



THE BEC DE LUENEY FROM ABOVE BLONAZ.
(From a sketch by A. Adams-Rilly.)

Switzerland. It appeared to be inhabited only by charcoal burners, who met our conciliatory observations with a haughty reserve peculiar to charcoal burners all over the world, and Englishmen.

It remains only briefly to compare this pass with the other routes from Saas to Simplen. More direct than the Thäli Joch, shorter and perhaps easier than the Fletsch Joch, and not much if at all longer even than the Gamser Joch, it can hardly, as far as my experience goes, be surpassed in interest and grandeur by any col in Switzerland. The entire time excluding halts was not much more than ten hours. I imagine that it may also be possible to effect a passage from the Rossboden Glacier, the stream from which flows into the Simplon valley just above Simplen, to the Fletschhorn Glacier, on the west side of the chain. I am not aware that it has ever been attempted, and if practicable it would probably lead over the summit of the Rossbodenhorn, or close to it; still it may be worth trying. With regard to the pass that I have endeavoured to describe, I may confidently say that, though there is no very striking ice scenery, any traveller who may be induced to cross it will receive three impressions which he will not soon forget—the view westwards from the Col, the view downwards to the Laquin Glacier, and the view upwards from the old moraine.

THE BEC DE LUSENEY. By A. ADAMS-REILLY.

ALMOST in the centre of the triangular block of mountains of which the Dent d'Hérens forms the apex, while Aosta and Chatillon lie at the extremities of its base, a region as yet untrodden by the casual tourist, lies hidden one of the most graceful snow peaks in the Alps, the Bec de Lusoney; of no great elevation, indeed, but the highest as well as the most beautiful of this group. From many points in the chain of Monte Rosa and the mountains of Bagnes both Mr. Whymper and myself had been struck by the symmetry of its form, but it had long been a puzzle to us, where or what it was—especially as guides exercised their imaginative faculties upon it in a manner startling and marvellous, and gave it any name that came handy from the Grivola to the Chateau des Dames. By means of a level I had ascertained from the summit of the Vêlan that its height was almost precisely the same, 12,350 feet; but it was not until some time afterwards, that, in the course

of a survey of the Valpelline group, I ascertained its real position, at the head of the Val St. Barthélemy.

I had started to explore this unknown region, in company with a Chamouni guide, Henri Charlet, who carried my instruments, and an ancient chasseur of Val Tournanche named Carrel, the only man I could meet with who had, or would even pretend to have, any local knowledge; and when, after exhausting the southern valleys of the chain, I crossed over to the Valpelline, I was delighted to recognise the white snow cone which I had seen from the south, crowning a steep glacier-tail, a little above Biona.

I reconnoitred it from the heights on the opposite side of the valley, the point from which was taken the sketch which illustrates this paper; and I am much indebted to Mr. E. Walton for having kindly clothed my naked pencil outline in the lovely purple tints and gauzy mists which are so characteristic of the Italian Alps, and to which he alone does justice.

This point commands a view of the peak from top to bottom, and its glacier, across which lies a pass to the Val St. Barthélemy, is well seen as it descends into a remarkable gorge running up behind Mt. Gialon. At a considerable height above, just below the final cone, a glacier-tail peeps over the western precipices, lying like an epaulette on the shoulder of the mountain; and as the lower ice-fall was cut off by much *roche moutonnée* we decided to ascend an arête which would apparently bring us up to the shoulder in question, and to touch the glacier first at this point.

Accordingly on Thursday, August 2, we started from Biona at a quarter past two, and after following for some distance the Prarayen road, struck downwards towards the river, which we crossed. We then passed through a little gorge which cuts off a portion of the ridge lying west of the Combe d'Arbien, and after crossing the waste of débris and snow patches which fills that valley, some steep slopes of *gazon* with occasional stony couloirs brought us to the rocks of our arête, where we made our first halt at five. The arête was a wonderfully broken and splintered ridge—excellent climbing, however—and we made our way without difficulty over, and occasionally under, enormous masses of rock piled up into the most fantastic shapes. At length the arête came to an end, and we arrived at a small bed of steeply-inclined snow, at the foot of a precipitous cliff, over which hangs the upper glacier-tail visible from Biona. We had spent an hour in mounting the arête, and a few minutes more placed us on the ice, which we proceeded to cross, intending to regain the arête above it.

We here met with our first delay, for the ice, at first steeply

inclined, was as hard as iron, and as we had to cut steps all the way, much time was consumed before we reached the shoulder, and found ourselves at the foot of the final peak. From this point the northern arête would doubtless have been our shortest route to the summit, but while Charlet was cutting steps up to the rocks, I had set off across the eastern face of the mountain, and when I came in sight of the arête on the other side, which overhangs the Val St. Barthélemy, it seemed so easy to reach, and the rocks appeared so good, that I sent Carrel back for Charlet, and we proceeded to cross towards them. We could not cut upwards, as a large bergschrund lay above us, stretching apparently from side to side of the slope on which we were.

For some distance we got on rapidly, but as we approached the rocks the nevé got steeper and steeper, until at last we struck the hardest ice I ever saw, lying at an angle of about 50° . This caused considerable delay, and we did not get upon the rocks until a few minutes after nine. They were not particularly good, but there was always a way, and we reached the summit at 9.30.

The view is one of great beauty, and of great interest: the Valpelline mountains, of which it is the highest and most central point, form a foreground of rocky peaks, showing every fantastic shape and every delicate tint which rocks can assume. Beyond these lie the Italian Alps, the Combin, Vêlan, and the chain of peaks which runs westward from the Dent d' Hérens, above which peer the white summits of the Zinal mountains. As I wished to examine the col which descends to the Val St. Barthélemy, we descended by the same rocks, and then cut downwards to the glacier. I then went to the head of the col, and having satisfied myself that the large couloir presented no difficulties, we turned our backs upon it and rapidly descended the gently sloping fields of nevé to a point somewhat lower than that at which we had quitted the rocks. A few minutes' step-cutting landed us on the arête which we leisurely descended, arriving at Biona at half-past four.

The Bec de Lusoney can of course only be called a second class peak, but second class peaks have their value, and the pleasure of an expedition in which guides can be practically dispensed with, is only equalled by its value in putting the mountaineer through the practice as well as the theory of step-cutting or picking out the route up an ice-fall; while of all the impressions ever made on my mind by the delicate loveliness of Alpine scenery, the most vivid are connected with three second class peaks of nearly the same height, Mont Dolent, the Vêlan, and the Bec de Lusoney.