5. TWO ASCENTS OF THE GRAND PARADIS.

By J. J. Cowell, F.R.G.S.

No high mountain in the whole region of the Western Alps has remained in undeserved obscurity so long as the Grand Paradis. This circumstance is the more remarkrable, when we consider the great claims to fame which this magnificent peak possesses.

In the first place, it is the highest mountain in Italy. It stands out towards the east, clear from the main range of the Graian Alps, on purely Italian ground, and thus escapes that partition of nationality which renders Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa but half Italian. It is, moreover, very conspicuous from the North Italian plain, owing to its great height and isolated position; and the circumstance of its being in the very heart of the solitary region where the famous *bouquetin*, extinct in all other parts of Europe, still continues to maintain a precarious existence, gives it an additional claim to attention.

Nevertheless, the Grand Paradis remained, until two years ago, almost unknown; and unknown, too, in a peculiar way. It is not surprising that a mountain here or there should experience vicissitudes of fortune, in respect both of its nomenclature and its geographical identity. Some mountains, which undoubtedly have a material existence, are unfortunate enough to have no name (for which reason, of course, I cannot point out an example); and on the other hand, some mountains which undoubtedly have names,—and well-known names, too,—

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such as the Aiguille de la Vanoise and Mont Iseran, unfortunately have no material existence. But the Grand Paradis, previously to 1859, suffered from both these disadvantages at once. From Turin, indeed, a distant lofty summit was pointed out as part of the Grand Paradis; but as one approached the place indicated, so little could one see or hear of the mountain that one ceased to believe in its existence. On the other hand, every explorer of the peaks and passes of the Pennine Alps may have observed a splendid mountain to the south of Cogne, whose height and name were a matter of mere conjecture, as may be seen by a reference to the table of heights contained in our previous volume. The prevailing ignorance extended even to the authors of the Sardinian Ordnance Map, who omitted altogether to give the mountain that prominence which it deserved. They avoided the difficulty by freely sprinkling a large strip of their map with peaks and ridges of various shapes and sizes, and then printing "Gran Paradiso" in large letters at each end.

The just description of the mountain may be briefly given. The Cogne highlands are divided from the Pennine chain by the great Valley of Aosta, and the highest crest of the range consists of two branches, which meet at right angles. One branch, the shorter of the two, runs north and south, and at its northern extremity is the famous Pic de la Grivola, which is described in another part of this volume. The other branch runs for some thirty miles west and east, and contains several peaks of great height near the Col de Cogne, even yet unvisited. At the point of intersection of the two branches stands the Grand Paradis, surpassing in height every other part of the range.*

* It has been suggested to me by my friend, Mr. F. F. Tuckett, who pre-

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From its foot two valleys descend towards the north into the Valley of Aosta, inclosing between them the Pic de la Grivola,—the Valley of Cogne on the eastern and the Val Savaranche on the western side.

Among the many points of view from which I have seen the Grand Paradis, I should at once fix on the Col du Géant as that from which it appears to the greatest advantage. It is thence seen rising right before the spectator, barring the way towards Italy, and presenting a more imposing aspect than any of its remoter rivals. I saw it thus under very favourable circumstances in 1859, and the idea of exploring it then first entered my mind; but its true name I did not then know, nor could I learn much from my guides, who called it by various local names. Accordingly, I leisurely collected information about it for use in 1860; I say leisurely, because I soon discovered that the sum total of information existing on the subject amounted to no more than this. First, it was not the Pic de la Grivola; and secondly, it was very likely to prove

ceded me in visiting this region, that the popular fallacy which for so long caused the imaginary Mont Iseran to be considered the highest peak of the Graian Alps, may have originated in the vague reports of a very high mountain existing S.E. of Mont Blanc; which high mountain may not improbably have been the Grand Paradis. There must have been some high mountain visible to the many observers who report having seen Mont Iseran, and also to the author of the work quoted below, who actually measured the peak in question.

"*Der Monte Rosa, Eine topographische und naturhistorische Skizze*," Von Ludwig von Welden. Wien, 1824, bei Carl Gerola. The author states (page 30) that he actually measured trigonometrically the height of "Der Iseran in Savoyen," and ascertained that it was 12,456 *pieds du roi* or 13,275 English feet.

It thus appears that Von Welden did observe and carefully measure a summit, which he erroneously calls Mont Iseran. I strongly suspect that the mountain which he did measure was the Grand Paradis, the height of which, as deduced from Mr. Tuckett's observations, differs from Von Welden's results by only 25 feet. The Grand Paradis is certainly at a considerable distance from the supposed site of Mont Iseran,—no less than 13 miles. Still there appears to be no other mountain at once near enough and high enough to have misled a scientific observer like Von Welden.

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to be the Grand Paradis. The Sardinian Ordnance Map, from which I hoped to learn something, served only, for the reason above mentioned, to confirm my belief that the mountain was quite unexplored.

Thus it became evident that I must study the mountain for myself before making any attempt to ascend it; and I



THE GRAND PARADIS FROM THE CRAMONT.

fixed upon the Cramont as the best position from which to reconnoitre. Accordingly I ascended that mountain on a beautiful day in the latter part of August, 1860, accompanied by my old friend and guide, Michel Payot of Chamounix, who was to attempt with me the ascent of this unknown mountain. We were distant from it twenty miles, so that we could decide with tolerable precision on the general direction of our future route, although we could not expect at that distance to detect any of those minor features, a knowledge of which is generally of great

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value. We agreed that the ascent ought to be made from the western side, along the rocky margin of the glacier on our right hand; and that probably we should find no difficulty until reaching the base of the highest peak, which certainly did look very steep indeed.

This right-hand glacier descended, as we ascertained, into the head of the Val Savaranche, which joins the Valley of Aosta, about six miles above the city of that name. So from Aosta we determined to start. I prevailed upon Jean Tairraz, the landlord of the Hotel du Mont Blanc, to go with me, he having made an unsuccessful attempt on the mountain a few days previously. I was also fortunate enough to obtain the company of Mr. W. Dundas as joint explorer.

We spent three dreary days at Aosta waiting for fine weather: all day and all night we had nothing but wind and rain. In vain we tormented Tairraz and Payot by trying to make them say that they thought it was going to clear, and on the third day Payot began to shake his head, and talk ominously about *cette vilaine cîme*, and the great difficulty—of which I was myself only too well aware — of ascending it just after a three days' fall of snow.

On the fourth day, September 3rd, 1860, we made a start, as the weather did hold up in a sulky sort of way, without actually raining, but with evident preparations for several more wet days at a moment's notice. Snow was lying everywhere above the level of 6000 feet, and the air was very cold. Still we were thankful for the day such as it was; for in that most inclement autumn of 1860, Alpine travellers were compelled to accept as fine any day which passed without a storm.

We first ascended the Valley of Aosta, passing on the left the mouth of the Valley of Cogne; and then crossing the Dora at Villeneuve, we travelled due south up the

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Val Savaranche, along the western slope of the Pic de la Grivola. The lower part of the Val Savaranche is grand and gloomy, and seemed to us almost oppressively dark under the heavy shade of the threatening storm clouds; but the upper half of the valley is flat, uninteresting, and singularly bleak and bare.

Our attention was chiefly directed to the conspicuous traces of glacier action, both on the sides and in the hollow of the valley. The numerous and extensive groups of "*roches moutonnées*," extending for several miles, deserved much more careful observation than we were able to bestow. We were compelled to hurry on to the Châlet du Mont Corvé, where we were to sleep, and whence we expected to make a survey of the mountain before sunset, and ascertain whether or no it really were the Grand Paradis.

After tramping steadily along the valley for seven hours, we turned to the left and began climbing a precipitous path which led to the solitary châlet and dreary pasturages of Mont Corvé. This final climb occupied an hour, and tried us severely, heavily laden as we were, and compelled at times to creep on all fours along wet mossy ledges of rock.

The man at the châlet received us very civilly, having been forewarned by Tairraz of our visit; and having plenty of room inside, he was able to make us more comfortable than I expected. Comfort, I must observe, in an Alpine bivouac is not a mere matter of luxury, but is of real importance; the man who has had a comfortable night in a warm bed, and a comfortable breakfast before starting, will do much more work and enjoy his day much more, than one who has passed a cold restless night, however hardy and enduring he may be. Thus, although a bivouac and a night spent in a châlet are most

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enjoyable in themselves, yet they prove, as far as my experience extends, but bad preliminaries to hard work. The days on which I felt most confidence in myself, and on which my powers of enjoyment were keenest, were not those which succeeded nights spent in a châlet, where one is generally cold and always restless. We were, however, very glad to see that we were to have plenty of room, of hay, and of spare blankets.

The remaining hour of daylight was spent in examining the high peak to the east of us, which we supposed to be the Grand Paradis. On comparing it with my sketch and our maps, we were unable to reconcile them with the scene or with each other; and we ended with the conclusion that, though we could not tell where we were, at any rate a high mountain was before us, and we had to find the way up it. Two large glaciers descend from the foot of the highest peak,— one that of Montandéni, flowing northward, and the other that of Mont Corvé, flowing westward. Between these two, lies a small glacier known as the Glacier de Lansqueour. It terminates at the snow-line, whereas the other two descend into the valley. The glaciers are separated by ridges of rock, and scattered heaps of enormous débris. We determined to ascend by the ridge on our right hand, which lies between the middle and right-hand glaciers, and which we thought might prove to be the same which we had fixed upon from the Cramont.

During supper we tried to learn from our host something about the geography of the surrounding region; but he could tell us nothing. His father and grandfather before him had occupied the châlet for 105 years; yet they had no name for this mountain, and seemed never even to have gone as far as the foot of the Glacier de Lansqueour.

We were afraid to say much about the state of the

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weather, lest we should discourage each other before our time; but we knew only too well what to expect. At length, after we had been pretending to sleep for some hours, we began to feel an occasional drip, drip, through the loose and draughty roof.

In the morning of Tuesday, September 4th, it was snowing fast, and so the guides did not call us till nearly seven o'clock, when the weather began to clear a little. At 7.30 we started up the long desolate slopes above the châlet, which extend to the end of the Glacier de Lansqueour. After an hour's walk in the snow-storm, we reached the base of the high rocky barrier which stretches from the Glacier de Lansqueour to that of Mont Corvé. Every exposed surface of rock was coated with ice and sprinkled over with snow, so that in creeping along the ledges we had to go slowly and cautiously. After an hour's scramble we reached a level plain of snow,— hard snow, as we were delighted to find. We had now ascended above the snow-storm, which appeared not to have extended to this region. There had been fortunately a hard frost, so that the masses of fresh snow which had fallen during the preceding week were completely consolidated, and as hard as old well-compacted névé. We were thus relieved from all apprehension on the score of avalanches, which might, at times, render the summit inaccessible.

After a little more rock-climbing we fairly entered upon the steep snow-slopes that lead up to the base of the lower peak. The surface here was very hard, and we could not step firmly on it without a fatiguing effort, as many of the nails had been torn from our boots during our scramble among the rocks. So, to our regret, it became necessary to submit to the delay occasioned by cutting steps. However, Payot wielded his axe with great rapidity, always cutting a good step at one blow.

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He cut about 700 steps in two hours, which is certainly very fast work.*

We now passed above and beyond the source of the small Glacier de Lansqueour, and found ourselves upon the broad arête which separates the sources of the two large glaciers. On our right the arête fell away, forming a precipice that overhangs the Glacier du Mont Corvé; but on our left the head of the great Glacier de Montandéni was almost on a level with us. It lies in a long and nearly level channel in the depression between the highest and the lower peaks. This long channel Tairraz named the Corridor, from its resemblance to the Corridor on Mont Blanc. We reached it in four hours from the châlet.

From this position we could see the Cramont, and we now succeeded in reconciling our sketch with the visible features of the mountain. The three glaciers, the two sharp peaks, and the gap between them were all satisfactorily identified. We saw that the actual summit was not, as it had appeared to us, a sharp point; it was — to use a familiar illustration — the gable-end of a nearly horizontal roof, the ridge of which had lain exactly in the line of sight.

Along the western base of this highest ridge, which is about 500 yards long, runs the corridor, about 1500 feet below the summit. The southern and lower end of the ridge rises from the corridor with sharp slopes, and the northern end with vertical cliffs of ice, of 200 or 300 feet in height, above which those steep slopes which we had seen in profile from the Cramont lead up to the summit. Just below this point these slopes have an inclination of 57°.

* It must be understood, however, that these were mere superficial indentations into the crisp snow, which yields readily to the axe. Cutting a secure step in hard ice is a very different matter, requiring ten or twelve blows, and occupying a minute or more.

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and elsewhere they vary from 50° to 45°. All along the side of the slope, and about 150 feet below the crest, runs a small crevasse three or four feet wide.

We did not propose to climb straight up the slope, which appeared too steep, and we therefore proceeded towards the southern end of the corridor, intending to advance thence along its whole length, mounting slowly all the way. From the point where we recommenced cutting steps, we had, in order to reach the summit, to travel about 500 yards and to rise 1000 feet; and as we observed that the latter half of our route would extend above the precipices overhanging the corridor, we tied ourselves together. About the advisability of doing this Tairraz had some doubt, bearing in mind the fatal accident to his brother, Victor Tairraz, which had taken place only a fortnight before on the Col du Géant; on which occasion the rope had (as he imagined) proved the destruction of the party. We discussed the question, and Dundas and I overruled Jean Tairraz — fortunately for him — as the sequel will show. We considered that, while a single man who might fall could have no chance of saving himself, it was very unlikely that one man by slipping could pull us all down, as our whole party were experienced and sure-footed. My own experience on this question of roping leads me to conclude, that if all the party are practised mountaineers, the use of the rope on a slope or arête conduces much more to safety than to danger; while if some of the party are unpractised, or temporarily unequal to their work, no possible precautions can prevent all chance of an accident.

As we ascended we found that the weather improved, until there was not a single cloud to be seen above us. But at the same time we became conscious that this change was owing to a violent north-east wind, which had

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cleared the upper regions of the air, and which now swept fiercely down the side of the slope, chilling us thoroughly, and threatening to make a prolonged stay on the summit intolerable.

At last, after 400 steps had been cut, and we had been an hour and a half on the slope, we reached the little crevasse of which I have spoken. Had we met with this on a level or slightly inclined surface, we should merely have stepped over it; but as the slope at this place had an inclination of 51°, the upper edge of the fissure was three feet above the lower edge, and almost overhung it. Both edges were rather rotten, but, by help of one or two deep notches, we pulled ourselves up. But while Jean Tairraz, who came last, was half way up, with his foot on the lower edge, and his knee on the upper, both broke off under him, and he at once rolled over on his back and went down the slope headlong. Dundas, who was next him, shouted to us to "hold on," and we dug our spikes desperately into the hard surface, and Payot struck in his axe-head, in readiness, as he said, to hold us all up if necessary. However, no such necessity arose; for Dundas, by simply standing firm in his tracks, and without seeking much support from his pole, arrested Tairraz's rapid descent with the rope when he had gone down about twenty feet, and drew him up again without any assistance from us; so that, had Dundas been alone, he could have saved him without difficulty. But had Tairraz not been tied, the issue would have been very different. He was shooting down head foremost, quite unable to stop himself with his alpenstock on so hard a surface, and would in a few seconds have met the fate of his poor brother Victor. I believe nothing could have saved him from glissading to the bottom of the slope, and then falling sheer over on to the Glacier of Montandeni.

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We were so miserably cold that we could not stop to talk,—in fact I do not think a word was said. Payot resumed his work, and in a few minutes we stood on the top of the arête in a little gap, to the north of which rose the summit. Here we met the full force of the N.E. wind, and the cold became so intense that we felt that we could not endure it much longer. So with fifty more steps we mounted the last and steepest arête of ice, and reached the crest of the highest ridge, when we at once took refuge behind a little turret of rock,—being in a state of thorough wretchedness, and thinking about nothing but how to descend at once.

We should have started without a minute's delay but for the alarming discovery that Payot's hands were frozen, which, till then, he had concealed from us. How he had been able to cut those last steps I could not imagine; for now he could no longer hold the axe, which he nearly let fall over the precipice on the Cogne side. His hands were really in a dreadful state, the backs of a livid purple, the palms quite white, and the whole curled round, and stiffened as they had been grasping the pole. Tairraz also was partly disabled by a misfortune that is of not unfrequent occurrence in very cold weather. During a long ascent the foot is constantly bent upwards, and the thick boot becomes frozen quite firmly in that position, so that the torpid foot has not sufficient muscular energy to bend the sole downwards, which it is absolutely necessary to do before one can step downhill. Thus Tairraz could not possibly descend without first reducing his boots to subjection. So while he and I each took a hand of Payot's and pinched, rubbed, and thumped them violently, Payot and I each stamped with equal good will on Tairraz's toes; until after about five minutes' hard work, their nervous twitchings showed that they began to feel that ex-

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cruciating but most welcome pain, which announces that all danger of a permanent frost-bite is over, and that animation is being restored.

However, they declared that to complete the cure, and to warm us properly, a rapid rush down was indispensable. So we detached ourselves from the rope, as otherwise in a rapid descent we should have pulled each other over, and they all started off, while I remained a moment to look at the time and to observe the thermometer. This had been in my waistcoat pocket, with my coat closed over it, and the sun had been shining brightly on us; yet it stood at 22°, so the temperature of the air may be imagined. In a moment more I was hurrying down after them, and we descended the slope at full speed, scampering furiously down where we had crept up painfully and cautiously. To a spectator our descent would have appeared a wild, disorderly flight, like the stampede of a prairie-herd fleeing from the fire behind, and rushing down a precipice in front. In fact, the cold had quite demoralised us, and, as sometimes happens, the spirit both of enterprise and prudence had yielded to the pressure of intolerable physical discomfort; and so, powerless to resist, we fled from our enemy as if panic-struck. As soon as we could do so with safety, we glissaded about 500 feet right down into the corridor.

The ascent of the arête had occupied us for two hours; we came down in eight minutes, thoroughly warmed and invigorated by the excitement of the descent, in spite of the continued inclemency of the weather. Our return journey was most luxurious, as we glissaded nearly the whole way, and thus avoided the tedious passage over the rocks. We got back to the châlet in three hours after leaving the summit; so we had been absent but nine hours altogether, having taken six hours to ascend and three to

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return. Now, considering the great height of this mountain, and that one can get up it without ever touching a glacier, with little fatigue and no danger, and all in nine hours, I think it one of the most easy and luxurious expeditions that can be made.

It was true that we were rather dissatisfied. We grumbled to each other all the afternoon, — we had been very unfortunate, — we had seen nothing from the top, and had taken no observations. We had spent two days in climbing to that summit, and had after all experienced, in spite of the fine clear weather and a bright noon-day sun, the fate so beautifully described by Byron * : —

> "He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
> The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
> He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
> Must look down on the hate of those below;
> Though high above the sun of glory glow,
> And far beneath the earth and ocean spread,
> Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
> Contending tempests on his naked head;
> And thus reward the toils which to those summits led."

On the following morning Dundas was obliged to return to Aosta, but I determined, as the day was really very fine, to ascend the mountain again with only Payot. As all the steps were ready-made, we ascended very rapidly, reaching the top in five hours from the châlet; rising in that time 5500 feet, or 1100 feet per hour. Thus, in facility of rapid ascent, the Grand Paradis surpasses the well-known Cima di Jazi, and is 1000 feet higher. To please Payot, I counted carefully the number of steps that he had cut the day before. The grand total was 1275, a score of which he was not a little proud, it being, he said, the greatest number that had ever been accomplished by a Chamounix man in one day.

* "Childe Harold," Canto iii. Stanza 45.

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The actual summit consists of a thin cornice of ice, and we found it impossible to establish ourselves there; so we took up our position at the rock which had sheltered us on the previous day. This is a little square turret, about fifteen feet high, and it projects from the face of the cliff on the Cogne side, like an upright tower projecting from the sloping wall of a fortification. But even here there is not room for more than three, or at most four, men to sit; a larger party would have to make itself at home on a slope with an inclination of 57°. In fact, we had to be very careful how we moved, and never let go our hold upon the rock; for there is no flat place to stand on — not a square foot anywhere.

After three observations of the boiling point* of pure water, I found the mean temperature of boiling water to be 188·1°. The height of the Grand Paradis, deduced according to Colonel Sykes' Tables, would be 13,700 feet, which is probably too high an estimate by at least 200 feet.

At any rate, we could see quite over the top of the Grivola, and by measurement made it to be 500 feet lower than ourselves.

The unknown regions to the south-west, which we were intending to explore, we scrutinised carefully, comparing the view with our maps. We saw peaks in unexpected plenty, twenty or thirty being more than 12,000 feet in height. We could identify only two,— the Levanna and Mont Pourri,— which bore W. by N. But there were others higher than these, which we could not make out, partly owing to our ignorance of their distance, and partly through the inaccuracy of the map. I could not even fix our own position on it; the more I studied it, the more I

* The observation in detail was as follows:—Date, September 5th, 1860, 1 P.M. Temperature of air in shade, 51°; temperature of boiling water, 188·1°. Contemporary observations at Turin give us, temperature of air, 78° Height of barometer, 28,977.

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became perplexed, as ridge, peak, and glacier were all in confusion. Thus I had to fix our position without reference to the map; and having no means of ascertaining directly either latitude or longitude, I took bearings from all the well-known mountains in the Pennine chain.*

The few pinnacles of rock which rise from the long icy ridge are of mica-schist, partly disintegrated, and covered with black and green lichen. These rocks are strangely riven and broken up, and everywhere present a decayed and crumbling aspect, as if the destructive agencies of nature were rapidly overpowering them. Our own little turret appeared ruined to the last degree; it was in two places split from top to bottom, and the whole material was so friable that fragments as large as bricks could be detached with a slight touch. Payot even objected to my climbing up it, lest it should collapse, or in his very expressive phrase, "*dégringoler*." And indeed, I believe, that in a few years it must fall to pieces; so that, as the adjoining rocks are no doubt liable to the same disaster, the height of the mountain is being slowly reduced.

I mounted carefully on to the top of the turret, which was quite level, and about half the size of a card-table; from here I obtained a much better view. Everywhere the valleys were choked with clouds, and nothing was visible below 7000 feet. This is a circumstance not always to be regretted, as to my mind it seems that one is much more impressed with a sense of the sublime by being thus raised above every trace of the inhabited world, and compelled to gaze only upon the beautiful but barren peaks that rise above the works of man, and on the "unfruitful" sea of mist that surrounds them all. Owing to my isolated

* From these bearings I should place the summit of the Grand Paradis as follows:—North latitude, 45° 30′ 24″; West longitude, 7° 15′ 12″.

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position on the point of rock, I was peculiarly liable to be thus impressed. The clouds 2000 feet below were beating against the sides of the cliff over which I stood, so as to suggest the idea of a bottomless precipice. It was a strange and exciting sensation—that of being alone on this little spot, lifted so high in the air above all surrounding peaks, and with no visible surface or support below. Looking over the dim mist at my feet, I felt as if perched on the very topmost pinnacle of the universe.

I found my anticipations of a splendid panoramic view fully realised. We were in the centre of that vast semicircle, in which the south-western Alps sweep round from Monte Rosa to Monte Viso, and with no high summit near us to intercept the view. I know of no other point of observation at once so central and so commanding. The whole of the main range, 150 miles in length, is within a moderate distance of the spectator, while the view of the range of Mont Blanc, distant twenty-six miles, is equal in grandeur to that obtained from the Buet. Our view towards Italy ranged over an unbroken surface of cloud from Monte Viso to the Ortler Spitz. These two conspicuous mountains, the black cone and the white, more than 200 miles apart, seemed to me to complete the picture. Beyond them everything was lost in the hazy distance, and thus they rose from the sea of cloud like two great landmarks facing each other, and serving to fix the limits of the visible world.

I repeatedly searched with my telescope for bouquetins on the slopes of the Paradis and the crags of the Grivola (where a troop of five was seen in 1859); but in vain. I hear that there was also a marked scarcity of chamois in 1860 in the Cogne district, while on the western slopes of the Graian Alps they were unusually plentiful. On the Col d'Iseran, a few days afterwards, I saw a troop of thirteen.

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Before descending we emptied our last bottle of wine to the health of the King of Italy, whom Payot still honoured as his sovereign, in spite of having been "annexed" some months before. The toast happened at an auspicious moment; for about that same time, in the afternoon of that same day, September 5th, Francis II. fled from his capital, and thus at the earliest moment that the King of Italy could fairly claim that title, his health was proposed for the first time on the summit of the highest mountain in his dominions.

I hope I may have had the good fortune to interest some of my readers in this remarkable mountain. The mere ascent would be perfectly practicable for ladies; but of course the discomfort of the châlet must to them prove a great objection. But if any mountaineer has an inexperienced friend to initiate into the mysteries of Alpine climbing, or any youthful *aspirant* to train up in the way he should go, let him start with a six hours' ramble up the Grand Paradis. Nothing could more encourage a beginner than for labours so slight to earn so rich a reward.

Any one who wishes to make the excursion should not go later than the end of August, because the châlet* is deserted early in September. After bad weather he should make a point of allowing one clear day for the snow to harden, as otherwise he would find the final slope dangerous, and perhaps impracticable. Four days later, after constant bad weather, I saw the slope from the top of the Levanna, and I observed that it was completely striped with the tracks of avalanches. It would be well not to go with a large party; for there is next to no room on the top, which, indeed, is the only dangerous place in the whole

* The châlet is at a height of 8200 feet.

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journey. Being there is ten times more trying than the getting there; unless, indeed, the more adventurous climber can mount on to the ruined turret, where there is just room for one person, and he can sit down very comfortably, with his feet over the edge, and survey at his ease the most magnificent of Alpine panoramas.

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