

clouds had collected on every side of us and the neighbouring peaks had been blotted out from view, although the summit still remained in sight not 200 ft. above us. Suddenly I heard a peculiar humming sound which appeared to be coming from my ice axe. For some seconds I did not understand what was happening. Then I moved the crackling axe and the high-pitched drone ceased for some seconds. I shouted to Pallis, who had observed a similar phenomenon. We abandoned the axes and retreated down the ridge away from them. As we crouched on the ridge our hair stood on end and our feet and scalps tingled in the highly charged atmosphere. But there was a good wind blowing and it seemed likely that the storm would be carried past us. We sat on until our hair fell limp, then continued our cat-walk to the summit.

We had come to the end of our 'midan,' as the Italian Professor had called it; but at the end of the climb we obtained no view into the promised land of Tibet. Accordingly we hurried down from our seat in the clouds and got lost in the mist long before reaching our camp in the depression at 6 P.M.

Next day fresh snow fell as far down as 17,000 ft.

SOUTH TYROL—OR THEREABOUTS.

BY URSULA CORNING.

“Age cannot wither . . . nor custom stale
Their infinite variety.”

THIS assertion by Shakespeare, who obviously would have proved an admirable man on a mountain, forms my only excuse for relating my own impressions of mountain districts which, though well known to so many, yet continue year after year to thrill fresh generations of climbers.

The Engadine during a wet August is not enlivening. The first fine interval saw me rushing to St. Moritz to see Walter Risch, very imposing in his new office as Forester. I had been fired by a note in a previous *ALPINE JOURNAL*, mentioning a new hut in the Val Codera (on the Italian side of Val Bregaglia), and stating that in all probability two Englishmen only, the late Douglas Freshfield and the present Editor, had ever traversed this remote glen. The place sounded pleasantly far from the madding crowd. Risch, who had only seen it from above, was keen to walk up the valley, crossing *via* the Bocchetta



Photo, Miss Corning.]

MARMOLATA FROM ROSENGARTEN.

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della Teggiola and Pizzo dei Vanni to the Italian side of the frontier at Castasegna, making meanwhile notes for his new S.A.C. *Guide* to the Bregaglia.

The Codera valley runs parallel with the Pope's little Val dei Ratti¹ and terminates in a wild gorge, through which the Codera stream flows into the Mera at Novate Mezzola, between Chiavenna and Colico. We made this our starting-point, having however many doubts about the charm of our objective as we toiled up what surely is the hottest path in the world, over the bare bluff on the true left of the gorge. Once out of sight of the main valley, however, our hopes rose, and by the time the needle of Punta di Trubinasca appeared at the back of our wild curling glen, we were both delighted with our adventure. Our innocent pleasure was not to last long. The fine new Capanna Luigi Brasca had just come into sight, when a brisk halt was summoned, and we found ourselves confronted by three soldiers. It was patent, even in the fading light, that they were bristling with suspicion. Who were we? What did we want? They were by no means impressed by passports or C.A.I. cards and informed us briefly and brutally that there was no question of Teggiola or Pizzo dei Vanni or indeed of any of the summits surrounding the valley, even with a descent on the Italian side. The only pass open was the Passo del' Oro to Masino: no possibility for us, as Risch had to be back the following evening to superintend the building of the new Forno hut. Meanwhile suspicions were obviously growing by leaps and bounds, and Risch's ironical silence did nothing to allay them. I saw us being marched away from that delectable-looking hut and possibly shut up at Colico; so, desperately marshalling such Italian as I possess, I informed them that I was American, had heard that this valley was the wildest and most beautiful in the Alps, and wished to be the first woman to traverse it. Their gallant hearts at once melted. They each squeezed my hand and congratulated me on my incredible daring. Of course we might go to the hut; moreover, if I would wait till the following midday, they would take me further than anyone else might go, escorted by a military guard! We felt it wiser to refuse this charming invitation, as our two cameras and Risch's measuring instruments might have re-aroused dire suspicions. Next morning saw us gloomily tramping down the glen again.

¹ We have not been able to trace His Holiness's connection with that very steep glen.—*Editor*.

Later we were told that a permit from Sondrio would have facilitated matters, but I doubt if it would make much difference. Smuggling, especially of large sums of money, is very rife in Val Codera, and climbers are so few that the military are naturally distrustful.

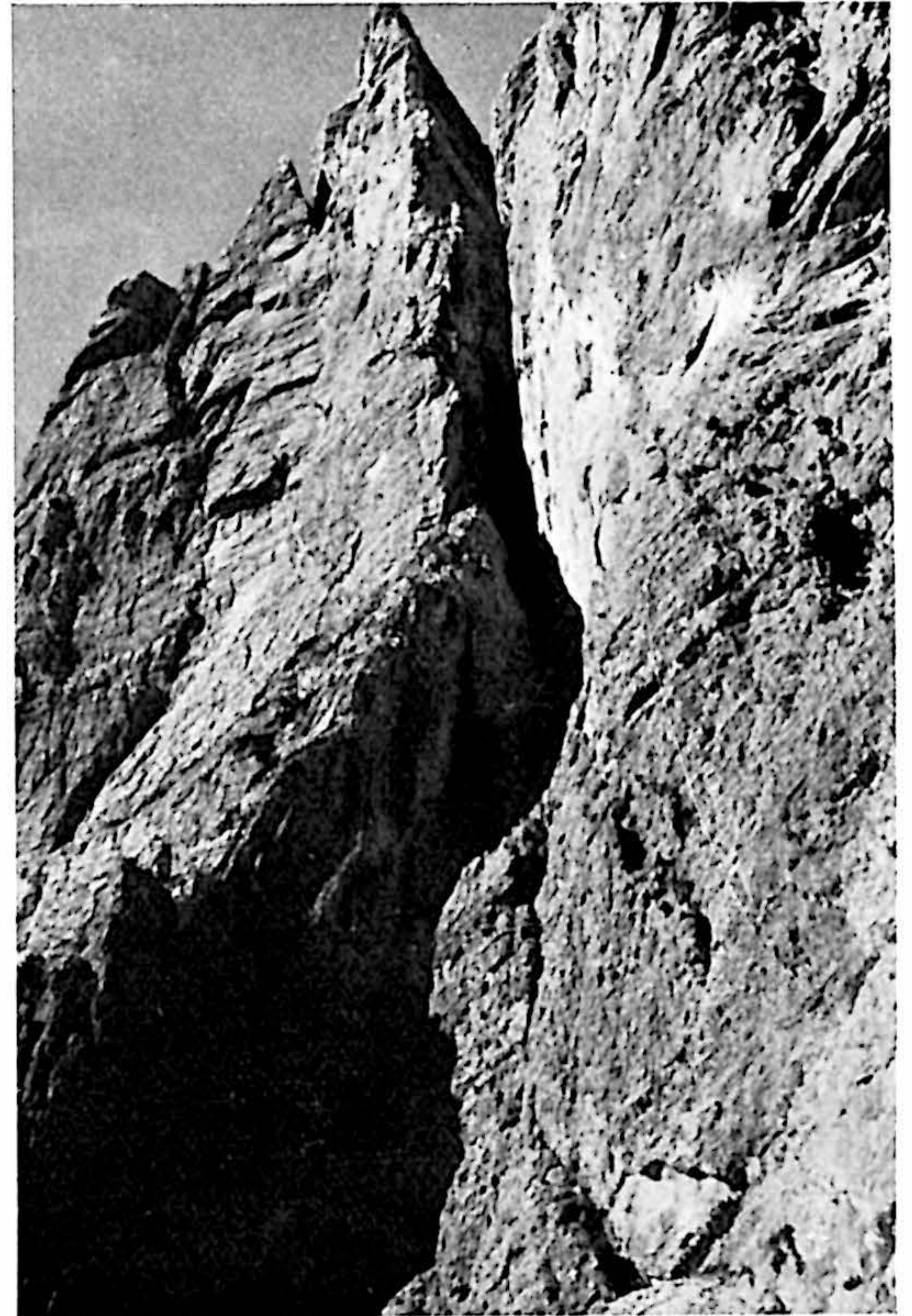
The new hut, at the lower edge of the beautiful Alp Coeder, 1200 m. high, is well built, plain and good, but one wonders why the Milan section of the C.A.I. should have gone to such expense, when the wild peaks round Val Codera seem likely to remain unvisited. The names in the book were few and all Italian; Aldo Bonacossa had been there recently. For anyone wishing to spend a peaceful remote Alpine holiday, I can imagine nothing better than a stay at the Capanna Luigi Brasca, living off huge bowls of milk and omelettes, which are generously provided, and dreaming away the days among the meadows, to the sound of innumerable waterfalls. But climbing—No. The inhabitants of the valley are very fine-looking as a race, but wild and shy. Certainly they are not accustomed to seeing women in climbing kit. I was guilty of emptying an entire church in one of the little hamlets, where the congregation left the priest to his ministrations, coming outside to gaze spellbound after my retreating figure!

After that one unsuccessful attempt in the Bregaglia, I hoped for better luck in the Dolomites. I had had a brief introduction to Dolomite climbing in September 1933, when, primed with a multitude of helpful suggestions from Colonel Strutt, Hans Brantschen and I spent a very pleasant week in the Brenta district. Even after this year's experience, it still remains my favourite Dolomite range, and it is surprising how few English climbers penetrate there. Carlo Magno or Madonna di Campiglio are excellent centres both for the Brenta and for the Presanella and Adamello ranges; the huts, especially the Tosa hut, are real inns, easily accessible from Campiglio or Molveno, and if they cannot yet be reached by motor, so much the better for those of us who value peace. In August the place is flooded by natives of Trent, who regard it as their special happy hunting-ground, but in September there is room and to spare. For fantastic shape and colour, the Brenta can vie with any Dolomites, and the fine paths, such as the *Sentiero Osvaldo Orsi* from the Tuckett to the Tosa hut, or the path from Campiglio to the Bocca di Brenta, afford magnificent views to the walker. There seem to be no good local guides, but the district is well known to the first-rate men of Canazei



Photo, Miss Corning.]

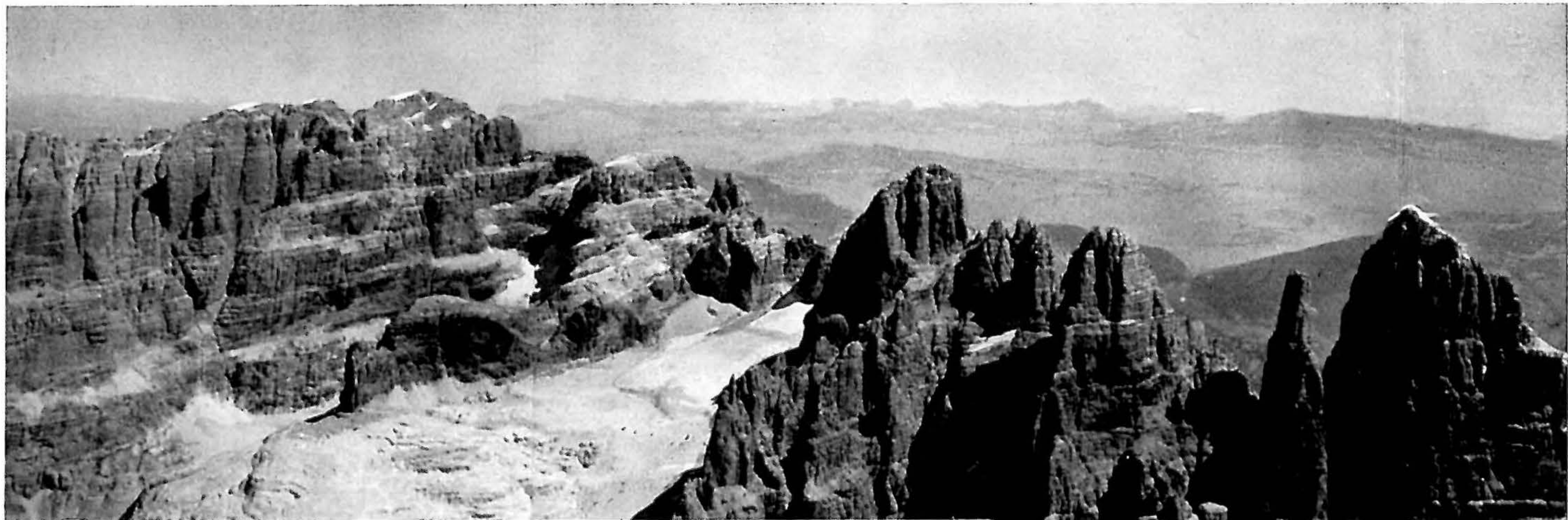
FORMATIONS IN GRAND CANYON, COLORADO.



Photo, Miss Corning.]

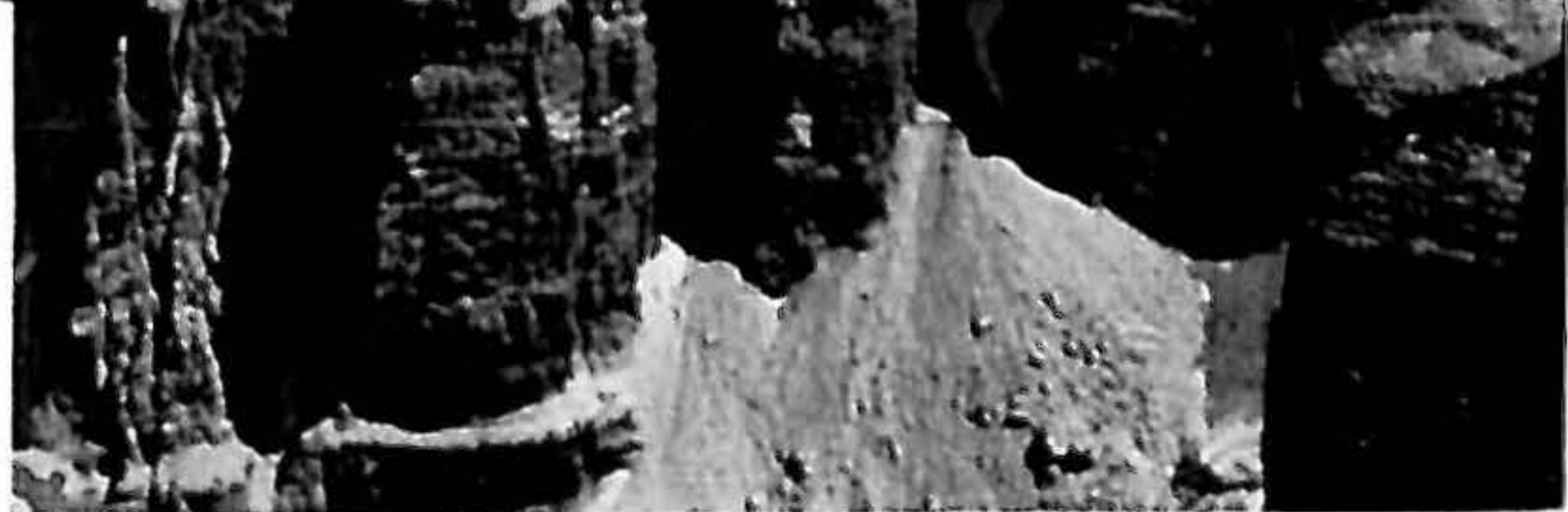
PUNTA FIAMMES.

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Photo, Miss Corning.]

CIMA DI BRENTA (LEFT), TORRE DI BRENTA, S'FULMINI, GUGLIA DI BRENTA,
CAMPANILE ALTO, FROM CROZZON DI BRENTA.



and Cortina, while for the guideless climber, Pino Prati's *Dolomiti di Brenta* is a very helpful companion, if somewhat large to be altogether handy. Prati (who eventually perished on his beloved Guglia di Brenta) had the soul of a poet, and suitable quotations from Dante are interspersed throughout his work, as well as a complete sonnet on the sublimity of Cima Tosa! His enthusiasm and spirited drawings are most inspiring, and somewhat to our surprise Hans and I found ourselves battling on our first day with the N.W. ridge of Cima di Brenta and its fifteen towers. The climb is seldom done. It is interesting and easy to find, but the rock is unpleasantly loose in places, while the towers and gendarmes seem endless. We omitted several of them, descending the usual way, which is as easy as most ordinary routes in the Dolomites. On our way to the Tosa hut, the amazing obelisk of the Guglia di Brenta (or Campanile basso) came into view. Hans is a man of few words. He gazed in silence for some minutes and then remarked: 'We go up.' From that moment my fate was sealed. We were both new to *Kletterschuhe*, so decided heroically to climb in boots for the next day or two, for fear of wearing the shoes out before attempting the Guglia. This added greatly to the difficulty of scrambles on the Croz' del Rifugio and also to the mirth of Italian friends at the hut.

The following day we climbed Cima Tosa; very easy, though the traverse thence to the Crozzon di Brenta is well worth doing. The N. ridge of the Crozzon is one of the finest climbs in the Dolomites and was done quite recently by King Albert of the Belgians. The next day dawning bright, we headed for the Guglia, which quite fulfilled Hans's anticipations. The rock is excellent. The climb offers endless variety, as one turns in spirals round the obelisk and, though exposed and sensational, is only really difficult in two places—the *Ampfererwand* at the beginning and the *Bergerwand* below the summit. For those who aspire to a higher 'grade' in rock-climbing, there are always *Via Fehrmann* and *Via Preuss*, not to mention the endless variations, so cherished by the young Fascisti of to-day. The Guglia is one of the few mountains possessing an exact record of ascents, from the moment when it was first conquered by Berger and Ampferer in 1899 down to the present day. We were the 619th party, but as the peak is gaining in popularity yearly, the number should soon rise to 1000.

Time was running short, so we decided to finish our little visit by climbing Presanella from the Segantini hut and descending the beautiful Val di Genova. The climb is easy

but repaying, for the view of the Brenta group is magnificent.² Climbers however will do well not to trust to the comforting sign of the spoon and fork displayed opposite the Segantini hut in the C.A.I. *Climbers' Guide*. They might find themselves, as we did, with a mighty hunger upon us and nothing but two bars of chocolate and a nondescript cube of blackish meat to still its pangs!

This year, when Graven's smiling face appeared at Karersee (Carezza) on August 16, our hopes were high. Only too soon however were they dashed, for after a few brilliant days, devoted to training climbs, the deluge descended again and rarely ceased for the rest of August. We soon became modest in our aspirations. No longer did we expect to see anything from the summit of a climb, or to get home dry; and if the rain and mist held off during the actual ascent, we were duly grateful for our good fortune.

Many of the older generation of climbers find the Dolomites irrevocably spoilt. Large and well-kept roads connect the valleys, huge charabancs from every part of Europe disgorge the most unaesthetic type of tourist, the hotels in August are filled to overflowing with guests whose only activity is that of the tongue. Cars labour up impossible zigzags to formerly remote huts. These are now nearly all equipped with luxuries unknown in Switzerland and France. (The Contrinhaus even runs to bedside lamps and a wireless!) Climbers are in the minority at huts, which are filled by that strange species known by impolite Germans as the 'Hüttenwanze'; alas! it is generally feminine. The best representative we struck was clothed in leather shorts, an organdie blouse with puffed sleeves tied with cherry bows, together with a gold ribbon to 'bind up its bonny brown hair.' The peaks themselves are covered with pitons in their formerly inaccessible places, and with what Mrs. Underhill calls 'lightning conductors' in the easy ones, such as the astounding *Santnerweg* across the face of the Rosengarten.

All this sounds black indeed, and yet for those of us who can make no comparisons with olden times, a stay in the Dolomites can be a delightful experience. No amount of roads and tourists can take away the evening light, when the peaks are illumined as from within, or the charm of the women in the hayfields, or the sheen of the autumn crocus in the lush grass. These things are apart and can never be spoilt.

Incidentally, those who know both, point out a very marked

² See illustration, facing p. 75.

resemblance, both in colouring and shape, between the Dolomites, the Sella group in particular, and those strange rock formations which rise inside Grand Canyon, Colorado, and which are still waiting to be climbed. But this is by the way.

Dolomite climbing is pure joy when the rock is good ; nothing quite compares with it. Pitons and attendant devices are rare except on stunt climbs, and surely there is nothing to beat the excitement of a good Dolomite chimney ? Another advantage, especially in a bad season, is the amazing rapidity with which climbs will 'go,' even after prolonged rain. We descended the Delago Turm one day in a torrential downpour which lasted well into the night, but were able to traverse the Vajolet Towers next morning without even finding much wet rock.

A (sadly negative) reason why I should strongly recommend a Dolomite season to all climbing novices is the fact that nowhere are there so many excellent examples of what NOT to do on a mountain. There are people who either do not rope at all, or tie themselves into Gordian knots ; people who send down large stones and continue to do so in spite of frenzied curses from below ; people who attempt climbs too hard for them with an insufficiency of rope, and then either harrow everyone unbearably by falling down precipices, or attach themselves leech-like to an unhappy guided party ; people who will not wait their turn but climb *over* your rope ; last, and almost worst, people who shout and scream ceaselessly during the whole climb. All this is more educational than any amount of sage counsels.

Graven and I found much to puzzle us in the strange district. There was first of all the question of 'grades,' into which all Dolomite climbing seems to be divided. There are seven of them : Grade I corresponds roughly with the ordinary way up the Riffelhorn, whereas Grade VII is best illustrated by an enterprising Dolomite beetle we found endeavouring to climb a perfectly smooth tiled wall ! Grade VI is subdivided into 'inferiore' and 'superiore,' but I am no judge of these finer shades, having no personal ambitions beyond Grade IV. We had some nasty shocks at first. While conscientiously following the S. arête of Rosengarten, we struck a most unpleasantly smooth yellow overhang, which gave Graven no small trouble. Arrived on the summit, a local guide at once told us that we had had nothing harder to contend with than Grade II ! Later this proved to apply only to the ordinary way, but it annoyed poor Graven quite considerably at the time.

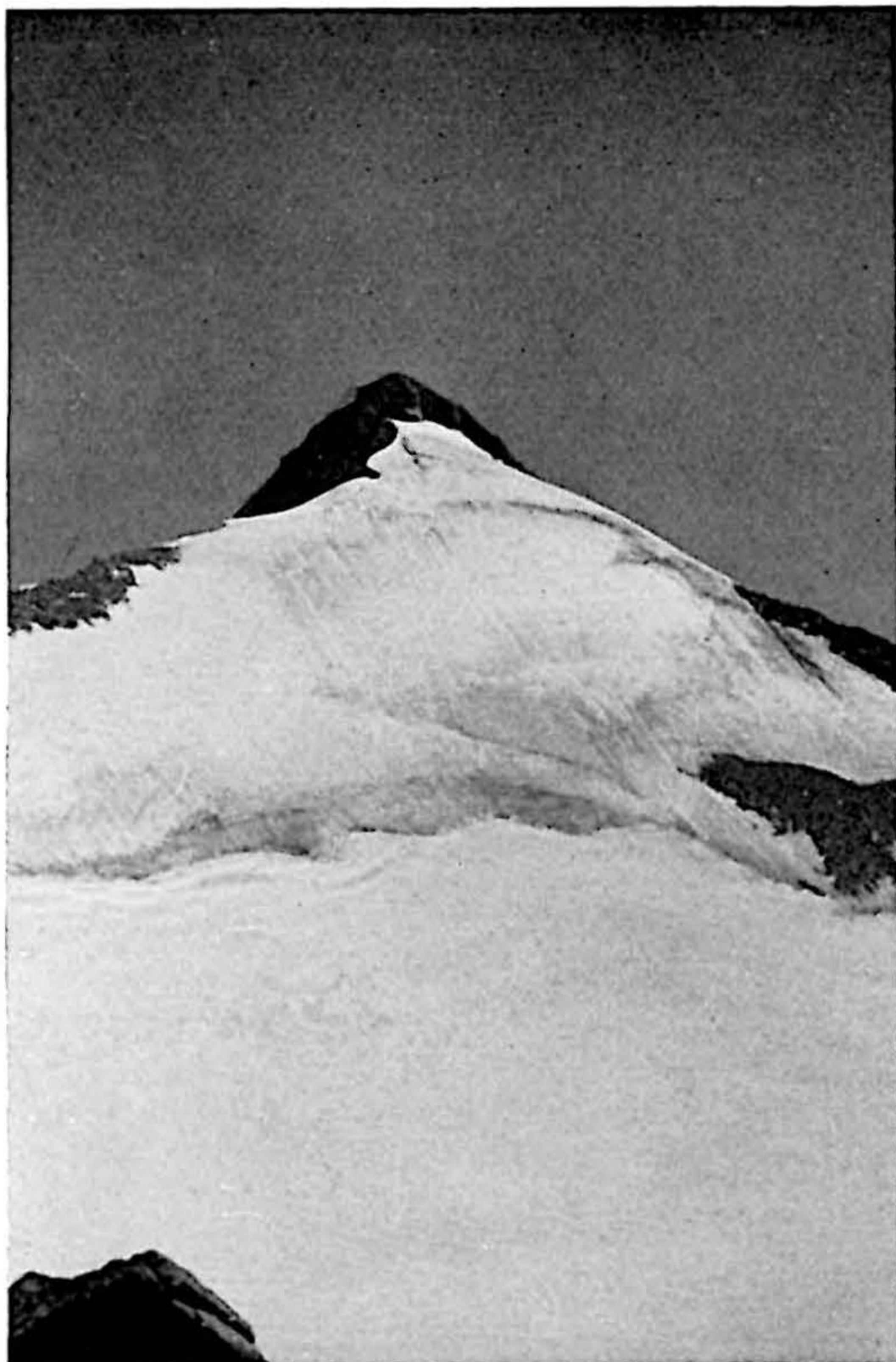
Another problem was that of the 'new' route and the 'variation.' Eventually we came to the conclusion that anything distant from a known way up a peak by two metres or more, constitutes a 'new' route—unless it joins the previous way, in which case it is branded only as a 'variation.'

Graven was much interested in the technique of the very long rope, and the great distance climbed by a Dolomite guide before allowing the tourist to follow. For the *Schmittkamin* on the Fünffingerspitze we were joined by an Italian friend with a young Canazei guide. This little man produced a rope 60 metres long, to which he proposed to tie us all four. When Graven and I politely refused, he disappeared up the chimney almost to the whole length of the rope. Great was the dismay of his tourist, who had never climbed a Dolomite before and had only with difficulty been prevented from putting a fat pear in each pocket, as refreshment on the way up! We were afterwards able to follow quite safely without being out of sight of each other except for short intervals. The system of going to the full length of the rope doubtless saves trouble and increases speed, but in many cases it is quite unnecessary and, as a novice in the Dolomites, I prefer not to be farther away than I need be from the leader! Coming down to the Daumenscharte in the usual snowstorm, thirteen of us converged at the spot immortalized by Sanger Davies as that 'where falling bodies descend.' A traffic director was sorely needed, and the length of the ropes added considerably to the universal confusion.

Karersee is not the best of climbing centres. The face of the Rotwand and Teufelswandspitze ³ no longer have much appeal in this age of pitons, and Vajolet and Rosengarten can be done just as well from Canazei. If I were to arrange a season in the Dolomites now, I should start at Cortina, continue to Canazei for Marmolata, Sella and Langkofel groups, and end up at San Martino di Castrozza.

Cortina was a great relief after Karersee. The village is noisy and trippery, but up at Faloria, under the kindly eye of Madame Menardi, all is still peace, at any rate in September.

³ It is interesting to recall that the W. faces of both these peaks were accomplished more than a quarter of a century ago by Messrs. Broome and Corning—closest relations of the writer—*A.J.* 23, 334; 24, 353–4. As a concession to modern methods—and incompetence—the great 'difficulty' of the latter peak has now been plastered with pitons—*A.J.* 45, 404.—*Editor.*



Photo, Miss Corning.]

PRESANELLA.



Photo, Miss Corning.]

ADAMELLO FROM PRESANELLA.

[To face p. 326



Photo, Miss Corning.]

ANGELO DIBONA ON TOFANA S. FACE.



Photo, Miss Corning.]

GRAVEN ON THE TRAVERSE ON TOFANA S. FACE.

There is an endless choice of climbs. We had a delightful day in the *Pompaninkamin* of the Croda da Lago, and then, as the weather seemed friendly at last, we had recourse to the services of Angelo Dibona, for with the best intentions in the world, it is almost impossible for strangers to find the more intricate routes on the Cortina climbs. Angelo took us up the S. face of Punta Fiammes, a very popular climb and a great favourite of the late King Albert's; Kleine Zinne from the north, of which far the most harrowing part was the motor-ride to the Principe Umberto hut; and Tofana di Rocces from the south. Our partnership was a very happy one, clouded only by the failure of two attempts on Marmolata, owing to bad weather. It is an education to climb with a man like Angelo, who has lost nothing of his wonderful ability and sureness of technique in rock-climbing; and his charming young son is following in his father's footsteps. Angelo's comments on the mountains and their history are always illuminating. Though no condemner of the piton, he has no love for modern 'Felsschlosserei,' and relates with childish glee how he invariably extracts pitons from a mountain when he finds them in unnecessary places.

Before going to Cortina, an acquaintance informed us with bated breath of a climb there costing 8,000 *lire* and requiring no fewer than eight guides! Faced with blank incredulity, she hinted darkly that it was a question of 'man power'! We were determined to get to the bottom of this legend. It finally transpired that a year or so ago two of the leading young Cortina guides dragged an unsuspecting American girl up the *Via Stoesser* on Tofana di Rocces. It was the first ascent by a woman and consequently a great feather in their caps. They dragged their wretched victim from piton to piton for nine hours, eventually demanding a fee of 8,000 *lire*. There are no fixed tariffs for the more difficult Dolomite climbs, so nominally they were within their right, but the scandal kept Cortina busy for many a day.

The Eastern Dolomites are a sad district in which to climb, for it is impossible to shake off the spectre of war. Fragments of shells and other war relics are banked up, museum-like, round the huts; the summit of Tofana is riddled with barbed wire and trenches, and from every viewpoint Angelo was able to show us Austrian and Italian positions stretching for miles round. Villages like Landro still lie in ruins, and the war has left cruel traces on the faces of all the older people. We made a pilgrimage to the grave of Sepp Innerkofler in the little

churchyard of Moos, where the church was shot to pieces during the war. Even the new mauve atrocity they have now built cannot destroy the peace of the Friedhof with its charming native paintings and sculpture, the flowers and the view of the Drei Zinnen beyond, while a realistic carved presentation of the poor family Watschinger roasting in the fires of Purgatory did much to prevent chilly feelings of depression.

We finished our Alpine summer with two days at Zermatt. What a treat it was to look at real snow mountains again! Most of us never waver in our allegiance to the Western Alps, and yet those fantastic Dolomite summits capture our imagination in some strange way. Even among the mountains of our choice we sometimes feel a wave of longing for the evening glow on Cristallo, the hayfields of Val Fassa, and for the charming courteous inhabitants of the Dolomite country.

[We are greatly indebted to the writer for her excellent paper.—*Editor*, 'A.J.']

SOME NOTES ON CLIMBING IN FORMOSA.

By W. H. MURRAY WALTON.

THIS article is based on notes made during a climbing expedition to Formosa in the spring and early summer of 1930. Though every precaution was made to enable the 5 weeks spent there to be spent most profitably, though the writer had the benefit not only of introductions to those administering the island and so most capable of advising him in general detail, though the whole expedition was planned in closest collaboration with Japanese climbers who were familiar with certain parts of the mountains covered, and though the writer had the advantage of an intimate knowledge of the Japanese language, yet in the course of an expedition lasting some 5 weeks only, it is impossible to give anything by way of an exhaustive description of the mountains, or of mountaineering in this, relatively speaking, little-known island. Consequently any suggestions that are made must be accepted in the light of the above limitations, and naturally the description that follows can only be of that part of the mountains covered during the expedition.

The island of Formosa, lying some 600 miles S. of Japan, and only 100 miles off the coast of China, is remarkable from a mountaineering standpoint inasmuch as, although only 240 miles long and 80 broad at its greatest breadth, it contains the highest mountains in the Japanese Empire and, in its E. coast cliffs, one of the most striking mountain phenomena in the world.