

detail, and, seen from above the 100 ft. rock wall gives no indication of its presence. Everything looks smooth and continuous. Skeeing in the dark is, of course, more dangerous than walking in the dark, and to be familiar with a locality one ought to know it as a skeester, not merely as a walker.

These hints will suffice, for the main thing is that you should go and try for yourselves. Gentlemen, I can promise unspeakable delights to every one of you, be he ever so young or ever so old, but then an A. C. never does grow old. Skeeing by the method which I have set forth is an accurate sport, where every movement has its rule and works without a hitch. It combines the deliberate progress of the climber with the brisk excitement of tobogganing, with the grace of skating or dancing. The rough hill with its hot and stony mule path becomes a vision of smoothness and coolness. Once on the top, the work, if any, is done, and unadulterated pleasure begins. There is plenty of time to enjoy the view at leisure. Then the skeester descends like a bird, now gliding softly, now rushing with a whizz, now circling calmly. Indeed, he is a bird, as sure of his fleet runners as the eagle is of his wings. He feels the delightful sensation of flying. Skeeing of that sort is the acme of elegance, the summit of physical joy.

What I have told you is not a nightmare, but the sober truth. I shall be only too happy if you will during the next winter give me an opportunity to prove it by coaching you either in Adelboden, or Davos, or in the Black Forest, or Scotland. And I make bold to say that those who accept this invitation will be the first to forgive me for having been so talkative to-night.

*P.S.*—The Ski Club of Great Britain has just been formed.

All inquiries on skeeing matters will be gladly answered by E. C. Richardson, Esq., 38 Earl's Court Square, S.W., and Mr. W. R. Rickmers, Radolfzell, Germany. Gentlemen who wish to take lessons (from amateurs) ought to apply not later than the beginning of December.

W. R. R.

### THREE DAYS AT THE PIANTONETTO HUT.

BY W. T. KIRKPATRICK.

**A** FORTNIGHT in Dauphiné, the Aiguilles d'Arves, and then a high-level route to Chamounix, was the idea we had in our minds when we left home in July last year. Our party consisted of R. P. Hope, J. H. Wigner, and the writer,

and in carrying out the first portion of our programme we were specially impressed by the route we chose up the last part of the southern Aiguille d'Arves—apparently the same as that followed by M. Torrent—and, I think, a harder bit of rock-climbing than any of us had previously experienced. The ordinary way, by which we descended, scarcely seems difficult enough to justify the fixed rope which hangs there. We reached Modane, a most unattractive spot, by way of Valloire, and, as what we had seen of the Tarentaise did not look very interesting from a distance, we decided to make for the Cogne district, and so found ourselves, after a somewhat dull ascent of the Central Levanna, on August 5, at the top of the Colle Perduto. The snow man of the party descended the snow couloir, some 2,500 ft., which is fairly steep at the top, in 15 min., the second man in 30 min., and the third in 45 min.—times which fully account for any friction which may occasionally have arisen when the same persons were roped in descending a snow-slope. Luckily there was no need for that on this occasion, but the leader appeared glad enough to have half an hour's rest at the bottom, as the couloir was full of rough old snow, which made a rapid descent something like bicycling down a steep hill over rough cobble stones.

Reaching Ceresole at 7.30 p.m. by our watches, we expected to be not quite too late for *table d'hôte*, but naturally found the Italian clocks pointing to 8.30, and dinner over. We consoled ourselves, however, with an excellent little *diner à part* at the Hotel Bellagarda, which we found good and moderate. Our experience in this respect differed from that of another English party, who made an entry in the hotel book at Pont complaining of excessive charges at the Hotel Bellagarda, and of having had to take their meals in a room in which there was a bar, a billiard table, and a piano. We danced in the latter apartment, and dined in the dining-room.

In engaging Italian porters it is wise not to trust too implicitly to their interpretation of the tariff. The innocent-looking individual who proposed to carry our provisions to the Piantonetto Hut unblushingly told us that his fare would be 20 lire, but when I demanded his book and pointed out that the tariff was half that amount, he admitted at once, also without a blush, that this was so, and that he was bound thereby. We started next morning at 5 a.m., the earliest hour at which any of us had previously started for a hut walk, and took the high-level route *via* the Bocchetta del Gias, the Val di Goj, and the Bocchetto della Losa, a fine

but somewhat wearisome tramp of seven hours, most of it by the King's hunting paths, those excellent highways which must constantly cause Italian mountaineers to bless his Majesty with all their hearts. From the Losa glen we got a fine view of the Becchi della Tribulazione, a most attractive-looking series of pinnacles, and the rock man of the party mentally registered a pious vow.

The Piantonetto Hut is well placed on a promontory about 1,000 ft. above the Teleccio *chalets*, and is solidly built, but its equipment leaves something to be desired. The inventory when we arrived there consisted of seven sheepskins—one so small as to be hardly worth taking into account—one bucket, one cooking-pot, one ladle, two spoons and forks, two very rusty knives, three plates, and one cup. No doubt it was originally well furnished, but depredations have evidently taken place. I should add that some members of the Italian Club, whom we afterwards met at the Victor Emmanuel Hut, were most courteous in asking us to let them know of anything we found wanting in their huts. On retiring to rest the first night we found our porter, who did not leave till next morning, comfortably sleeping under three of the best sheepskins, leaving one for each of his three employers, and I am ashamed to say that we were too soft-hearted to disturb him. An ordinary sheepskin is not the most desirable coverlet. Unless each man has two or three fair-sized ones it is impossible to cover your body or to tuck them in. You have to poise them on top of you as best you can; the cold air gets in all round, and if you venture to turn over they are at once dislodged. On the other hand, if you do manage to get well covered by them they are very likely to prove too warm. They did not, however, prevent our porter from giving vent to such resonant sounds as only guides and porters can emit.

Next morning, August 8, we started at 6.30 for the Tour du Grand St. Pierre, that being the principal summit in the immediate neighbourhood, though there is not much difficulty in attaining it. The 'Climbers' Guide' gives a choice of four different routes, and we chose the last in order of date—namely, Signor Vaccarone's route from the S., first taken in 1878, which seemed likely to be the most interesting. We started in a north-easterly direction up stone, and then snow, slopes, to the foot of the first line of rocks, which we passed by the couloir nearest to the ridge forming the right bank of the Teleccio glacier, and so gained the crest of this ridge. We then crossed the glacier to the foot of the couloir that runs up

into the W. arête of the mountain, and ascended it for a time, keeping a sharp look-out for falling stones. Leaving it we took to the rocks on its right, where the climb became interesting, but not difficult, though there was one rounded boss of rock that required an effort to get over it. The rocks were very rotten in places, and about three-quarters of the way up I had turned a corner in a small gully and was out of the sight of the others when I unfortunately dislodged a biggish stone. It turned the corner, and with unerring aim hit Wigner on the knee, giving him a nasty knock. Happily, however, it did not put him *hors de combat*, and he was able to struggle on notwithstanding. Near the top we separated, as Hope, who always maintains that I choose the hardest rocks, did not like my route. So I went my way, and the other two theirs. I am bound to say that I stuck for a considerable time before I wormed myself on to an overhanging slab, which was decidedly wanting in handholds. However, I reached the top first, and when the others arrived I was pleased to hear that they, too, had found a *mauvais pas*, of which they gave a sensational account. We were rewarded by an excellent view, with fine cloud effects, and in descending found that the difficulties alluded to were easily avoided. We had to go slowly and carefully, however, as Wigner's knee was getting stiff, and he required a good deal of helping down the rocks; but we succeeded in just getting in before a heavy storm, the apparent force of which was not lessened by our iron roof.

Next day, August 9, Wigner elected to stay at home and doctor his knee, while Hope and I started at 6.30 for the Becchi della Tribulazione, which we decided to attack by the couloir on the E. face of the mountain. It looked extremely formidable, but was the nearest route from the hut, and in climbing without guides it is usually better to take the line that you can see rather than look for an easier one. Half way up the couloir we sat down on an island of rocks to eat our second breakfast, and enjoyed a glorious view over the plains of Italy. We could see the rivers winding along, and the towns dotted here and there, while a Turneresque haze, which hung over everything, added to the enchantment. As we sat, a herd of chamois came quietly up the snow slope from below, and passed about fifty yards in front of us, the leaders every now and then stopping and looking back for those behind. One doe with a young one came within about ten yards of us, and, when she saw us, scampered off to join the rest. As she went she slipped in jumping on to a narrow edge of rock, and quickly regained her equilibrium; but it



*Photo by I. H. Wigner.*

BECCO DELLA TRUCCIAZIONE FROM THE EAST.

[Swan Electric Engraving Co.]

was consoling to see that even a chamois can sometimes make a false step.

After this most pleasant halt, we resumed our attack on the couloir, the upper part of which was decidedly steep. We ascended, chiefly by the rocks on either side, to the col at its head, where we had a choice of routes for attempting the southern or highest summit of the mountain. Above us rose a nearly vertical wall,\* which looked extremely difficult and was very much exposed. It was clear that we could climb the peak by descending the couloir on the other side of the col, if the first pitch of the descent was possible. Where we stood a rock overhung, and we had to contemplate a drop of 15 ft. into a cave, which was not enticing, and we decided to attack the wall. We had almost immediately to make a much exposed traverse to the W., along a rounded ledge with good footholds, but no handholds whatever, while below a smooth wall of rock descended for 150 ft. into the western couloir. At first it was easy to walk along the ledge, but it soon got narrow and more rounded, and then came to an end. The problem to be solved now was this. Standing with one foot on a ledge about six inches wide and slightly sloping outwards, with your hands on rock which did not give even a hold for your finger-tips, to make a stride of 4 ft. into a crack. The correct method of rock-climbing, by which one hold is gradually changed for another, was impossible, and something like a jump was needed. We each in turn studied the place, but with the drop below, and no hitch, nor even a firm standing-place for the second man, we decided that it was not good enough. Thinking an axe might help, Hope fetched one from the col where we had left them, and by wedging the pick into a crack the required handhold was supplied, and the difficulty vanished. The rocks above this spot were very steep, but the holds good, and we reached the top without further serious difficulty. As it was Coronation day, and we were the first Englishmen to climb this peak, we celebrated the occasion by singing 'God save the King,' which we did with great fervour but little melody, at least so far as Hope's contribution was concerned; and as the last bars broke upon the stillness of the upper air we saw Wigner at the hut hanging out clothes to dry.

The summit, which consists of a gigantic rock overhanging on the S.E. side, is an imposing one. We sat down on it with that perfect satisfaction with ourselves and the world in

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\* This is the black wall shown in the photograph.

general which can only be attained by guideless climbers as the result of a good climb, safely accomplished in perfect weather, with a magnificent view to crown their efforts. This feeling of exhilaration did not, however, prevent me from enjoying my customary nap on the summit, while Hope busied himself with the camera and our projected route for the next day. My friends go so far as to say that I disturb the glamour of the mountain-tops by snoring, but my conscience tells me that there is no foundation for this unkind aspersion.

Under a stone we found the record of the first ascent in 1875 by Signor Vaccarone's party, and of the second in 1892 by Signori C. Fiorio, N. Vigna, G. B. Devalle, and G. Rey, without guides. We also found the cards of Signori Ettore Canzio and Felice Mondini, who made the ascent without guides on August 19, 1894, and of Signori Emilio Questa and Lorenzo Bozana, who also made the ascent without guides on August 16, 1901.

We went down at first by our old route, but when nearing the level of the col bore to the W. and descended into the couloir below the steep wall, regaining the col by a tight chimney between the opposite wall and a large, firmly wedged boulder, which brought us into the cave below the col. We had spent a long time in enjoyment on the top of the mountain, where we had given up the idea of another summit, and as it was now 4.30 P.M. prudence counselled a return to the hut, but we decided to make a push for the central peak, and accordingly traversed on the E. side of the ridge to the next gap, which was about 4 ft. wide with parallel walls 15 ft. high. The one we had to surmount overhung, and the only way was by a corner on the E. face which resembled an angle formed by two walls each with a large overhanging coping. To reach this we had to creep along a ledge on the top of steep slabs with the coping above our heads, and then standing up get first head and arms and then our bodies on to it. From the coping ledge a short struggle brought me into a little gully on the E. face where, at Hope's urgent request, I had to avoid touching a most conveniently wedged stone which hung over his head as he crouched on the coping. Then came a slabby traverse to the S. without handholds, and, as Hope seems to like walking on sloping slabs better than I do, we changed leaders. Then we had a pull up on to the arête, a few steps along it, and worked by cracks on the E. face to the foot of the S. summit. Squeezing into a crack between the rock and a large flake on the W. side we got on



*Photo by R. P. Hope.*

ROCCIA VIVA LAKE AND TOUR DU GRAND ST. PIERRE.

[*Swan Electric Engraving Co.*



the sharp top of the flake, and thence over another smooth rock, where an axe was again useful, to the summit.

The 'Climbers' Guide' (1893) stated that this peak was then unclimbed, and we were disappointed to find three or four stones suspiciously like a cairn, but there was no other record.\* The next tower, a few feet from us, seemed slightly higher, but as it was so late, and there seemed no chance of a first ascent, we descended the way we had come up. The last pitch looked like a sheer drop of 10 ft. on to slabs, but proved not nearly so bad as it looked. This little pinnacle afforded very interesting climbing, and was well worth the time spent on it.

We returned by the couloir and got back to the hut at about 7.30 P.M. Wigner had scrubbed and polished the table and everything else in the hut in a way that they had apparently never been cleaned before. He had the soup ready, and things generally were so comfortable that we considered it would be well worth leaving a man behind on all occasions. We had a state banquet in honour of the day, lighting two candles, wearing flannel collars, and drinking the King's health in hot lemonade—the best we could do.

Next day, August 10, we wished to reach Pont and to climb the Roccia Viva, an easy mountain, on the way. Hope, whose programmes do not generally err on the side of modesty, proposed that we should go over the Bocchetta di Monte Nero, up the Roccia Viva, descend to the Colle Baretti, and down its north side to the Grandcroux Glacier, thence up to the Col de Grandcroux, over the nameless col N.W. of the Becca di Noaschetta to the Noaschetta Glacier, and then over the Col Gran Paradiso to Pont. The first col was vetoed at once, though it would probably have been better to take it, and we approached the Roccia Viva by the glacier bearing its name, and thence up the great snow couloir, which leads up the E. flank of the peak to its N.E. ridge. The snow on the steep slope from the col to the top was decidedly thin, and as a slip would probably have meant a rapid descent to the Roccia Viva Glacier, we put on the rope and Hope proceeded to scramble up in a peculiar method of his own, while we stood by to field him.

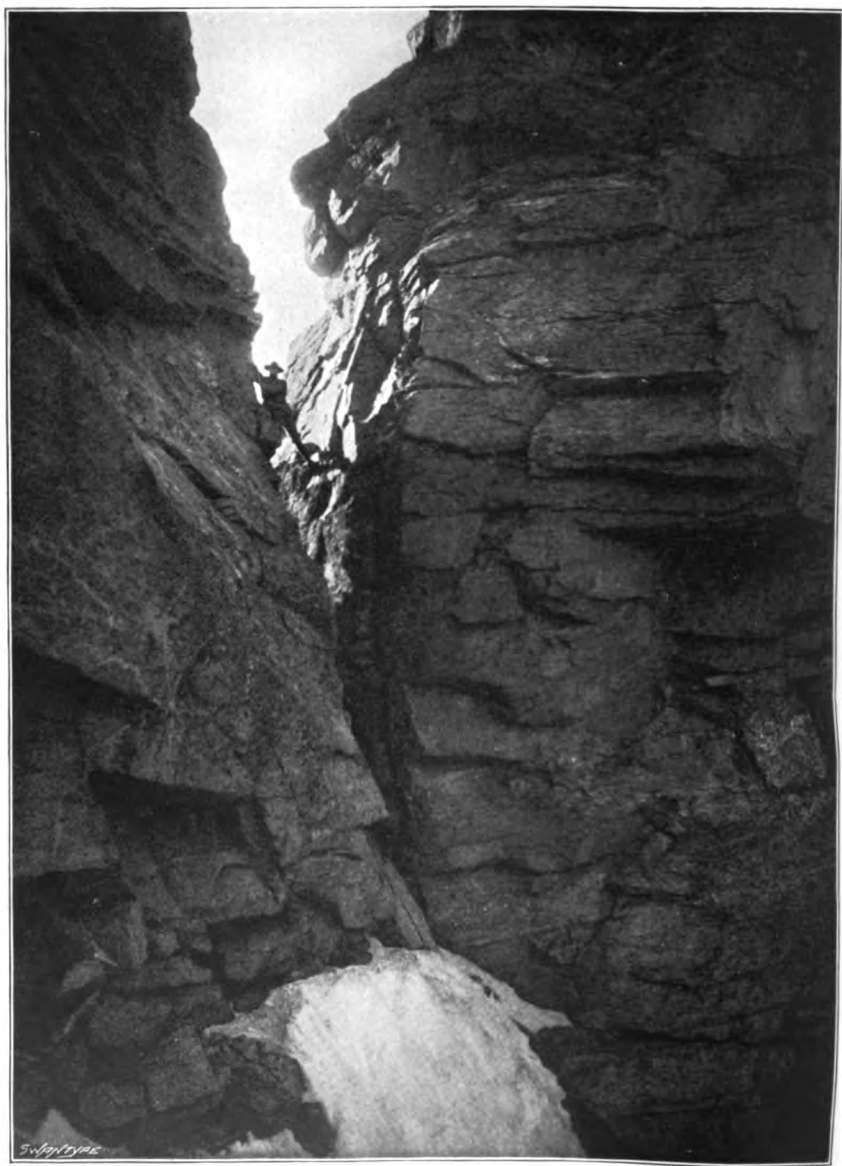
The day was perfect and we had a glorious view, Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn, Finsteraarhorn, Mischabel, Monte

\* I find from *Scrambles in the Eastern Graians*, p. 175, that Signor Bobba with Casimir Thérissod of Val Grisanche climbed this peak in 1892.

Rosa, the Grand Combin and Vêlan, Monte Viso, the Écrins, Meije, &c., while over the plains of Italy floated a sea of white fleecy clouds, with here and there a mass of cloud rising up, shaped like a mountain—a wonderful effect. We were much interested by the curious frozen lake which lies in a crater on the summit of the Roccia Viva, surrounded by snow walls, and which the 'Climbers' Guide' justly describes as 'one of the most astonishing sights in the Alps.' Its size, as judged by stepping, is 50 yards long by 15 wide. We breakfasted on some rocks just above it, and had an excellent brew of hot chocolate, which was all the more acceptable as we had pushed on without halting from the hut.

We spent altogether 3 hrs. on top, and seeing that the slopes from the Colle Baretto to the Grandcroux Glacier were ice, and not inviting, we abandoned the idea of descending by that route, and decided to return the way we had come. Looking back at the matter I am at a loss to account for the moderation of our remarks to Hope, at whose request we had unnecessarily carried our packs up 2,000 ft. of steep snow. It was perhaps difficult to rise to the occasion on such a perfect day, and my temper was doubtless soothed by a comfortable nap, while Wigner's was probably diverted by the excitement of many photographs. From the Roccia Viva Glacier we had a steep grind up to the Bocchetta de la Losa, an endless tramp up to the Col Gran Paradiso, and a quick descent to Pont, which we reached at 8.30 P.M.

On our way from Ceresole to the Piantonetto Hut we had specially noticed the sharp needle of the Punta del Broglio, which somewhat resembles 'The Inaccessible Pinnacle' on Sgurr Dearg in Skye. In the hotel book at Pont we found it described as being harder than the Nape's Needle, the fame of which, though we did not know it by experience, made us more desirous of trying the Broglio. The 12th of August, moreover, seemed to call for something more sporting than a mere stroll to the Victor Emmanuel Hut, so we decided to make a diversion and take this peak on the way. Starting at the comfortable hour of 10 o'clock we went up the Val Savaranche at first by the path leading to the aforesaid hut, and then, crossing the stream, took a small path above its left bank. This we soon left to choose our own way nearer the valley bed, and suffered much in consequence. Having reached the Grand Etret Glacier it began to rain, and we lunched under the partial shelter of a large rock. Here Wigner, who was feeling seedy, decided to go straight to the hut, while Hope and I considered our plan of operations.



*Photo by R. P. Hope.*

*[Swan Electric Engraving Co.]*

PUNTA DEL BROGLIO, FINAL PINNACLE.

It was getting decidedly late, and as the route by the Col du Grand Étret was a long way round we examined the N.W. ridge of the Broglio, which pointed towards us, through the telescope, and made out a way up its face, and then through the only apparent gap on to its N. side. We went as hard as we could, being somewhat retarded by the rottenness of the rocks, and having reached the snow shoulder in which the arête merges, passed round to the S., and then to the E., of the peak into the gap between it and the next summit to the N. The final pinnacle looked most sensational, and notwithstanding the discomfort of snow and sleet, Hope made a gallant dash into the cleft, and went up about 15 ft. till it became too wide to use both walls. He then called on me to lead, and, having passed him, I contemplated the wall above with considerable doubt. It was nearly vertical, and, though there were some little square ledges above my head,\* they were wet, and consequently none of them gave very secure holds; but Hope, by going a little way up the opposite face of the cleft, was able to give directions, and the head of his axe, stretched across the gap, helped to keep me attached to the rock. The first platform was small, and there was a difficult pull from it on to a big one, where Hope joined me with the aid of the rope. The rocks were very wet, and the next pitch which overhung did not look attractive, but we managed to negotiate it, and so reached the summit after a short but stubborn climb. We only spent a few minutes on top, and came down quickly, using a doubled rope for both upper and lower pitches.

Having regained the snow shoulder, we followed it for a short distance, and then bore N. down the ice-slope above the bergschrund, which we crossed. We then traversed, just below the bergschrund, the small hanging glacier which lies under the N.W. face of the Broglio ridge. This glacier is shaped like a crescent, its upper boundary being the bergschrund with ice-slopes above, while below it breaks off in ice-cliffs. It seemed very doubtful whether we should be able to get off it, while a slip would have sent us over the ice-cliffs. We succeeded, however, in finding a way off at the farthest point of the glacier, whence we cut across a short ice-slope and reached the couloir leading to the Colletto Monciair by rock patches and steep snow. Here we were surrounded by fallen stones, but as it was freezing hard there was no danger of others falling. We glissaded down to the Seiva

\* Shown on the skyline in the photograph.

glacier, climbed on to the Monciair glacier, and across it and the Moncorvé glacier to the Victor Emmanuel Hut in 7½ hrs. from Pont, exclusive of halts. This was an interesting route, but it would be safer to take it in the reverse way, descending to Pont, as the couloir leading to the Colletto Monciair is, from what we saw of it, quite equal to its evil reputation, and though it is not very steep the stones would require a good deal of dodging on a hot afternoon.

Our doings, as a semi-attached party, between the Victor Emmanuel Hut and Chamonix, have been graphically described by Mr. T. G. Longstaff in the last number of this Journal.

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### THE FIRST ASCENT OF MOUNT BRYCE.

BY REV. JAMES OUTRAM.

**M**OUNT BRYCE was named in 1898 by Professor Collie in honour of the then President of the Alpine Club, and is referred to as bearing a resemblance to the Finsteraarhorn. From the N. it is a far more striking mountain than when seen from any other direction, except perhaps from the depths of the Bush River valley. Its long and very narrow ridge juts out westwards from the Divide, between two rapidly descending valleys, the three peaks rising in increasing elevation in the direction of the deepening ravines till the final precipitous cliffs of the main summit tower more than 8,000 ft. above the junction of the converging streams.

Unfortunately, like almost all the mountains of this group, the earliest estimate of altitude has been considerably exaggerated, and instead of its expected 13,000 ft. the peak is only about 11,800 ft. above sea-level. The low elevation of the western valleys, however, gives it an imposing appearance from that side, and the abruptness of its slopes and precipices, together with the sharpness of its triple-peaked arête, renders it hard of access and particularly grand. To me, as to Professor Collie, the first view of the mountain at close range was from the N.E., probably the finest aspect of all. The soaring mass rose in its entirety from the white plains of the Columbia névé, its flanks so sheer as to suggest absolute inaccessibility, and the corniced crest and icy mantle seeming to overhang the dark green depths of the narrow gorge 8,000 ft. beneath the top-most pinnacle.

The geographical position of the peak is about sixty miles N.W. from the point where the continental watershed is