

IN LOFOTEN AND VESTERAALEN.

BY T. G. OUSTON.

GIVEN a holiday with a maximum length of four weeks, where may virgin peaks be reached and climbed? Such was the problem which exercised the minds of Mr. H. S. Mundahl and the writer for several months prior to August 1902. Iceland and Corsica were discussed and discarded for various reasons, Spitsbergen and the Caucasus required more time, our old friend Norway again seemed to draw us.

Unclimbed peaks on the Norwegian mainland are becoming as rare as the elk, and even Mr. Slingsby's wide knowledge of the country, kindly placed at our disposal, could only suggest Søndmøre as an alternative to the choice we only definitely made on approaching Aalesund.

This choice was largely influenced by the kind information given to my companion by Mr. Howard Priestman.

Climbing friends with one consent had made excuses when invited to honour us with their company and share our camp; even an old tried friend and companion for years in mountaineering expeditions gave the unanswerable, ancient, and Scriptural one, that he was 'marrying a wife.'

Hence it was that a small party of two, with a large amount of impedimenta, found themselves deposited on the quay at Svølvær on August 7 by the s.s. 'Capella' at 6.30 P.M.

Our introduction to Lofoten on this gorgeous summer evening was like an exquisite peep into fairyland. However, for a general description of the physical and scenic characteristics of the locality we would refer an interested reader to the accurate and graphic articles by Mr. Howard Priestman and Dr. J. Norman Collie in the May 1898 and 1901 issues of this Journal respectively. We hope this supplemental article may prove as useful in pointing out to future climbers in this neighbourhood where, or where not, to go, as the above-mentioned articles were to us.

As the local s.s. 'Hadsel' was starting at 8 P.M. for a tour to the S.W. extremity of the islands, we re-embarked at once on her, anxious to gain a general idea of islands amongst which the steamer threads its way to places of call. Introduced by our ice-axes, we were immediately in conversation with the mate, Mr. H. Bendicksen. He had been inoculated at the sea-level with mountain fever by our predecessors, and had such a severe relapse that on a

following hot Sunday afternoon he conducted a party of three, including a lady friend, up a 2,000-' footer ' between Svolvear and Kabelvaag!

A snapshot taken at 10.15 p.m. on this occasion gave a somewhat under-exposed negative, demonstrating, however, the large amount of light present at this hour, even in August.

Passing Kabelvaag, a busy fishing centre during the cod harvest of April, we reached Sund in Flakstadö at 9.30 a.m. Mists up to now spoilt our only chance of obtaining the view of the summits of Flakstad and Moskenes at fairly close quarters, which we had hoped for, but by 11 a.m. we had a good view, some miles distant, of the rugged S. and E. faces of Stjernihodet, 3,123 ft., the highest summit on Flakstad from the Napström and the sea.

A surveyor's 'vaade' (cairn) is on its second summit; whether the highest has been climbed we do not know. The peak looked worthy our attention; it was indeed on our programme, but the opportunity for its ascent never came. N.E., on W. Vaagö, we also had our first view of the pretty triple-pointed Himmeltind, our immediate destination.

The sharp and shapely Skottind, 2,250 ft., conspicuous from all points of the compass on the S.W. extremity of W. Vaagö, next claimed our admiration, and we should forthwith have disembarked at Balstad for an immediate attack had we not been assured by a native on putting into the harbour that it had been climbed. Landing at Leknes in a rowing-boat we obtained a stolkjarre and proceeded to Rise. W. Vaagö is, roughly, the size and shape of the Isle of Man, except that, like most islands in this country, its coast line is much indented by fjords.

A broad valley running N.E. to S.W. is flanked on each side by mountain ranges, the opposite slopes running down to the sea. This valley was marshy in places, with much peat and many peat stacks. To the W. rose the Himmeltind group, but the mountains to the E. of us were uninteresting from a climbing point of view. The island has a population of 9,000 souls, a large one for Lofoten.

The natives here, as elsewhere, were hard to persuade that we were not hunting for minerals, our ice-axes being taken for geological hammers. On arriving at Rise we pitched our tent outside the hamlet, having the slopes of the Reptind and Ristind to the W., separated by them from the Himmeltind. In the evening we climbed W. to a col 950 ft. on

the arête, running N. from the former to the latter peak, returning to the camp at midnight.

On August 9, starting at 11 A.M., we struck the S. arête of the Ristind at 1,200 ft.; following this due N. for about 1,500 ft. we reached the summit in a N.E. direction at 3.30 P.M., where we found a surveyor's cairn. The Ristind has often been ascended, its chief interest being its northern precipice, looking over which from the summit the valley at nearly sea-level appears almost vertically below, giving an impression of height foolishly out of keeping with the record of our aneroid, confirmed by the 'topographisk kart,' of 2,890 ft.

The next morning we left at 11 A.M. for the Himmeltind, 3,217 ft., the highest mountain in W. Vaagö, crossed our col of the first evening, and descended S.W. to the head of the Mörkdalsvand, that is nearly to sea-level. The descent was steep, through the densest and largest masses of male fern we have ever seen, many of the ferns being 7 ft. long. This little valley is hemmed in on all sides except the S. by precipitous mountain walls nearly 3,000 ft. high, and did not appear to possess one square yard of level ground.

After a dip in the lake we toiled up a similar slope to the one we had descended; going W. towards a prominent waterfall on the E. slope of the Himmeltind, we then followed the true left bank of the gully down which the stream came for a time, and after tiring wanderings on the face in a more northerly direction (the rocks rapidly increasing in difficulty) we redescended 600 ft. to the foot of a snow gully which fed our waterfall stream; after kicking steps up the steep snow for 500 ft., we again took to rocks of moderate severity on the N. side, which led to the summit ridge. We followed this ridge, which ran N. and led to a lower summit, on which was a well-built surveyor's cairn; descending to and crossing a pretty little snow arête, at 8 P.M. we touched the highest point, which, however, was too sharp to sit on. There was no sign of any previous visit, and whether ours was the first or not we cannot say. A small cairn was built and visiting cards deposited in a tobacco tin. It was now evident that the W. and S.W. sides of the mountain offered a very easy ascent, if that were desired, and that a start from Rise entailed at least double the expenditure of energy.

The view was superb. Immediately beneath us to the N. the mountain fell nearly vertically away to the beginning of a long, sharp, saw-like arête, connecting our mountain with the Ristind; the traverse of this arête would necessitate rock work of the highest order. 600 ft. beneath us on the same

precipice was a beautiful little frozen lake of green colour, in an inaccessible-looking position, where legend says a silver bowl awaits the daring climber who first reaches it.

Comparatively close to the E. Vaage Kallen dwarfed its neighbours. Somewhat more distant Mösadlen and the Raftsund and Langö groups displayed a bewildering number of peaks of every shape and form. Beyond these again stretched the mainland. The Svartisen snow-fields and snow-capped summits of Sulitelma, conspicuous among many others, reflected the rosy tints of the sunset, and gave us a panorama 200 miles in extent. To the S. the islands of Flakstad and Moskenes showed a dense cluster of purple-tinted, rocky spires, piercing a low-lying strata of fleecy clouds, whilst to the W., almost at our feet, lay the Arctic Ocean.

Leaving the summit at 9 P.M., we made for the top of the snow gully; the snow was frozen, and, for the only occasion during our trip, an axe was put to its legitimate use. One may say here that we found no true glaciers on either W. Vaagö or later on Langö, unless some small ones were present near the frozen lake mentioned above. Forced on to the rocks by embryo bergschrunds, three somewhat awkward traverses delayed us, partly atoned for later, however, by a snow glissade for 500 ft., and at 12.45 A.M. we found ourselves at the margin of the lake.

It will be understood that during the whole of the so-called night there was at least as much light as on a fine midsummer evening at 9 P.M. in our own latitude. The Himmeltind had justified its name, no less as a nightless peak than in the beauty of its scenery. For the third time on this expedition we forced our way up through 1,000 ft. of dense fern, and at 3.15 A.M. reached our tent, on which the sun was once more shining brightly. At 8 A.M. a sound sleep was broken by a plaintive wail of 'Dok-tor, dok-tor,' at the door of the tent. Unfortunately—or fortunately—there is no medical man on W. Vaagö.

On the 12th, driving twelve miles to Bucknæs, we caught the steamer at midnight, arriving in Svolvær at 7 A.M.

W. Vaagö is, perhaps, on the whole of less interest to the mountaineer than its neighbours E. Vaagö, and, from what we saw, Moskenes and Flakstad, although a peak, Skolmen, N.W. from the Himmeltind, and the arête mentioned in the summit view, looked worthy a visit for their own sakes alone.

We were being repeatedly asked if we had climbed Vaage

Kallen. The following legend is told of the mountain in the guide-book referred to later on:—

‘The intention to build a church at Vaagen displeased the gnomes, who were of opinion that the church bells would disturb their usual rest, so Vaagakallen and his better half tried to prevent its being carried into effect. With this intention they took a boat one night, and put across to Naussthalsen, in the immediate vicinity of the church. The builder, who was a religious man, had in the meantime in some way or other conceived suspicion that such a conspiracy might be plotted against the church, on which no cross had yet been raised, so he hewed a cross on a block of stone; this stopped the old gnome in his hurry from passing, who in a temper hit the stone on the side opposite the cross, leaving marks of four fingers, which are still to be seen. The old gnome had probably neither almanac nor watch to lead him, as, whilst his mate was getting the boat ready on the beach, just below the hill Kallen, where they had put in, and he had just climbed to the top of the mountain, the sun rose and surprised them, and there she now lies, a huge rock on the beach, whilst he is to be seen sitting on the summit, holding his petrified oars across his knees.’ Ignoring this legendary ascent, Eckroll, a local climber, had made the first and only ascent some years before, to the wonder of the neighbourhood. In self-defence the mountain had to be climbed by us, nor were we loth to try, as it is a nobly shaped peak of formidable appearance. Strip the Dent Blanche of its ice, double the number of its arêtes, making them more jagged, cut off the upper 3,000 ft., plant it by the seashore, and a fair idea will be obtained of Vaage Kallen.

On the 13th we left Svolveær in a rowing-boat at 1.30 P.M. Passing the 3,000 ft. of sheer-looking E. face which Vaage Kallen presents to the sea, we landed just S. of this face at 3.15 P.M., and struck up W., making for the col between Kallen and a southern neighbour. When within about 300 ft. of the S. arête, we took to the most northerly of three gullies facing us, and, by easy chimney work and step-kicking up 150 ft. of steep snow, reached the junction of the S. arête with the smooth and nearly vertical S. wall of the mountain, 2,550 ft., at 5.25 P.M. Further progress in this direction appeared almost impossible. Retracing our steps for a little, we traversed along the S.E. face, and following the way of least resistance, which led N., easy ledges brought us to no petrified giant, but to the remains of Eckroll’s cairn, on the roomy summit, at 7.55 P.M. If 3,070 ft. of mountain take

only 4 hrs. 40 min. to climb, the going cannot be difficult. From the summit, however, the peak appeared extremely difficult by any truly alternative route to the one we were lucky in finding. Repairing the cairn, we studied the excessively jagged and sharp arêtes, about eight in number, which, starting from the main mass in varying distances below the summit, and intersecting, radiate in all directions except easterly, like the tentacles of a monster octopus. Mundahl opines, and the writer agrees, that this one mountain would give more rock work of a high order than all the English and Welsh mountains put together. Descending rapidly, 10.15 P.M. found us astonishing our boatman by a most welcome plunge into the sea, and a delightful row, enhanced by gorgeous sunset effects, landed us in Svolvær before 1 A.M.

The whole district has been recently surveyed, but only the maps of W. Vaagö and the islands S.W. of it are as yet published. Other maps were most meagre in their information. My friend fortunately speaks Norwegian fluently, otherwise a native interpreter would have been a necessity.

Wishing to obtain some general notion of the Vesteraalen group of islands—*i.e.*, Hindö, Langö, and their neighbours—as we were without any but the most scanty topographical information, we left on the evening of the 14th in the s.s. 'Hadsel,' and went up the Raftsund with the intention of ascending Mösadlen, partly because it is the loftiest summit in either group, and partly because, from its height and situation, it was likely to afford the widest view of the mountains of the above-mentioned islands.

Herr R. With, the managing director of the Vesteraalen S.S. Company, was on board, and to his kindness we are much indebted, not only for introducing us to Ræka, the most sporting mountain of our trip, but also for altering the course of the steamer down the famous Troldfjord, on learning that we had not seen it. At a later period he sent us, amongst other papers, 'Norway above the Arctic Circle,' the tourist guide-book of his Company, a valuable and interesting help to the tourist in this locality, whether mountaineer or no. So, discarding the oft-climbed Mösadlen, we decided to try conclusions with the reputedly unclimbable Ræka.

Landing at 2 A.M. at Sortland in Langö, we obtained a few hours' sleep at a little café, then we drove 15 miles to Froske-land, on the N.E. shore, near the head of the Eidsfjord, foolishly leaving our tent and other impedimenta behind, and taking only food for one day.

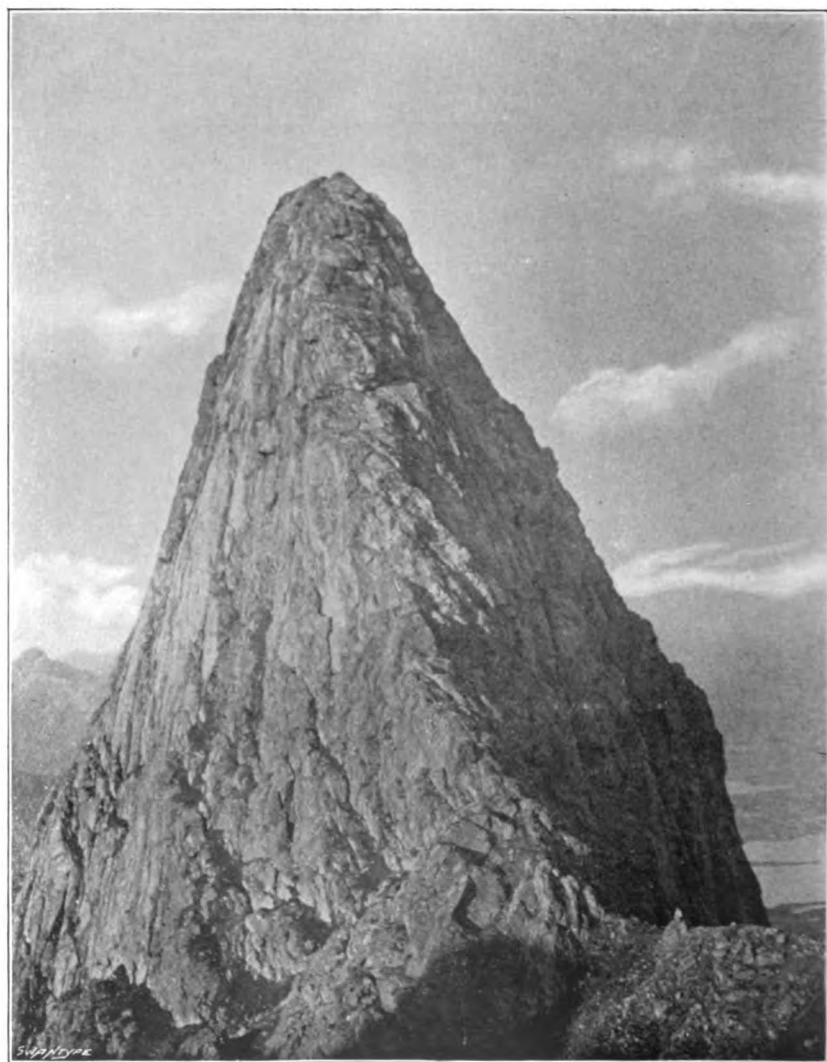


Photo by T. G. Ouston.

[Swan Electric Engraving Co.

RØKA FROM S.W. LANGO VESTERAALEN.

The following description of the parts we were now in is given by the 'Vesteraalen S.S. Guide Book':—

'The surroundings of the Eidsfjord are very majestic . . . to the westward is the stupendous Ræka, which, seen from the mainland, looks like a colossal monument boldly struck off by the hand of a master. The shape of this mountain is something between a pyramid and an obelisk. Its outlines are so regular, and its sides so smooth and even, that one is almost led to suppose that in this instance nature has been assisted by art. As may be imagined, the peculiar shape of this mountain has given it a place in tradition.

'In olden times there was no Eidsvaag, but only mountain; then the giant who held sway in these mountains thought it would be more convenient if, when he wished to row out to the fishing ground, he might take his way right across the island to Skjærfjord in Oxnæs. Well, he set to work, and they were not small tools he used. Ræka, standing there, was the handle of the spade, with which he dug out Eidsfjord. The work of the giant had progressed so far that only the narrow isthmus now separating Skjærfjord from Eidsfjord remained, when the handle of Ræka (the spade) broke. Then in a rage he put it down where it now stands, forming the island of Ræko; but the blade he flung up the side of the mountain, where it now lies.'

Forty-five minutes' row across the head of the fjord landed us at the foot of the N.E. side of Ræka about 2 p.m. As this face looked impossible, we struck up the ravine to the S.W.; though we carefully scanned this side of the mountain only one gully offered any hope of access to the top, and that a forlorn one. About 4.30 p.m. we reached a col, 1,550 ft., at the foot of the S.W. arête. This col and the arête running up from it are shown in the illustration: the latter looked bad enough: the remaining N.W. face, therefore, must be the 'soft' side. A reconnoitre soon undeceived us.

In order not to fall into error by giving the angles of the slopes, one would just say that this S.W. arête was of practically the same angle as the profiles of the right and left slopes shown in the illustration, but, if anything, promised better holds than the smooth, hopeless-looking slabs of the three other sides of the mountain.

Starting up two chimneys to its W., we reached the arête proper 100 ft. above the col. The rocks were splendid gabbro, sound and rough, and, though small, the holes were for some time satisfactory. A point 400 ft. above the col, and

200 ft. below the summit, however, found my friend spread-eagled on a slab with dangerously small holds, and myself, 12 ft. lower, balanced on a tiny ledge, looking for rope-anchorage which was not there. Another 12 ft. higher was the overhanging mass of rock to be seen in the illustration, flanked on either side by unturnable slabs. The situation was not one in which to remain longer than necessary, and a rapid consultation ended in the mutual agreement to 'live and climb another day.'

Descending to the col, we skirted the N.W. face, thus completing the tour of the peak. Reaching the foot of the N. precipice, we became separated, and the writer, entangled in a maze of enormous boulders, lost much time before, extricating himself, he was able to join his somewhat anxious companion in the boat at 11.30 p.m. Rowing across the fjord, a 6 miles forced march to Gjennestad only enabled us to hear the steamer's derisive blare as it put out from that place of call. But 2 a.m. found us most hospitably received by the Landhandler Johansen, who, however, took it as a matter of course that Ræka was still unclimbed!

So far our nine days' stay in the district had been one of almost cloudless sunshine, but we rose next morning to one of soaking rain. Telephoning for our baggage, and returning to the Eidsfjord, we rowed along the W. bank until a suitable level and sheltered spot, by the side of a trout stream, presented itself; here we pitched our camp in heavy rain.

Rynning, the young farmer who owned our boat, rowed over to visit us with some friends the following day, and in their company we again reconnoitred the N.W. face of Ræka, and fixed on a 'great central gully' for our next line of attack. The following day found us at 1 p.m. below this gully, separated from its foot by about 100 ft. of slabs; for 5 hrs. we tried, but failed, to force a way over or round these slabs, though we actually got within some 10 ft. of the gully base. Forced S.W. along the face, after awkward traversing, we struck a narrow and, higher up, ill-defined gully, with an oblique and northerly bias, at about 1,700 ft. Rapidly climbing its pitches, some six in number, none of them difficult, we found ourselves at 8 p.m. on the summit ridge, which is about 100 yards long. On its highest N.E. point—2,070 ft. (aneroid)—we built a 5-ft. cairn, which we viewed with satisfaction from the Eidsfjord the following day. To the W. was a fine array of inviting-looking and unclimbed aiguilles, including Lille Ræka in the foreground, and away

to the N., amongst others, the sharp and locally famous Klotind was identified. Further investigations were peremptorily stopped, and our descent rendered urgent, by a storm breaking on us and obscuring the light, at 8.30 p.m. The days had been rapidly shortening since our Himmeltind excursion, and before we had descended 100 ft. holds had to be felt rather than looked for, and our little cairns, as we thought cunningly placed in turns at our ascent, were difficult to identify. To add to our difficulties, the rocks were streaming with water, and in places covered with thick moss, which peeled off in large masses at the slightest touch; even a slight slither on rocks set at such an angle was not to be thought of, and was avoided by using every available hitch for the rope, the second man on two occasions coming down on a spare one doubled. On one 'firma loca' the advisability of waiting for light was mooted, but a steady stream of water on the leader's head soon set him groping for footholds again. We found ourselves off the difficult part soon after midnight, and three-quarters of an hour later we reached our food-filled rucksac, left carefully deposited under a boulder. A small quantity of chocolate and raisins was all we had had to eat during 15 hours' hard work, so, although soaked to the skin, we sat perfectly happy in the heavy rain and emptied that rucksac. Our trials were not yet ended, for on reaching our camp, at 2 a.m., we found the goats had upset the tent—fortunately they had been gallant enough not to rend a fallen enemy, and the contents were dry. The following morning we caught, cooked, and ate some trout. On rowing to Storvik in the afternoon we were met by the smiling face of Rynning, who, watching the mountain the whole of the previous day, had seen us on the summit. Rynning had never been within several hundred miles of a railway, and, whilst treating us to chocolate and cake, questioned my friend on many points in connection with the (to him) outside world—from locomotives to the Boer war. Leaving Storvik at 10.30 p.m., in two ramshackle stolkjaers, we arrived at Sortland at 2 a.m., and, pitching our tent in a meadow, were soon asleep.

The morning of the 21st we spent in inspecting the studio of the late Gunnar Berg, a native of Svolvær, whose death at an early age robbed Norway of a bold depicter of her mountain scenery. We purchased some specimens of his work.

The inhabitants keep his memory green by a visit every day in the year to his grave on a small rocky island off the harbour.

On the same afternoon we made a short and unsuccessful attempt to scale the Svolveær Kjærringa (Old Women), a rock needle about 200 ft. high, grotesquely bifid at the top, giving the appearance of two human figures. This rock stands out a prominent object on the mountain bounding Svolveær harbour on the N. The same evening we started in the s.s. 'Röst' for the Ostnæs Fjord, but hopeless weather and loss of our cooking apparatus drove us back by a rowing-boat to Svolveær in the early hours of the following morning. On the morning of the 23rd a three hours' row in clearing weather landed us at the extremity of the above fjord, beyond Austapollen, where we pitched our tent at the foot of Gjeitgaljar, on whose summit the cairn erected by our predecessors of the year before could be clearly seen. A scramble the same evening to a point 2,650 ft. on an arête on the Langstrandtinder gave us an idea of the topography of the neighbouring peaks, as we scanned with especial interest the Rulten group, though unable to identify at that time the particular summit which had turned back such strong parties in 1897 and 1901. The hopeless-looking slabs of the faces and the deeply cleft arêtes of this group offered sufficient explanation for these reverses. The following morning, with an idea of more closely examining Rulten, we scrambled along the side of the fjord to Langstrand, passing *en route* the ashes, not, one is glad to say, of Dr. Collie's party, but of their camp fire; a one-sided discussion ensued as to the relative merits of wood and methylated spirit for camp cooking, we having exclusively used the latter to our satisfaction. Arrived at Langstrand, a young native offered to demonstrate Rulten, so the interpreter of our dual party rowed with him to investigate round the promontory S. of this place, and the writer returned to fetch the camping paraphernalia. The interpreter returned with a long face, reporting that an attack on Rulten, with only one remaining day, would be futile. To the N. peeping over an intervening range were some rock peaks of fine appearance flanking the W. side of the Higraf-fjord; these we were assured had not been ascended, so at 2.30 A.M. the next day we rowed to Liland, and at 3.15 A.M. reached a road which traverses the neck of land, only two miles broad, separating the head of the Ostnæs from that of the Higraf-fjord, which nearly cuts W. Vaagö into two. On reaching the head of the latter fjord we struck up the slope due W., just N. of a fine conical rock about 1,300 ft. high, which shows up strikingly from every point. At 650 ft. we were looking down the opposite slope;

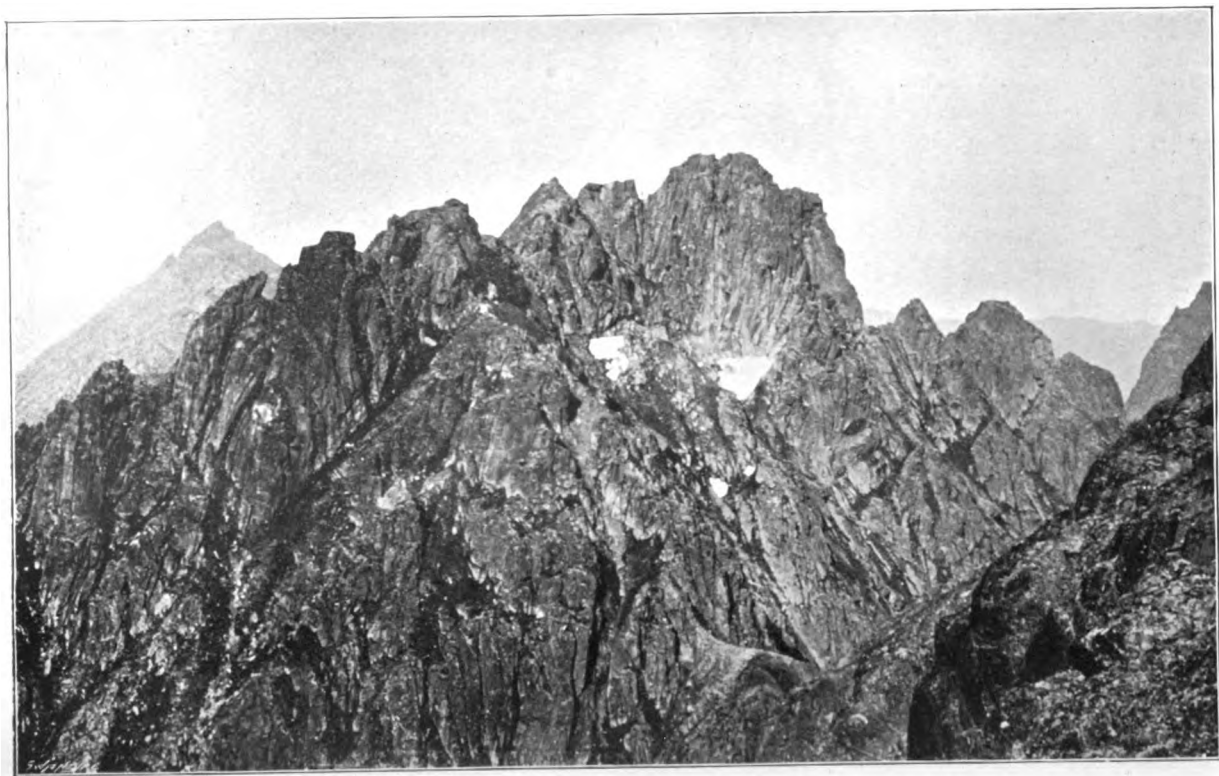


Photo by T. G. Ouston.

A LOFOTEN ARÊTE. LOOKING N. FROM MEMDRA.

[Swan Electric Engraving Co.]

beneath us was a crater-like valley, and opposite us, N.W., was our peak, Memdra, whose correct name we only discovered from a map of Mr. Priestman's four months later. Remembering our laborious approach to the Himmeltind, we decided to 'fetch a compass' and skirt right round the head of the valley rather than descend again to sea-level. Our choice proved of doubtful merit, but moving vigorously, we traversed below a summit to the S., and struck the col 950 ft. at the valley end before 6 A.M.; thence a fine ridge walk N. of a Crib Goch character changed on nearing the peak to a very narrow gabbro arête, topped with gendarmes of crystalline rime, one of which at a height of about 1,800 ft. ordered us off on to the S. precipice. A slippery slimy traverse placed us, at 8.30 A.M., at the bottom of a 500 ft. gully, which appeared to be the only feasible way to the summit. One may here say that our experience of ascents in this region led us on the whole to prefer gullies to arêtes, as the more certain and rapid routes to the summits of the more difficult peaks. The fear of ice or rock avalanches did not enter into the reckoning in any of our ascents; though loose rocks, of course, were met with in places here as in other countries, and required the same cautious handling. Halting for the first time to breakfast, we entered the gully and found some interesting pitches; in one place the only route led through a hole 2 ft. above one's head, formed by a jammed boulder, through which we were just able to wriggle our fortunately lanky bodies. My first attempt, with camera containing rucksac on back, resulted in a tight corking of the hole; a struggle for freedom was followed by a loud and ominous crack, and great was my joy on opening the rucksac to find my camera intact, at the expense only of a flattened butter-tin. Reaching the top of the gully we found ourselves looking down the N.W. precipice. From here the summit was reached at 10.45 A.M. by interesting climbing, which included the descent of a somewhat difficult chimney corner, at the top of which a spare rope was fixed to ensure our return, and a crawl on all fours for 12 ft. along a narrow ledge on the side of an overhanging wall. The top consisted of a wedge-shaped boulder 10 ft. high, surrounded by luxurious moss-covered ledges. Large stones forming a small cairn were with difficulty balanced on the edge of the wedge; and even six weeks later scarred finger-tips still bore witness to the extreme roughness of the gabbro of which that cairn is built.

My note-book says the colouring effects of the extensive view were indescribable, so perforce they must remain un-

described. The peak showing through the gap to the left of the illustration is the easily ascended Stronna; the mountain with the jagged arête we hope awaits a future visit for a first ascent, as also the sharp aiguille on the right, to which my camera has hardly done justice.

Perfect weather, perfect training, perfect peaks were all present, but the fourth necessity—time to climb them—was not ours. Alas! the first step downwards would be the first step homewards. Time flies quickest when one is happiest; so four hours on the summit passed like one. Starting down at 2.45 P.M., on reaching the foot of the gully we continued its direction S. to the bottom of the valley; following the latter N.E., we were soon at the margin of the Higraf-fjord, and reached Langstrand at 7.45 P.M. We were to have been met by a boat from Svolvær, but owing to a hitch in the arrangements one had come for, and returned without, us. Our only chance was to catch the 'Röst,' a mile away, in 35 minutes, in which time our camp was struck, everything bundled into a boat, and shouting, gesticulating, and rowing our hardest, we just intercepted the steamer as she was moving away from Sildpolnes. Rowing at midnight from Kabelvaag to Svolvær, we packed in the early hours of the morning, and caught the s.s. 'Astræa' for Bergen, at 6 A.M., in an equally exciting and undignified manner.

Thus ended our first, but we hope not our last, visit to islands where beauty of scenery and first-class rock-climbing are only matched by the charming hospitality of its unspoilt inhabitants.

THE EARLY ASCENTS OF MONT BLANC.

By C. E. MATHEWS.

AN extremely interesting bit of Alpine archæology has recently come to light. It consists of two pieces of paper of 8vo. size, on which are written an account of the attempt to ascend Mont Blanc by Jacques Balmat on June 28, 1786, and following days; the actual ascent by Balmat and Paccard on August 8 in the same year; the further ascent by Balmat on July 5, 1787, with two companions (Jean Michel Cachat and Alexis Tournier); the ascent by Saussure and eighteen guides on August 3, 1787; and a list of the further ascents made by various climbers, ending with that of the Honourable E. Bootle Wilbraham on August 3, 1830.

This valuable fragment was until recently in the possession