

EXPLORATIONS AMONGST THE COTTIAN ALPS.

1. *The Chambeyron District.* By the EDITOR.

IT is certainly a curious and remarkable fact that so few members of our Club have hitherto found their way to the Cottian Alps. Zernatt and Chamonix, the Oberland and the Engadine are worked to death, so that it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that during the season the peaks and passes of those districts are almost as frequented as the inns at their feet. The erection of numerous huts and the fixing of chains, &c., have largely brought about what our French neighbours would call 'la vulgarisation des montagnes,' an expression which, it need hardly be added, has not the same touch of satire in it as the literal English translation. Now, while yielding to none in my admiration of the giants of the Pennine and Swiss Alps, I confess I have a hankering after mountaineering as it must have been in the early days of the Club, when one might hope to enjoy the grand scenes scattered with so lavish a hand throughout the Alps, without finding the way made dangerous by fragments of broken bottles, and to descend in the evening, after a well-spent day, to rest in some village inn, or in the cabane of some 'Alper,' or 'berger,' sure of a hearty welcome, and a genuine cry at the moment of leaving of 'au revoir,' or 'auf Wiedersehen,' far from the magnificence and tediousness of a *table d'hôte* in a 'Grand Hôtel.'

My friends tell me that I am singular in this strange desire to avoid meeting the never-ceasing stream of Cook's tourists, and I am beginning to believe that they are right, and that I must be differently constituted from other people, when I see how few of my colleagues I have ever had the pleasure of meeting anywhere to the south of the Col de la Seigne. Lately a handful of adventurers have penetrated to Cogne and even to the Val Savaranche, but, as has been already remarked by one of them in this Journal, these districts 'appear to be regarded by our members as the extreme limits of Alpine civilisation.' How many, for instance, even suspect the existence of the glorious glacier scenery round the Grande Casse or the Mont Pourri, the Ciamarella or the Sassièrè, and how many even of those who are aware of their existence ever think of turning their steps towards them? I speak of the French and Italian Alps, because I know them best, but the same phenomenon occurs, I believe, at the other extremity of the chain of the Alps. For two or three summers, indeed, Dau-

phiné gained a temporary notoriety as the site of an apparently inaccessible mountain; but after the fall of the Meije the majority of the English visitors fled to return no more; and the astonishing fact was rendered possible that but three English-speaking visitors (and none of those three coming thither for the first time) had found their way during the late season, up to the middle of August, to the hamlet of La Bérarde, the natural centre of the district.

Two explanations of this strange want of curiosity are offered. It is said, in the first place, that in the French and Italian Alps the accommodation is so bad that it is impossible to put up with it. Now this would describe the state of matters fifteen or twenty years back, when these districts were *more* visited by English climbers than at present. But by this time matters have wonderfully improved in almost every portion of those regions (partly owing to the encouragement given by foreign climbers), and yet fewer English are found there than before, which, to say the least of it, is a fact requiring further explanation. It is then said, Oh it is all very well for *you* to go to these out-of-the-way parts to climb 'little peaks,' but *we* prefer to remain where there are 'real mountains,' which are worth the trouble of ascending. Now this view is, I think, quite fallacious, and indeed quite fatal to a true appreciation of the Alps, resembling, with an unpleasant closeness, Mr. Ruskin's celebrated greased pole theory. And here I must make my Alpine confession of faith, in which I trust no heretical doctrines are to be found. To my mind the difference between one mountain and another is merely one of degree and not of kind. I admit that I have a catholic love and admiration for all mountains big or little. Therefore I can appreciate the beauties of the Welsh hills, amidst which I am writing, as well as the sterner glories of Mont Blanc or Monte Rosa. I may, and candidly allow that I do, prefer a snow mountain to a snowless one; but this is simply a difference in the degree and not in the kind of delight with which they severally inspire me. So too between one snow peak and another. Everyone will allow that some of the most enjoyable days he has spent in the Alps have not been on the very highest, or, as they are now called, the 'first-class' summits. And this goes far towards establishing the doctrine of Alpine faith for which I am contending; once grant that the relative height of a peak is but an insignificant factor in the aggregate amount of pleasure derived from making the ascent, and my case is won. It is notorious that the highest peaks are by no means always the most difficult; and yet it is these which are most frequently

ascended, a fact which one can scarcely err in attributing to the more or less unworthy motive of wishing to be able to crow over other less fortunate individuals. Possibly my proposition, that the attraction of mountains does not vary with or depend on their relative height, may be admitted in theory as a truism, and ignored in practice with a sort of contemptuous pity for the poor mortals who have such a low respect for the Alps. I am willing to be pitied, provided I am allowed to take my own course, and to try to get converts to my way of thinking. But I have derived so much pleasure from my rambles amongst the unfrequented and relatively lower ranges of the Alps, that, at the risk of spoiling my own hunting-grounds, I feel bound to endeavour to get others to follow my example as an experiment, to see whether, as in my own case, the change from the familiar giants of Switzerland to the comparative pigmies of the south-western Alps is not an agreeable one, and one worthy of being more frequently tried.

Now, as compared with the Cottians, Dauphiné itself is crowded with English travellers. The Cottians, having the misfortune, as some would say, of possessing but one peak over 12,000 feet, have been all but utterly neglected by our Club. The peak just alluded to—Monte Viso—indeed was first conquered by Englishmen, but with that exception and an attempt on another summit, no mountainous part of this region has been hitherto visited by Englishmen, except hurriedly by Messrs. W. Mathews and Bonney, who have been the pioneers in so many other parts of the Alps. Having long gazed on these ranges from the Dauphiné peaks, I gradually became filled with a desire to know more of this mysterious region, as to which Mr. Ball himself could give but little information.* Hence I resolved to have a look at it in 1879, when on my way to the Maritime Alps. I should be inclined to fix the north limit of the Cottian Alps, from motives of convenience, at the pass of the Mont Genève, with all deference to Mr. Ball, who adopts the Col du Galibier and the pass of the Mont Cenis as his boundaries, though no doubt on scientific grounds these are the most suitable. Mr. Ball again places the south limit of this region at the Mont Enchastraye, whence many ridges diverge; but here again convenience points to the frequented pass of

* Much recent information may be found in SS. Martelli and Vaccarone's excellent 'Guida alle Alpi Occidentali del Piemonte,' just published by Casanova of Turin, under the auspices of the Turin section of the Italian Alpine Club. Unfortunately this does not take in the French side.

the Col de l'Argentière or della Maddalena, as the frontier between the Cottians and the Maritimes. Adopting the boundaries which I suggest, we can, for clearness sake, distinguish three, or, taking Mr. Ball's definition, four groups within these limits, viz. :—

1. From Mont Genève to Monte Viso—the district of the *Vaudois valleys*.

2. *Monte Viso* and the immediately surrounding valleys.

3. From Monte Viso to the Col de l'Argentière, a region which may be called, from its highest peak, the *Chambeyron district*. To which we may add

4. The district between the Mont Genève and the Mont Cenis—the *Mont Thabor and Mont d'Ambin district*.

It is proposed to treat of each of these districts in a separate paper, and thus obtain space for an adequate description of this extensive and little known tract of the Alps, which during its entire length forms the frontier between Piedmont and France. The present paper will be devoted to the group numbered three in the list given above, as being the least known of all.*

Anyone casting his eye on a map of the south-eastern corner of France can scarcely fail to have his attention attracted by a remarkable affluent of the Durance, flowing in from the east, which runs for the latter half of its course almost at a right angle to the direction previously followed. This river is the Ubaye; it rises not very far south of Monte Viso, and its valley is bounded on either side by the mountains which I propose to describe in this paper. The principal summit in the range separating it from the Durance to the west is the Fond Sallette or Font Sancte (3,370 mètres=11,057 feet),† and those in or very near the ridge forming the Franco-Italian frontier (going from N. to S.) are the Grand Rubren (3,341 mètres=10,962 feet), the Aiguille de Chambeyron (3,400

* As this paper is meant to give a general idea of the district, it may be well for those wishing for minute topographical details and exact times, to refer to my notes, published in vol. ix. p. 346, sqq. of this Journal.

† The natural derivation of this name would be from the lake and chapel of S. Anne, at its north-eastern base, resorted to by the natives on July 26, S. Anne's day. It is worth noting, however, that Bouche ('*La Chorographie ou Description de Provence*,' 1664, Aix, i. 28) states that the old name of the Ubaye was Sanctio, as appears from a passage in the life of S. Marcellinus of Embrun ('*Acta Sanctorum*,' ed. 1675, April. ii. 753). There are other readings—Cusanctio and Consanctio.

mètres=11,155 feet), the highest summit between Monte Viso and the Mediterranean Sea, and the Brec de Chambeyron (3,388 mètres=11,116 feet). At the head of the valley is the commune of Maurin, of which the chief hamlet is Maljasset or Majasset; lower down is the flourishing village of S. Paul-sur-Ubaye, and just at the point where the Ubaye turns to the west is the small town of Barcelonnette or Little Barcelona. The valley forms the north-eastern corner of the department of the Basses-Alpes.

Climbers will not easily forget the enormous quantity of snow on the Alps in the early summer of 1879. This was especially troublesome on the rocky ranges of Dauphiné, and as the weather was very variable, I resolved, after nearly three weeks' trial, to seek warmer climes, and, after saying good-bye to my friends, Mr. Gardiner and Messrs. Pilkington, on their departure for their magnificent expedition up the Meije, I crossed the Col de la Temple from La Bérarde to Vallouise on July 21, and next day drove to Guillestre at the entrance of the Combe du Queyras. I was accompanied as usual by Christian Almer and his son Christian, now, though but twenty-one years of age, a most promising young guide. As we were due in the Maritime Alps I could not spare much time for the Cottians, but they proved so attractive that we spent a week among them instead of three days as I had intended. At Guillestre we found comfortable quarters at the Hôtel Imbert, whither I had been directed by my friend Monsieur Paul Guillemin, and I spent the afternoon very pleasantly in the examination of a parcel of letters and papers from England. We started about 8 A.M. on the morning of the 23rd for the head of the Ubaye valley, with rather vague ideas as to how we were going, but wishing to examine the southern face of the Fond Salette. Passing through pretty woods on the banks of the Rioubel torrent, and by some fine earth pillars, we got to the lonely hamlet of Escreins in time for a frugal lunch of mouldy cheese and black bread procured at one of the houses. Wonderful to say, this village has escaped the notice of Mr. Ball! To the west lies the Protestant valley of Vars; to the north-east between Escreins and the valley of Ceillac is the little known range of Henvières (3,273 mètres). To the east, two valleys unite not far from the village. We had intended to cross a pass indicated by Joanne through the more northerly of the two, the Vallon des Salettes, but suffered ourselves to be over-persuaded by the natives, and actually passed through the more southerly or Vallon Laugier. We had a fine view of our peak, though the topo-

graphy was not yet quite clear, and also of the peak where my friend Monsieur Salvador de Quatrefages met with so severe an accident this last summer.* Our pass, which, as hitherto unnoticed, we named Col du Vallon Laugier, was very easy, but rather tedious. After descending a short way on the Ubaye side, we learned from a shepherd that the valley down which we were merrily proceeding would lead us to a point in the valley far below Maljasset. So we tried a 'traverse' to the left, which led us over very steep grass slopes, followed by rocky slopes, to the Pont Voûté in the main valley. A long and dreary walk along the Ubaye brought us to the territory of the commune of Maurin, which is considerably higher than the rest of the valley. We were glad enough to get to Martréi's little auberge at the upper end of the hamlet of Maljasset, and directly after retired to the double-bedded guest chamber, and slept the sleep of the just, after a day which had been unusually fatiguing and 'pénible,' though we had not encountered the slightest difficulties on the way.

Next morning, Thursday, the weather was glorious, and as after breakfast it was too late to start for any high peak, I resolved to go up a point seen from the inn, and called by the people Pointe de Mary (3,129 mètres = 10,266 feet),† in order to get a general view of the surrounding ranges. The ascent was perfectly straightforward throughout, and the view most magnificent, extending as far as the Zermatt peaks. It is just the sort of mountain to fill up an off day, the total time occupied by the ascent and descent being only 3½ hours. Our chief attention was naturally paid to the Font Sancte and the Aiguille de Chambeyron. A way was soon made out up the former, but the steep face of the latter above the Glacier de Marinet, though seamed by several couloirs, did not look promising, and it was resolved to postpone the ascent until we had seen more of the other side. A great feature in the view, from this as from all other points in the district, is the grand sight of the Monte Viso, which towers up most majestically, and is only a few miles distant. Throughout our whole journey of six weeks in the Cottians and Maritimes, it was always our great landmark, and we were bitterly disappointed when, having reserved it to the end of our trip, we reached it by the new route from the north, and found ourselves enveloped in mist. The great height to which it rises above all the neighbouring ranges con-

* 'Bulletin du C. A. F.,' 1880, p. 74.

† It is well seen in the background of the photograph marked F at the end of the album mentioned in the next note.

tributes much towards the profound impression which it leaves on the mind. We spent a long time on the Pointe de Mary (Mary is only another form of Maurin), and returned in the late afternoon to the village. Maljasset (1,910 mètres=6,267 feet) is the central of three hamlets, La Barge lying a little way lower down, and Combe Brémond a few minutes higher up the valley—each being visible from the other. They lie in a beautiful green valley of which the eastern slope is clothed with fine timber, and partly hollowed out into a marble quarry. From Maljasset itself none of the higher peaks are visible except the Rubren and the Panestrel (3,253 mètres), but a buttress of the Chambeyron called Tête de Miéjour, makes a grand show, as does also another point on the north slope of the valley. Between Maljasset and Combe Brémond stands the church with an inscription on the door recording its destruction by an avalanche on February 14, 1531. A niche in the churchyard wall marks the spot where the coffins of those who die during the winter are deposited until the return of spring makes it possible to dig a grave.* The commune being so distant from any other village has retained much of its individuality. By means of easy passes it communicates with Ceillac, Saint Vêran (the highest village in Europe, 6,592 feet), La Chianale and Castel Delfino in the Val Varaita, and the Val Maira. This superfluity of passes is due to the position of the valley, which is pushed up like a wedge parallel to the main watershed of the Alps, and not, as is usually the case, at right angles to it.

On Friday we went up the Font Saucte, this being the second ascent, but by a new route. The way taken lay by La Barge, the Vallon Claus, and the eastern arête. An English party in 1865 reached this arête from the north side,† but, for some reason not easy to understand were not able to gain the highest summit. The last bit was up a steep rock tower. As usual, during the week we were in this district the weather was perfect, and the view of great magnificence. The peak is at the meeting-point of three valleys, so that Escreins, La Barge, and Ceillac were all visible. The route from Escreins

* All these localities and the whole valley of the Ubaye are well illustrated by the photographic album, published by the Barcelonnette section of the French Alpine Club, and of which a copy has been kindly presented to the Club Library. There is in it an interesting series of photographs taken on the spot of a great avalanche which fell from the Miéjour, on May 29, 1879.

† 'Alpine Journal,' ii. 207.

taken by Signor Novarese in 1878, and MM. Salvador de Quatrefages and H. Nast in 1880, is even easier than that from the Vallon Claus. The Chambeyron was very fine and looked more unpromising than ever, and our curiosity was stimulated by the fact that we just could not see the south-western face, which we hoped might afford the means of reaching the top.

We could not believe that the fine weather would last, although the people assured us it would, and felt bound to do something on the Saturday. As we thought the Chambeyron would probably be a tough bit of work, we put it off till the Monday, and went up the Grand Rubren, which with its great pyramid on the top had been staring at us from the end of the valley ever since our arrival. We passed on the way the beautiful Lac de Paroird, the slopes above the south side of which were clothed with splendid larches, which came down to the water's edge, and mirrored themselves in the calm surface of the lake, while above, on either side, rise sheer and jagged rocky peaks. A number of quarries were passed from which marble is extracted. The marble quarries of Maurin are very fine and of many colours and varieties: they will be more 'exploités' when the railway passes through Barcelonnette. A mule might almost be taken to the top of the Rubren, and the distance was not as great as we had imagined (4·10 from Maljasset). The view resembled those from the Pointe de Mary and Font Sancte, but as the peak is very near the Viso, there being nothing between them but the deep cleft of the Val Varaita, that noble summit was even more wonderful than usual, and the sight rivals that which we saw a month later, from the Col della Bicocca. No one who visits Maljasset should on any account fail to visit the Rubren. If the Pointe de Mary is the Gornergrat, the Rubren is the Breithorn of the district. We also climbed a slightly higher peak (3,396 mètres = 11,142 feet) a short distance to the east, whence a fine view is gained down into the Val Varaita. Soon after our return to Maljasset that evening we heard the sound of chanting, and looking up saw, descending the steep zigzag path from the Col de Girardin, a procession in the most approved theatrical style. Headed by a priest in his vestments, who was attended by a man bearing a banner, it consisted of a large number of men and women, many with umbrellas, sticks, or baskets. It passed through the village, chanting as it went, and proceeded to the church, where a short service was held, after which it broke up. On inquiry we found that this was S. Anne's day, and that all these people had started from

Maljasset in the morning, carrying their provisions, and had crossed the Col de Girardin to the little chapel of S. Anne, near a lake of the same name (which we had seen the day before from the Font Sancte). Here they met the priest of Ceillac, who had come up with his flock, and a mass was then celebrated. In fact it was a sort of pilgrimage, and the whole thing was a most touching and interesting sight, showing how far we were from the modern world and its uneasy doubts. One woman, who was a cripple, had walked the whole way—some four or five hours.

We spent Sunday in delightful repose on a hillock behind the village, and on Monday, the 28th, started to attempt the giant of the district, which we were assured was still virgin—the Aiguille de Chambeyron. It lies entirely in French territory, though not far from the frontier. Having gained the Lacs de Marinet by the Col de Mary path, we decided, after careful examination, against two long and steep couloirs, which led up the north face to the east and west of the highest peak respectively. I recommend them to the attention of Mr. Mummery. We then executed a flank movement to gain the western face of the mountain, which was achieved by crossing two ridges and the head of a lateral valley between them. We kept, however, too close to the western ridge, and found ourselves finally at the eastern extremity of the highest ridge, with the true top standing up some way farther to the east. A descent to a snow slope and reascent to the head of the most westerly of the two couloirs mentioned above brought us to the base of the final peak, which was won in a few minutes more by a climb up steep rocks (6.35 walking from Maljasset). The top was not roomy, and bore no traces of any previous ascent. Of all the splendid views we had during that week, this was perhaps the most glorious. We had spent so much time in making out the way that it was nearly 1.30 P.M. when the top was gained. But there was not a cloud in the sky, and the whole of the Monte Rosa, Mont Blanc, Tarentaise, and Graian chains glittered in the clear sunshine of a bright July afternoon. Close at hand rose the mighty mass of the Viso, while to the south stretched the tangled chain of the Maritime Alps, which we hoped to explore in a few days. That view will always remain in my memory as one of the sunniest of all my 'Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands.' We spent an hour taking it all in, and then, varying our route slightly, regained Maljasset in 3.15. The ascent by this route should not take more than five hours walking, but it

is very circuitous. We had a good opportunity of examining the couloir which leads to the west of the highest peak. It is much longer than could be imagined from below, and very steep, especially in its upper portion. We could not decide whether it would be possible to force a way up the eastern ridge from the top of a couloir which would lead to the east of the highest peak, and is probably accessible from the Glacier de Marinet: the rocks of the ridge, however, seem very steep and precipitous. We stayed another day at Maljasset to make the first ascent of a curious three-pronged summit—the Pointe Haute de Mary (3,212 mètres = 10,539 feet)—just opposite the Chambeyron. It was composed of a very crumbling and treacherous rock, and we had considerable difficulty in reaching a snow-field on the north-western face, whence the highest of the three teeth was easily gained. It proved a most unstable perch, quite incapable of supporting a large cairn, so two small ones were built and nine feet of club rope abandoned as a witness of our ascent.

When the time came for leaving Maljasset next day, I was sincerely sorry to be obliged to go, as I had spent a most pleasant week there,* and was pleased with the civility of Martréi, being as yet unaware of his treachery. He can only offer rough quarters and food, but I found it quite possible to exist there, and hope that some of my brother clubmen may be tempted to see this delightful spot for themselves.

Retracing our steps for some way, we descended to the delicious green oasis of La Blachière, situated in a very desolate part of the valley, here but a narrow gorge. Below we passed through several hamlets, and thus gained the Châtelet or Castellet, a great rocky barrier closing in the valley, on which there are remains of fortifications erected doubtless in the 16th and 17th centuries, when this valley was hotly disputed by France and Savoy. To the left the Ubaye roars in the chasm nearly 300 feet deep and but a few feet wide, which was being bridged at the time of our passage. Descending to the village of Grande Scénne, we began to catch glimpses, through the wooded valley of Fouillouze to our right, of the Brec de Chambeyron, a peak stated by Joanne to be inaccessible, but on which, from the Aiguille of the same name, we had seen two stone men of unknown origin.

* In the landlord's book, in which are inscribed the names of all who pass that way (mostly Italian workmen), the only traveller's name was that of the Count Paul de Saint-Robert, well known for his explorations in the Maritime Alps.

A tiresome road led finally in half an hour or so to the village of S. Paul, prettily situated in a well-cultivated hollow, from which a path runs by the Col de Vars and the Protestant hamlet of Vars to Guillestre. We entered the village, and were soon comfortably installed in the Hôtel Hellion, looking forward to an enjoyably idle afternoon, and quite unconscious of the doom which was hanging over us.

The first intimation that anything was wrong came while we were consuming a *déjeuner*, which was luxurious compared with the fare at Maljasset. Two gendarmes in full costume looked in at us through the glass door, and then disappeared. Returning presently with a comrade, they entered the room, and through the mouth of the 'brigadier' or chief informed us that they had come to take us before the *juge de paix*. This was rather startling, but as we had quiet consciences, I replied that we would come after finishing our repast. They assented, but remained on guard at the door, evidently fearing that now they had given the alarm we should lose no time in escaping. After quietly finishing our *déjeuner*, we announced that we were ready to start, I being provided with my passport, and the two Almers each with their *Heimatschein*; Almer père grimly recalling a somewhat similar adventure with Mr. Tuckett in the Suldenthal, in 1866.* The 'brigadier' asked if we had any *plantes*, and I was able truthfully to reply in the negative, but when he inquired after *desplans* I confess I was thoroughly puzzled. Fortunately, the distance to the residence of the *juge* was not great, as it was not agreeable to march through the village street under close guard. But, as will be seen later on, we had our revenge. After groping through a stable and other back premises we were at last ushered into the presence of the worthy Justice Shallow, a very typical specimen of his class. Having approved of the documents presented by the two guides, although he later allowed that he did not understand German, he perused my passport, held wrong side up, and was much edified by the American eagle. Discovering a French *visa* on it, he began to demonstrate to me that the passport was invalid, being more than two years old. Now this fact was quite true, but, as I was getting provoked by his long cross-examination, and thought it best to make a firm stand, I held out for its validity. This, however, he could not allow, and, being much given to unnecessary talk, inflicted a long lecture on me as to the advisability of going about provided with proper papers, to which the only answer I could

* 'A. J.' ii. 341.

make was that we had no intention of crossing the frontier, and that my letters, etc., were quite sufficient to prove my identity. The old man prattled on at great length, not being satisfied with my account of the reasons which had brought us to his valley. At length he determined to put a crucial question, and, remarking that M. Hérold, the Préfet de la Seine, and an old schoolfellow, had just been paying him a visit, and that he had that morning received a letter from the President of the French Alpine Club, inquired of me the name of the latter gentleman, adding that as I claimed to be a member of the club, I of course knew the name of my President. I must explain that this was meant as a catch. M. Joanne had lately, to the regret of all *Alpinistes*, resigned this office, and the election of his successor had taken place a short time only before my departure from England. Fortunately, however, partly from having stopped at Lyons and Grenoble on my way to renew the acquaintance of some, and to make that of others, of my French colleagues, partly from the fact that I had had the pleasure of meeting him at the Fête du Lautaret in August 1878, the name of Monsieur Xavier Blanc, Sénateur for the department of the Hautes-Alpes, recurred to me, and this lucky recollection served at once to allay all the *juge's* suspicions. He became as friendly as he had before been surly, showed us all his curiosities, returned with us to the inn, and examined all our *impedimenta* with great interest. This revealed the extraordinary fact that neither the good man nor the 'brigadier' were aware of the *existence* even of the great French ordnance map, and eagerly took down an address in Paris where I assured them the sheets could be procured without any hindrance on the part of the Dépôt de la Guerre. It then appeared that the 'brigadier's' question as to 'plans' had reference to map-making, and as we were all now the best of friends, they soon confessed that our landlord at Maljasset had sent down word of our long stay there and mysterious proceedings, and suspecting we were *des espions prussiens* (!!!) come to survey the country for future annexation, had asked for the aid of the gendarmes, who were on the point of starting to capture us, when we appeared, and saved them the long tramp up the valley. I could not at first believe in this astonishing instance of peasant suspicion, but it is quite genuine and characteristic. We later came across traces of the same feeling in the French valleys of the Maritime Alps. 'All's well that ends well,' and I was well pleased to get out of a position which threatened at one time to become awkward. But I must now tell how we

had our revenge. Our axes, ropes, etc., excited the liveliest curiosity in the mind of the little *juge*, and even the stately 'brigadier' condescended to unbend a little. They expressed a desire to see how the rope was used, and on my explaining this desire to Almer, he volunteered to show them all the secrets of the trade, with, as I remarked, rather excessive eagerness and a twinkle in his eye. He proceeded to fasten the rope round the *juge*, the 'brigadier,' and a fat *commis voyageur* who happened to be present, placing himself and his son between the Frenchmen. He gravely distributed ice axes, wine barrels, and knapsacks till the whole party was got up in thorough Alpine trim. He then led the procession out into the yard in front of the inn, and, before one knew what he was about, he had marched out into the street. The official part of his train drew the line here, and vehemently resisted, but he would not be gainsaid, and dragged the unwilling victims nearly the whole length of the village. The news soon spread, and the inhabitants proceeded to see the strange sight, the excessive drollness of the whole proceeding entirely overcoming their fear of the two great officials. The village resounded with shrieks of laughter, and the inmates of the inn yard were among the merriest. When the party returned, I tried to apologise, as far as my mirth would allow, for this dreadful insult. By this time the victims themselves saw the comic side of the matter, and, though slightly ruffled and conscious of having been overmatched by the *espions prusses*, condescended to accept my excuses. It will be a long time before I forget that most laughable scene; and I have no doubt the *juge* and 'brigadier' will often be reminded of it. At Barcelonnette, two days later, we found the people there in fits over our revenge, and quite at the end of our tour our landlord welcomed us back to Guillestre with the words, 'Oh, yes; I have heard of your tying up the *juge*!'

Not to interrupt the course of my story, I omitted to say that while we were at the *juge*'s, two men came in who we were informed were the first conquerors of the Brec de Chambeyron, which we hoped to ascend next day, and who had been summoned to send their names to Monsieur Xavier Blanc.* They declared it was foolish for us to attempt the ascent, but I was determined not to take one of them with us, as Almer had seen from the Aiguille de Chambeyron a practicable way

* The Barcelonnette section had offered a reward to the native who first reached the summit, and also to the one who led the first tourist to the summit. I hope that our success did not prejudice the latter.

up. They would not, however, give us any inkling of their route. The taunts of local men serve of course but to inflame the zeal of the true mountaineer; and, as has always happened to me when attempting an ascent against the advice of the local men, we succeeded perfectly in our undertaking, next day, July 31. Retracing our steps to Grande Sérenne, we mounted through the pretty valley of Fouillouze to the village of the same name just under the Brec. As it is very steep on this side, we made a long and very rough ascent to reach some lakes at its northern foot. Carefully scanning the crags as we advanced, we finally reached the Col de la Gippiera (= chalk quarry) on the frontier. We had been joined on the way by two men who, partly out of curiosity to see whether we would really get up, and partly from a desire to learn the way so as to break down the monopoly of their fellow-villagers, came with us as far as the Col. The ascent of the final peak proved quite easy, and was effected by the eastern or Italian face by means of snow gullies and loose rocks. After climbing as far as a great stone which blocked up a narrow gully, we climbed up both and thus gained the summit—a great plateau sloping towards Fouillouze, and of which the Italian lip is slightly the highest (3,388 mètres=11,116 feet). Though the way is easy, it is very rough and roundabout, so that 6 hours 25 minutes walking were spent in climbing the 1,915 mètres (= 6,283 feet) from S. Paul. We hoisted a great red flag on our arrival, and it was soon seen from the S. Paul inn, from which just the tip of the peak is visible. The view was cloudy, but the Aiguille de Chambeyron was very grand, and we felt very proud of our conquest. We returned to S. Paul by the same route in 4 hours 20 minutes, learning at Fouillouze, from the wife of one of the heroes of the first ascent, that they had struck to the right when at the base of the great boulder, across difficult rocks, and certainly we can bear witness to these rocks being steep. We were received in triumph at S. Paul, the daughter of the hostess being highly delighted at having seen us on the summit, and the old *juge* being most excited.

We left S. Paul next afternoon (August 1) by the local diligence, and passing over the remarkable road constructed through the fine 'gorge de la Reissole,' and under the magnificent rock-hewn fortress of Tournoux* (near which a village church shelters the remains of the last Duke of Guise of the old

* See the photographs numbered 32 and 33 in the Album mentioned previously.

line, who committed suicide here in 1747), joined the high road coming from Larche and the Col de l'Argentière. After a rapid descent down the zigzags of the Pas de Grégoire the valley broadened out. The road passes by Jausiers, the scene of a terrible Vaudois persecution in the 14th century, and in a few miles reaches the little town of Barcelonnette, founded in 1231 by Raymond Bérenger, fourth count of Provence, and named the 'Little Barcelona,' in remembrance of his hereditary connection with that county. The whole drive from S. Paul in the late afternoon had been most agreeable, and we began to feel, as we gazed at the distant hills to the south, that we were on the threshold of the main object of our journey—the Maritime Alps.

We found unexpectedly good quarters at the Hôtel du Nord (*chez Martel*), on the *place*. Monsieur Arnaud, the secretary of the Barcelonnette section of the French Alpine Club, soon found us out, and with the other members entertained us at a most sumptuous banquet. He was very kind to me in many ways, and gave me (though a perfect stranger with my *qualité* as a member of the C. A. F. as my sole introduction) a certificate signed by himself, and bearing his stamp as notary, and another of the 'Tribunal de 1^{re} instance,' which he kindly procured for me, to the effect that I was travelling in the Alps 'comme simple touriste, n'ayant d'autre but que de gravir et de faire connaître les montagnes au point de vue artistique.' Armed with this document, I defied many a gendarme in the Maritime Alps, and always found it more powerful than my passport. I take this opportunity of thanking Monsieur Arnaud for his courtesy, and can assure my readers that they may rely on his good offices should they ever find themselves in Barcelonnette. Yielding to his entreaties we remained in the town two days in order to see the *fête patronale*, a very pretty and thoroughly French sight, which lasted a day and a half. Religious processions, races, music, sports, fireworks, illuminations succeeded each other with bewildering rapidity. It may be worth while to describe one amusement, which I dare say may still survive in England. From a rope stretched across the *place* were hung four large earthenware jars, containing respectively water, flour, a rat, and a fowl (whence the game is called the *jeu de la poule*). The boys of the villages, armed with a long stick and blindfolded, tried in turn to break the jar containing the fowl; and their erratic movements were often very amusing. This time three jars were broken before a small boy, amid the *vivas* of the crowd, succeeded in smashing the jar with the fowl, which became his possession. A local band became much excited in the evening, and played the Marseillaise con-

tinuously until 5 A.M., as I can bear witness. Monsie Arnaud told me that at other times the little town is very du but I shall always recollect it crowded with country peop dressed in their best, all bent on enjoying their annual ho day. We left Barcelonnette on the morning of August 4, t the way to Allos, thus beginning our wanderings in the Ma time Alps, of which I hope to speak in another paper. W carried away most pleasant recollections of our week in t Ubaye valley, and I venture to hope that some of my reade may be tempted by my description to give up for one summe the beaten round and seek 'fresh woods and pastures new in the fine mountain group which culminates in the twin peak of the Aiguille and Brec de Chambeyron.

THREE NEW ASCENTS WITHOUT GUIDES IN SOUTHERN DAUPHINÉ. By FREDERICK GARDINER. Read before the Alpine Club, June 1, 1880.

TWO of the three peaks, the first ascents of which it is the purpose of this paper to describe, are situated at the head of the Val Godemar, which lies on the southern side of the main group of Dauphiné. This valley runs from east to west, roughly speaking, and the peaks may also be said to lie at the head of the Val des Bans, running from west to east, and ending at the well-known village of Ville Vallouise. The higher of them, the Pic Bonvoisin, 11,503 feet, is well seen from Ville Vallouise, and is the most imposing mountain viewed from that place. The other is the Pic Jocelme, 11,277 feet, which is very conspicuous from La Chapelle en Godemar, where it is incorrectly known as the Pic Bonvoisin; at Le Clot, a small hamlet at its foot, it is called by its proper name Jocelme, and the true Bonvoisin of Vallouise by its proper name. The Jocelme as seen from La Chapelle completely blocks out the view of the Bonvoisin, and the name Jocelme is there given to a minor peak (first ascended by the Pilkingtons and myself in 1878 *) between the Opillous and Les Bans, which only makes 'confusion worse confounded.' In Bourcet's old map of Dauphiné, which is remarkable for the manner in which he has taken most of the physical features of the country either upon hearsay or from the efforts of his own imagination, but which is curious with regard to the old nomenclature of the district, I find that to the north of the Col du Sellar the

* 'A. J.' ix. 90, 226.