. We

arrived bad-tempered at the last of its successive false summits and sat down to prospect possibilities on the W. face of that Aiguille. Then the clouds swirled round us again, and we glissaded down the other side of the col. We were expecting to spend a luxurious and, we hoped, undisturbed night at the new Refuge Lombard, considerately built for such as us by the C.A.F. in the previous year. We had forgotten to note its precise location in *La Montagne*—at Rieublanc they knew nothing of it, which we might have known was ominous. As we vaguely descended the other side of the col, we grew still more irritated, and dashed on little aimless voyages of discovery in the infrequent cloud breaks. At last Wager discerned lower down a heap of wreckage in the stream, and gravely said that he thought it was the hut. I was almost speechless by now, and controlledly drew pictures in the snow of what a mountain hut was like, square, and with a chimney, and perched on a rock rather than a stream bed. It was no good: he was right. It *had* been a hut;[1] and it was now getting late, and we were as far from La Grave as from Rieublanc. (Not that either seriously considered retiring over that infernal col again.) Well, eventually we built a *gîte* from the wreckage, miraculously salving from the stream a spirit stove, as well as about a gross of spoons and forks. In the end we spent three nights there, comfortably in sleeping-sacks, although it was not a *gîte* where you could turn over in your sleep, unless both did it together.

Next day we spent exploring the W. face of the southern Aiguille, and the day after set out on one of our main projects, the traverse of the three peaks in the day. We had climbed the southern Aiguille before in 1926, and so we were early on the top, 2½ hours from our bivouac. We took a variant route on pleasant [2] slabs avoiding the *Mauvais Pas*, roped down the *Mauvais Pas* itself, regained sacks and ice axes at the *Brèche Supérieure*, and from there descended the E. face to the Glacier de Gros Jean in just over the hour, down good easy slabs.[3] The central peak took more time, although easier. We had not been on it before, and the clouds began to close in and hamper our choice of route. Still the top was reached at one o'clock, just over 2 hours from the glacier, with views

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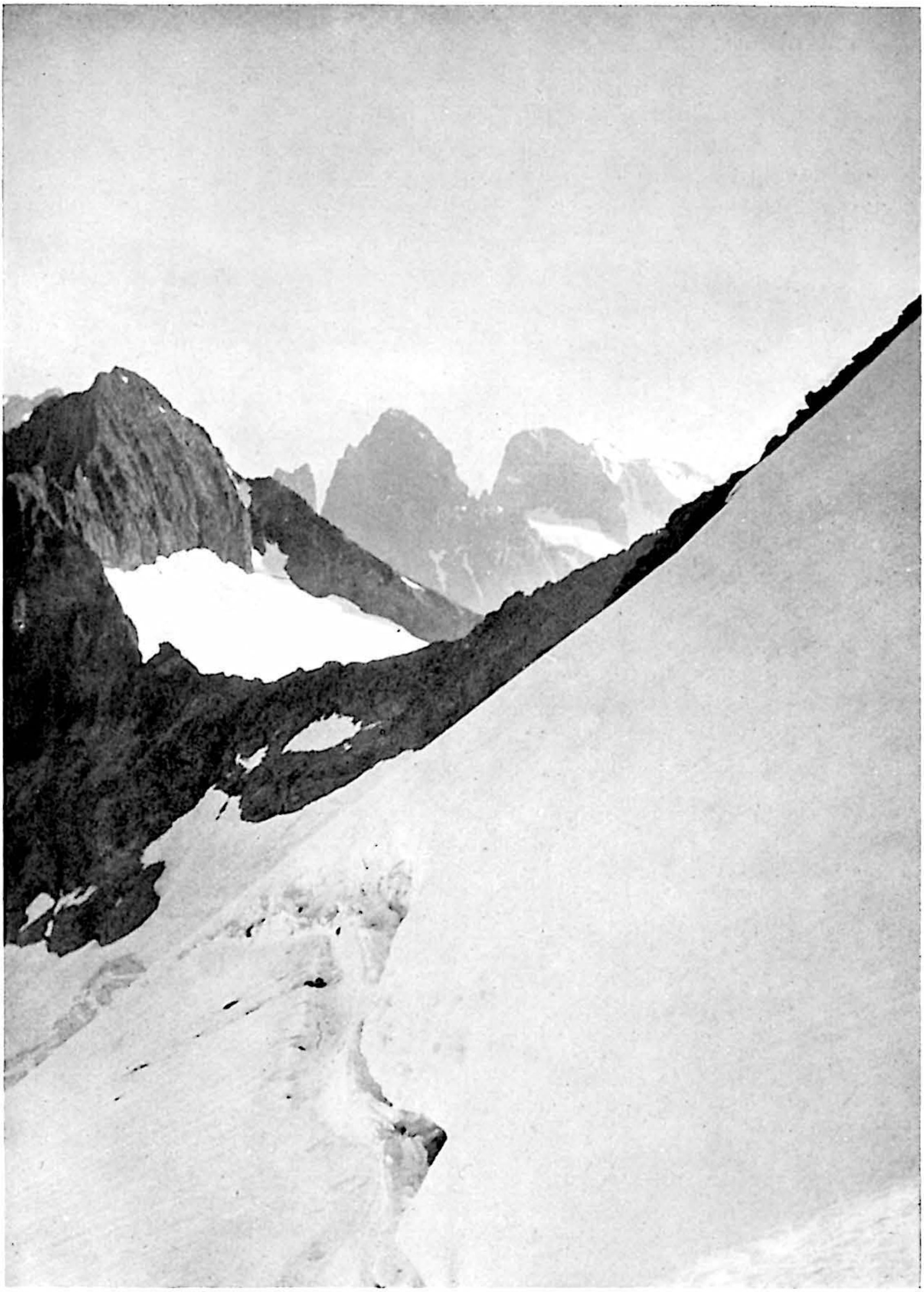
[1] *A.J.* **40,** 402; **41,** 408.

[2] For a very different description see the *Climbers' Guide* (1905), p. 30; *A.J.* **21,** 456; **22,** 558; **40,** 21, footnote 9.

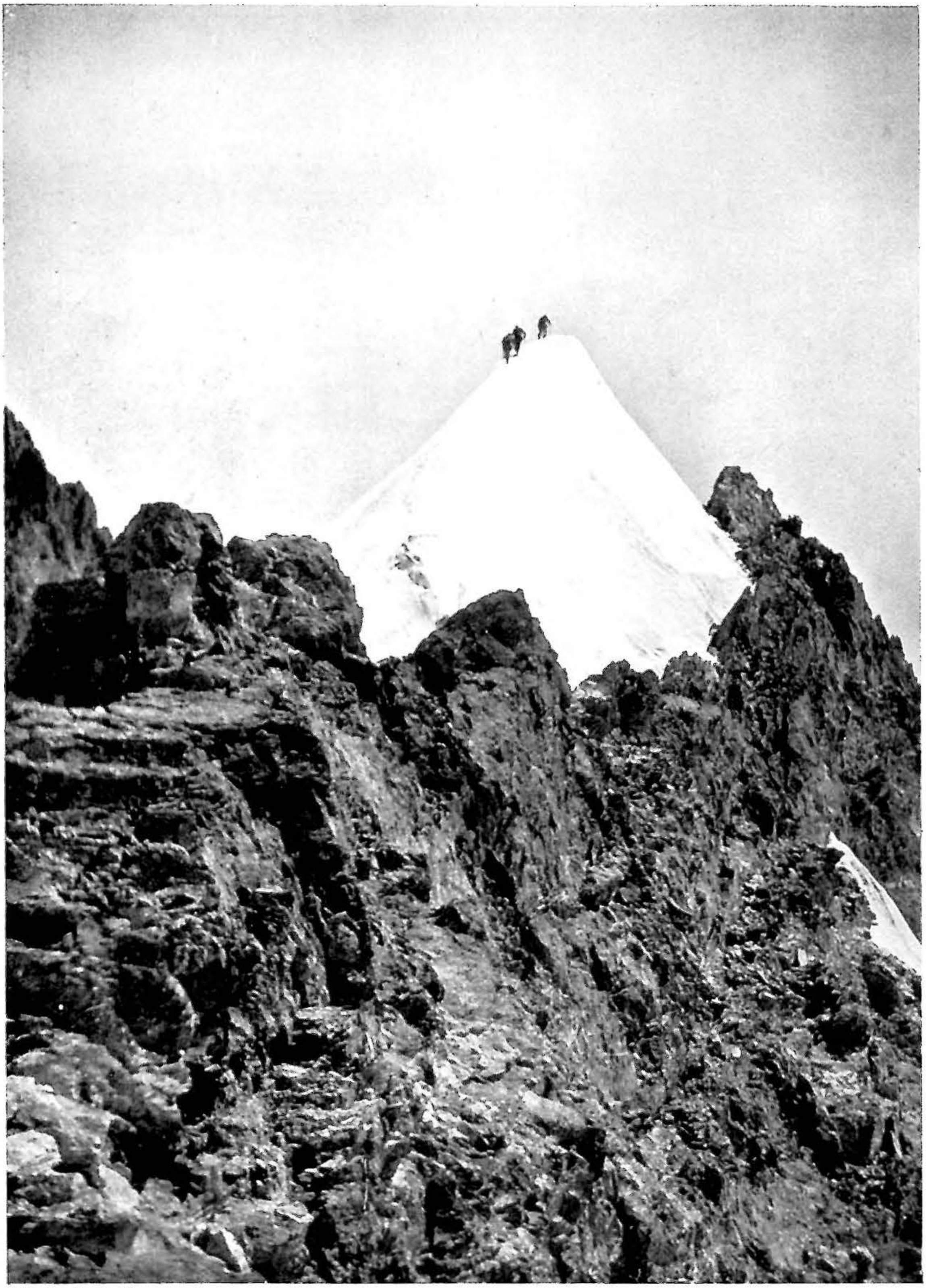
[3] *A.J.* **39,** 344–7; **40,** 18–19.



Photo, J. L. Longland.]

FROM L. TO R., POINTE DU SÉLÉ, COUP DE SABRE, PIC SANS NOM, PELVOUX, FROM N. SLOPES OF COL DE LA PILATTE.

[*To face p.* 208.



Photo, J. L. Longland]

PARTY ON TÊTE DE LA PILATTE, JUST TO E. OF COL DES BANS, TAKEN FROM E. ARÊTE OF LES BANS.

on the way up of the superb cliffs of the southern Aiguille as they fall towards the col between the two. Getting off in cloud was more difficult, and we certainly chose the longest way down the N. face of the Aiguille Centrale, reaching the Glacier des Aiguilles d'Arves rather low down, in just over 2 hours from the top—of which nearly an hour had been so much waste time. The Col des Aiguilles d'Arves in consequence took us a valuable half-hour to reach, and we did not leave it for the N. peak until five minutes to four. We ran unroped up the S. horn of this curious peak in 20 minutes from the col, but cloud closing down completely, we did not feel that we had the time for the more difficult northern prong. The ice couloir on the Rieublanc side of the col, when we reached it again, was not easy, and we did not like to glissade into the unknown snow-slopes (*cf.* Whymper) looming out of the cloud. So the descent was slow, though enlivened by the only objective danger of the day, a stone the size of a coconut, hopping out of the mist in 300-ft. bounds, which passed within a literal inch of my head, inside the extremity of my shoulder. But I doubt if that was a real objective danger, as I ought to have been more alert. Still it proved that even little pocket-handkerchief glaciers are not to be sneezed into. We made a very tired ascent of the Col Lombard once more, after crossing countless shale ridges, and staggered into our sacks at 9.15 P.M. Next morning we tightened our belts, having very little to put inside them, and set out for La Grave, where we were already a day overdue, because we had arranged to take two Cambridge friends for a climb. As the weather looked good, we decided to climb La Meije. Of our friends one, Bobby Chew, was a very fine rock-climber with a day or two of Alpine experience ; the other, F. S. Chapman, we knew to be strong and able to go anywhere he was led, although almost a complete novice.

I still do not think that to traverse La Meije with such a party was against the mountaineering canons, although it seems to violate the usual principle that 'in guideless parties *every* member should be able to lead.' We had learnt to adopt something of a guide's responsibilities on the Cambridge Club meets, and, knowing our men, did not feel that such a climb was unjustified. We left La Grave after a very dangerous shave by a lady barber who cut herself severely during the first approach shots. The Brèche was reached quickly with one diversion, when we waded a deep stream to rescue a crag-fast tourist, who turned out to be the village idiot with flowers

in his hand—and, for all I know, straws in his hair—who ambled off along an easy ledge as soon as we approached. At the Promontoire we cooked our usual meal of that year, pemmican and porridge, the former having such a disastrous effect on Chew that I was almost shaken in my belief that pemmican is the ideal mountaineering food. Later in the day I worked out the theory that Chew's biliousness was due to 'acclimatization lag,' and went to bed happier. That afternoon Wager and I made a long reconnaissance, nearly to the *Pas du Chat*, so as to lose no time on the next day, and were glad we did so, as a guided French party arrived late that evening at the hut. We set off before them in the morning, before it was well light—learning incidentally not to hold a lighted lantern in the teeth, even on difficult rocks—and kept ahead until we stopped for breakfast on the edge of the Glacier Carré. We followed them up the glacier with perhaps more safety than dignity, and then waited some time at the *Cheval Rouge* while they wrestled with its difficulties. We caught them near the top again, and left it before them. They must have lost nearly 2 hours descending into the *Brèche Zsigmondy* on a doubled rope. This went to reinforce an opinion that far too many places are descended on the doubled rope, and that very often its use, besides being less interesting, is more a loss than a saving of time. We found the climb up out of the Brèche not so difficult as we had feared : we looked for a steeper version of the Tearlach-Dubh gap, where the guide-book solemnly warns tourists not all to descend into the gap at the same time—for obvious reasons. The rest of the ridge was in fine condition, and our two beginners climbed extremely well. I achieved a long-awaited pleasure, in spitting a prune-stone over the drop on the S. side of the central peak, and watching how long it took to bounce. Thereafter the only thing that has stayed in mind is the great difficulty of getting off the lower glacier at all, and lastly, just before La Grave, a huge boulder that came ploughing its way through the meadow down into the stream, and which we assured Chapman had been dislodged by him on the summit and had been following him all day.

Our last climb in Dauphiné that year was an attempt to traverse the Pic Gaspard and Pavé in the reverse direction to the traverse first made by MM. Pierre Dalloz and Albert Arnaud a couple of years before. We saw Chapman off on an aged motor-cycle. He intended to reach England in two days from La Grave : he did so, though nearly frustrated by an

unprovoked attack by a hornet near Lyon; he fainted, fell off when going fast, recovered in the ditch, and with characteristic nonchalance continued his journey. Meanwhile we were making a far safer route to our bivouac below the Col Claire (just N.W. of Pic Gaspard) by way of the excellent Chalet de l'Alpe, one of those Dauphiné inns with the right ideas about omelettes. We laid out our sleeping-sacks under the col on the highest place that had any pretence to being called grassy, and then did a preliminary canter to find the best route on to the Pic Gaspard.

At our highest point we cached a rope and some provisions, much against my will. I do not mind caching a rope, but I feel strongly against hiding any food anywhere in the mountains. In spite of these anxieties we spent an absurdly comfortable night in our 'Watkins' arctic sleeping-sacks, and mercifully hit off the hiding-place next morning. We found the weight of these sacks, with spare rope, food, emergency ration and crampons, a fairly serious hindrance during the day, and although we did not rope up, each pursuing his own line, we took just over 4 hours from the bivouac to reach the top of Pic Gaspard up the easy E. face. But if we were slow, there was plenty to look at—the longest view I remember in the Alps, with details such as the Z'mutt ridge perfectly clear in the distance in one direction, as were the Puy de Dôme hills in the opposite. Arrived on top, we tried to descend by the ridge which links Pic Gaspard to the Pavé, by way of the *Brèche Casimir-Gaspard.* We had a very hazy recollection of M. Arnaud's account (another type of faulty reconnaissance!), and did not persist on the ridge when it grew steep. Bit by bit, instead, we worked down the great W. face of Pic Gaspard some way to the S. of the linking ridge, crossing and recrossing the central couloirs in an intricate route, and watching anxiously for stones which never fell. It was not a very exciting route, though it kept our attention wholly engaged—and I cannot think of any really cogent reason why it should ever be repeated, though I believe it was the second descent of the face.[4] We hit the couloir running down from the *Brèche Casimir-Gaspard* at 2.15 P.M., some 200 ft. below the Brèche and consequently some way from the ridge. A few steps cut in the ice and we were on the slabs of the S.E. face of the Pavé, a pleasant contrast. We could unrope and go fast up the slabs, past the pinnacle which M. Dalloz christened *L'Ourson*, and which our

[4] *A.J.* **39,** 131–2.

route somewhat immorally omitted, up the shattered final rocks to reach the top shortly after 3 P.M. We were glad we had carried our crampons all day when we came to use them for the descent of the other face of the Pavé towards the lower Étançons Glacier. The largest schrund needed a 20-ft. jump, where the pole vaulter in the party, who is used to falling awkwardly from some height, perhaps had an unfair advantage. But crampons took us down to the glacier-snout well before dark. I often think that prejudice against crampons is apt, owing to a series of inexcusable accidents, to be a little indiscriminate. I cannot see that there are any dangers absolutely inherent in their use, any more than there are in the use of the rope, unless you use it to jerk your leader off delicate traverses. The conditions in which they are most dangerous, incoherent snow lying on firmer snow, are the very conditions in which they have least practical advantage, in that the plunging boot is quite safe without the need of claws. Wyn Harris and myself were able to test this on the steep couloir running from the Fresnay Glacier up to the Brèche Nord des Dames Anglaises. In the course of climbing the Pointe Isolée and the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret in three days, we had to make two ascents and two descents of this couloir in widely varying conditions of snow. On each day the crampons were invaluable for saving time in the morning—each time we took them off in the course of descent, when we found the snow had gone soft. A working technique for crampons can be made out just as easily as for an ice axe. And there are climbs when I should be extremely sorry to be without them, as on the *Klein Triftje* rib of the Breithorn last year with Peter Bicknell. On that occasion we had them on our feet for over 10 hours, and were devoutly thankful for them on the patches of hard snow and iced rock on the ridge, as well as for running down the steep snow slopes S. of the eastern summit in the afternoon, to escape from the storms which had been chasing us all day and so reach the Schwarztor before the clouds hid our line of descent. Crampons, like most mountaineering devices, cannot be judged absolutely.

The Gaspard-Pavé traverse was my last Dauphiné climb of 1928, and I want to confine this paper more or less to that district. The climb began something of a new period for me in the Alps, overcoming a hesitancy to break away from ordinary routes and to be on the look-out for possible novelties. Consequently I used to feel mildly surprised that the memories of that day, our first at all authentic new route, have not

remained more exciting—the most vivid recollections are of the view, and the weight of our sacks, and the thirst only assuaged an hour and a half after we had walked into La Bérarde in the dark.

If I may, I should like to close this undistinguished survey of Dauphiné climbs with one or two remarks to link up our experiences with the position of the young guideless climber, as I conceive he finds himself to-day. If he is interested to develop himself as a mountaineer, the guideless climber cannot remain content with trailing after guided parties on well-known routes, nor is he likely to keep rigorously to minor novelties in out-of-the-way districts. One of our most reputable members has said: 'As we grow more proficient in the art, the thought of ascending ordinary mountains by the ordinary routes with ordinary guides would be unendurable, and the thrill may be more difficult to obtain.' And he adds the corollary: 'Eliminate all risks and half the enjoyment would be gone.' This precisely is the difficulty of the young climber to-day. Unless he is a fool he does not want *mere* novelty, but rather novelty that as well satisfies his sense of exploration, as it also gives him reassurance that his standard of mountaineering technique is getting higher each year, and, what is more important, has tasks of increased difficulty and of a narrower danger margin safely overcome to pit itself against. And in the Alps at least he comes at once against a difficulty: all the best and safest routes have already been made. If he resigns himself to this fact, existing as a snapper-up of occasional and ever less frequent unconsidered trifles, then he denies outlet to the ambition and the spirit of competition that have been the birthright of every great Alpine climber. Few can move to wider and still unexplored ranges, and in the exhaustion of the Alps one can foresee a time when the ALPINE JOURNAL, if it remains true to its title,[5] will become a journal of agreeable antiquarian research into the doughty deeds of Alpine conquerors a hundred years or more back—admirable maybe, but not encouraging to the young climber who wants to gather his Alpine rosebuds while he may. It seems disingenuous to deny that the spirit of competition has played a large part in the history of Alpine climbing—the most cursory reading of *Scrambles* proves this to the hilt. And as the editors of the Guide to the Aiguilles of Chamonix are honest enough to state, 'La compétition est à

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[5] Expeditions in other ranges have, however, found *always* a place in *A.J.*! See **1,** 223–36.—*Editor.*

la base de toutes les grandes conquêtes alpines.' It may be competition against fellow-climbers, and as the number of so-called Alpine problems decreases this much less reputable competition will tend to increase. It may be the equally obvious and increasingly hazardous competition of desperate climbers against natural forces. As for the more and more fantastic routes recorded each year, it is possible for the mountaineer to deplore when the smashes come, it is possible to praise the party for its daring when the off-chance succeeds—but I think it is irrelevant to do either unless you realize one important fact, that the methods of Alpine climbing have changed fundamentally, but its *raison d'être* remains unaltered. The young tigers of the German and Swiss guideless schools, however they may seem to disregard the view that mountaineering is the art of moving *safely* in difficult terrain, are actuated by the same motives of thoroughly healthy competition, they show the same *desire* to exercise their faculties of exploration and climbing technique that can be seen in the accounts of all pioneers from De Saussure downwards.

In the perfectly inevitable democratization of Alpine climbing, naturally, a far larger number of instances of folly and notoriety-hunting are recorded. But were they utterly absent in the days shortly after our Club was founded? And when, as in the Eastern Alps, it is not a question of a few eccentrics, but about 20 per cent. of the active population who are attempting mountaineering of a sort on skis or on foot the whole year through, the proper yardstick to measure the frequency of accidents is *not* British climbing, which affects an extremely small number of us, but British motoring, which affects an equivalent proportion. And then what is the answer?

The psychological symptoms of this state of affairs are plain to mark in most of the climbing journals. Given an increasing artificiality, given a decreasing number of new climbs which it is possible in *any* circumstances to render safe, and you can explain at once the tone of hysterical self-devotion which marks the accounts of those who have survived the most recent climbs. If you are killed there is no need to insist on the risks you ran: if you come through, perhaps honestly against your expectations, the natural tendency is to heighten the tale of the dangers you underwent. And this exaggeration we find in many recent climbing accounts, coupled with a sentimentality which tries to see in perfectly useless variations an adequate cause to which to devote a life. And men will cheerfully write of dangers which they loathed at the time.

As Whymper quotes in one of his chapter headings: 'How pleasant it is for him who is saved to remember his danger.' And this desire to describe the death you have escaped is perhaps as pardonable a failing in the brothers Schmid on the Matterhorn N. face, as we are all convinced it was with Whymper on the Moming Pass, or Geoffrey Young on the Täschhorn.

So at the present time, before we condemn outright, I think it is important to distinguish between young climbers who are merely hunting bubble reputations, and those who are attempting to exercise in a very straitened field a real desire for new adventure and exploration. Such an effort to distinguish makes one careful in condemnation. If we are to refuse to admit *now* that Alpine climbing is played out, and if we are unprejudiced, we shall reserve judgment about the use of such devices as rock or ice pitons, remembering the early clamour against crampons in the Western Alps, and rubber shoes in England. And after all, how is a piton more 'artificial' than the ladders carried round by a distinguished series which includes De Saussure, Whymper and Dent? It is certainly less heavy to carry.

I believe it is similarly possible to distinguish, even among the most foolish-seeming modern climbs, between routes that are inherently dangerous at all times and seasons, and routes only dangerous at certain times, and, be it said, to all but a very few parties. It is significant that the attack on the N. face of the Matterhorn came through in the only conditions—new snow and low temperatures—in which stones were less likely to fall. Watching the N. face on the day of the Schmids' attack for long periods through the Schönbühl telescope, I saw no stones at all fall anywhere near their route.[6] Is it then unlikely that design as well as luck may have entered into the choice of conditions for their days of ascent?

I believe it is important, perhaps more important than at any previous moment in Alpine climbing, to ask the new generation with sympathy and understanding to temper the easy condemnation—*Quo Vadis?*

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[6] See, however, *A.J.* **43,** 359; **44,** 70–1.