

explained to us that, although he would not say it before the ladies, he himself did not believe in the Devil. Whether he thought the ladies would think it unorthodox and be shocked, or whether he thought that Beelzebub, the God of flies, was still a name to conjure with, so far as the female sex was concerned, I do not know.

But to return to our climb up the W. face and S.W. arête of the Wetterhorn. We cannot altogether recommend *this* climb, as it can only be done in the early part of the season when there is plenty of snow and it is in good condition. The rocks of the W. arête still remain to be climbed, but for myself I believe they are impossible, and they are certainly not of a very inviting nature.

I will not weary you any more with the description of other climbs which we made last year, and in conclusion will only mention, for those who intend to visit the Oberland, that the traverse of the Finsteraarhorn, the S.E. arête of the Aletschhorn, the Jungfrau Joch, and many others are climbs which any mountaineer, to whom for pecuniary or other reasons the Caucasus or the Rockies or the Himalayas are a sealed book, must some day hope to make; and I would strongly assert that, although in some of the more frequented districts the Alps may have lost some of their charm, yet they are not, and never will be, played out, and that even in the more frequented districts, such as the Bernese Oberland, the jarring note brought in by the influx of visitors is still a mere nothing compared with the various and many mental and physical pleasures which one can there still enjoy to the full.

FROM THE AIGUILLE SANS NOM TO THE AIGUILLE VERTE.

By A. E. FIELD.

(Read before the Alpine Club, June 9, 1903.)

THE Aiguille Sans Nom is doubtless well known to many as a summit on the ridge that runs towards the Dru from the top of the Aiguille Verte. Its face is, perhaps, seen to most advantage from the Dent du Requin, while some part of its summit is seen from the Monteners, just to the left of the Dru. It was first climbed by H.R.H. the Duke of the Abruzzi in 1898,* by the great couloir between it and the Aiguille Verte; the party descended by the same route, were

* See *Alpine Journal*, vol. xix. p. 248.

overtaken by darkness in the couloir, spent the night there exposed to considerable risk from falling stones, and descended in the morning. Monsieur Emile Fontaine made the second ascent by a route up the rock face which entirely avoided the perils of the couloir, his leading guide being Joseph Simond, who was afterwards killed by lightning on the Dent du Géant.

In August 1902 Mr. R. W. Broadrick and myself climbed for three weeks in the Dauphiné, where we revelled in good weather while our friends in other parts of the Alps were complaining of a very broken season. Among other experiences we traversed the Meije under circumstances which have probably never occurred before. We went up from La Béarde to the new and comfortable hut on the Promontoire, and there we found two parties, one of which had been waiting two days and the other one day for settled weather. About two hours after us there arrived yet another party, consisting of a Frenchman, a guide, and a porter; the Frenchman had bicycled 100 kilomètres the day before, and had that day reached St. Christophe, where he had obtained the services of a very second-rate guide for the traverse of the Meije. All authorised porters were away from the village, and a peasant was taken off the hay-field to act as porter. This good man had apparently dressed himself in his best Sunday clothes for the expedition. Next morning the four parties started off together; we joined together with two parties and made a long rope of nine, while the other party, four in number, were on another rope. When we reached the top of the Meije, the various guides made various vague statements about a strong wind which might be expected to spring up suddenly, but which, as a matter of fact, never appeared. The result was that on the principle of there being safety in numbers we joined our ropes together, and the inhabitants of La Grave enjoyed the unwonted spectacle of a long string of thirteen men climbing the ridge of the Meije. Not only did we join forces together, but we also got re-distributed in the process; our guide, Maximin Gaspard, led the party, and I found myself between the haymaker and a young porter aged seventeen. The latter climbed well, but had no idea of the use of the rope, while the former was continually in difficulties and entreating me to 'tirer fortement.'

However, we did the climb in very good time, and entered La Grave in a sort of triumphal procession of thirteen, appropriately headed by old Père Gaspard, who made the first ascent of the Meije in 1871, and is now sixty-seven. Two days afterwards we again assisted the old gentleman and

his employer by joining forces up the southern Aiguille d'Arves.

The ascent of eight peaks in the Dauphiné, where the mountains are of no mean height, while the valleys are deep, and the huts, as a rule, situated too low down, brought us into such a state of good training that we felt justified in going on to the Montanvers, with the intention of attempting the traverse of the Aiguille Sans Nom to the Aiguille Verte.

The idea of this expedition had been in Broadrick's mind for two years, and it now seemed that a favourable opportunity had arrived. The weather had been good for several days, the sun had been warm, and there was a strong probability of the rocks being free from ice. We had already engaged Joseph Démarchi, and had written to him to get a worthy second man. He had risen nobly to the occasion, and secured Joseph Ravanel, who has already made a name for himself as a daring and skilful climber. Ravanel led throughout our expedition, and its success must be chiefly attributed to him.

We arrived at the Montanvers one afternoon, and the next day at one o'clock the four of us started off, accompanied by a porter to carry the sleeping-bags. We found it hot enough on the Mer de Glace, and hotter still as we toiled up the track which leads up crumbling moraine to the rocks on the Charpoua Glacier, where parties usually bivouac for the climb of either of the Drus. The sun smote fiercely on our backs, and the sacks seemed to grow unusually heavy; but we had tramped up to so many huts in the Dauphiné in even hotter weather that we had grown hardened to such conditions. We reached the gite in a little under 3 hrs., and found there two young Germans, who were meditating a guideless climb of the little Dru on the morrow. Another party soon arrived, who were also bound for the little Dru, and we all spent a pleasant hour or two together on the rocks, basking in the sun, studying the map of the Mont Blanc chain, and comparing notes in a polyglot mixture of English, French, and German. We lit our fire, and made soup for immediate consumption and tea for the morrow, and at 7.30 P.M. we lay down in our sleeping-bags for the brief rest that was to prepare us for the toils of the next day. It was a beautiful evening, and as I lay there in the hollow under the rock, so familiar to many climbers, I could see the last gleam of daylight fading away from the summit of Mont Blanc. Then the stars appeared, and the great peaks still shone out in the clear and cloudless night.

The time soon passed, and just as I was thinking it was

about time I was going to sleep came the summons to arise. We left our beds, if they may be so termed, at 10.30 p.m., and were soon preparing the earliest breakfast that has ever fallen to my lot. We tried to make a good one, for we realised the character of the work in store for us, and knew that it would be a long time before we should feel justified in sparing time to halt for another meal. Our porter made himself a luxurious couch with the sleeping-bags and blankets of the party, and we left him asleep as we started off by lantern-light at 12.2 a.m. A very few minutes brought us on to the glacier, which was in good condition; some large crevasses had to be turned, but we were able to steer a moderately straight course for the point where we proposed to attack the rocks. After 1 hour the bright moonlight enabled us to extinguish our lanterns, and we reached the rocks at 1.30. No bergschrund hindered our passage from the snow, and the leader climbed straight up broken rocks. After he had run out some 50 ft. of rope the next man advanced, and then we could all move on with comparative ease for a little time. One or two rather stiff passages were encountered, and several loose rocks had to be handled very delicately; when the direct route became too steep and devoid of handhold, a slight divergence up a simple chimney came as a pleasant variation. This brought us on to the S.W. ridge, where we continued up easier and more broken rocks, till it became very narrow and we were forced away to the right. The dawn had now come, and all conditions seemed to promise us a splendid day as we traversed a short snow-slope on to rocks again. We now followed these rocks round the big snow-slope which is so clearly seen from the Requin, till we reached a point where the rocks steepen and form the great wall of the peak. We had been warned by M. Fontaine, whom we met at the Montenvers, that here we should have to be very careful as to the route we selected; but after a little reconnoitring we found a depression forming the channel of a small stream. Here the rocks were smooth, and some care was necessary; but at the top of this funnel we found the rocks easier, and were able to clamber pretty steadily upwards for some time. A short snow-slope was next ascended, and above this one of the chief difficulties of the day presented itself.

The face of the mountain rose above us in very unpromising severity, and the only way appeared to lie up a very steep rock-couloir about 10 ft. wide. As we looked anxiously upwards it seemed to grow steeper each moment,

AIGUILLE SANS NOM AIGUILLE VERTE

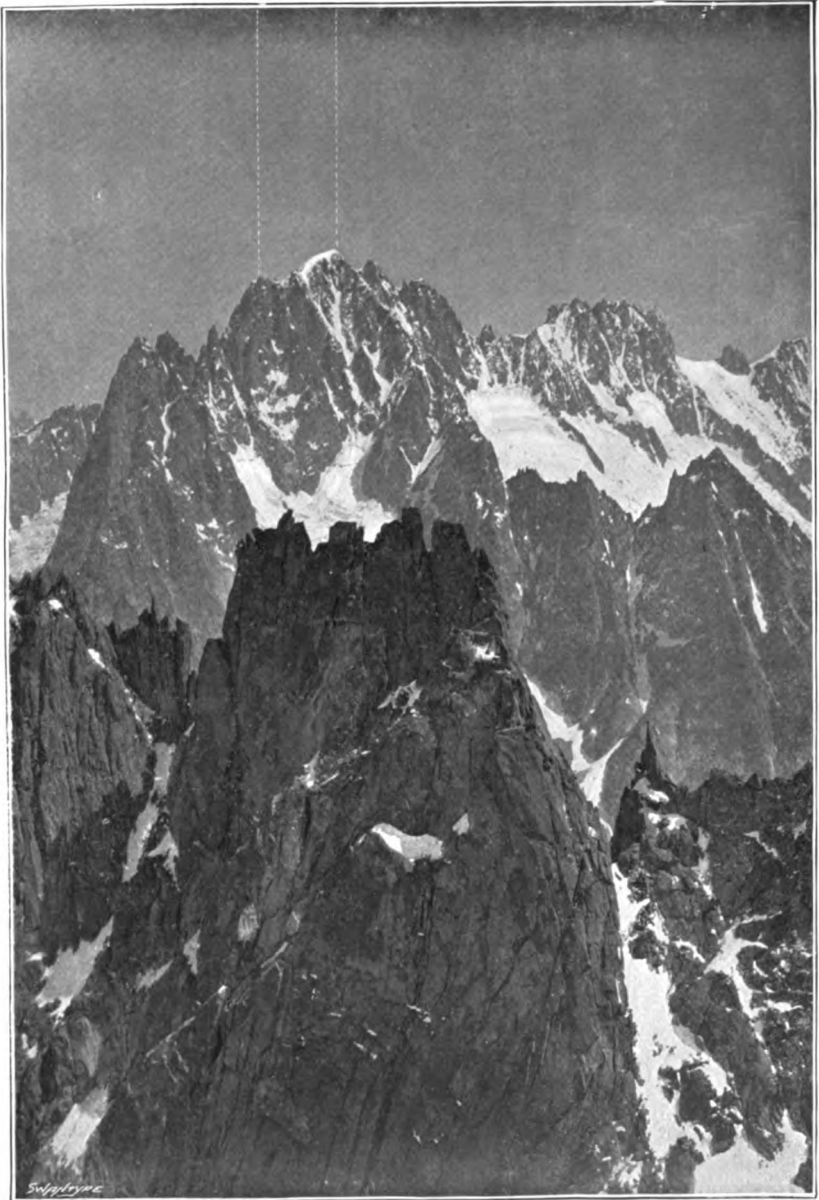


Photo by S. Spencer.

[Swan Electric Engraving Co.]

AIGUILLE VERTE FROM THE BLAITIÈRE (GRÉPON IN THE FOREGROUND).

and if we had been defeated at this point I have no doubt that we should all have steadfastly maintained that it was more than overhanging. No holds were visible at all, and the rocks were coated with a black and hard layer of *verglas*. However, Ravel started up, and all his efforts were needed to overcome the first 12 ft. or so. Above matters looked worse still, and he clung on to take breath in some mysterious fashion, possibly 'seulement par l'estomac et la force des habillements,' as a guide once explained to a friend of mine. He asked Démarchi, in 'patois,' whether he could hold him if he came off; but, on being informed that we were all too badly placed to render any assistance, he merely grunted, and again applied himself to the ice-glazed rocks like a veritable plaster, and managed to get up them by a marvellous display of climbing skill. I must confess that the rope was much more than a moral support to the rest of the party in the ascent of this couloir.

At the top the leader brought up the second man to a rather precarious standing-place, took a shoulder from him, and traversed round an awkward corner to the right, thus reaching a patch of snow, which he ascended to easier rocks. These proceedings occupied some time, and the other two were now glad enough to grapple in their turn with the *verglas* of the couloir, instead of remaining in anxious inactivity below. When they had mounted the couloir they climbed straight up, instead of taking the difficult traverse to the right. This route was difficult enough, but probably better, because clearer of *verglas*; good holds seemed to be almost non-existent, and progress was only possible by grasping wrinkles on the steep rocks between the finger and thumb and hauling oneself up by sheer exertion. However this passage, though severe, was quite safe, with the leader anchored firmly above.

The rocks above proved easier, and we were able to diverge to the left on to the ridge, where at six we halted 25 minutes for breakfast. We soon came in sight of the arête, which runs from the summit of the peak towards the Dru. Some little way above us a chimney seemed to offer an obvious passage to the arête, but for some reason or other we wasted some time in trying to climb the rocks on its right. We got up a little way, but then the difficulties increased, and we traversed back towards the foot of the chimney. We found it short and steep, though not difficult, although those of us who were encumbered with rucksacks found it inconveniently narrow, and were several times discovered in attitudes which were

more amusing to the rest of the party than to ourselves.

The chimney broadened towards the top, and its bed was filled with boulders, which afforded an easy, though somewhat tottering, road. At the top we found ourselves in a clean-cut window on the arête, from which we could see the Monteners. We also saw our companions at the bivouac nearing the summit of the little Dru; we shouted to them, and they shouted back to us what we took for cheery encouragement. Straight from our feet the rocks fell away in a precipice to the Argentière Glacier, and the face up which we had come did not appear much less precipitous.

We now followed the arête, but soon found the way barred by a gendarme. Its face was both steep and smooth, and the leader had to take a shoulder before he could find a handhold at all. After some struggles he got up, and the rest of us followed, each from the shoulders of the next. The last man preferred to climb a few feet up the rock behind him, and then stride across the gap to a small foothold on the face of the gendarme. Having placed one toe on this, he managed to get the rest of his body across; but his equilibrium was very unstable till friendly tugs from above brought him safely up.

The far side of the gendarme proved worse still, for it provided a smooth, perpendicular drop of about 25 ft., which was descended on a doubled rope looped round a rock at the top. The guide, who came down last, was quite ready to pull the rope over and risk the chance of defeat further on; but the counsels of prudence prevailed, and the rope was left. The arête was narrow enough at the landing-place, and some dexterity was required to hit it, instead of ignominiously dangling over the Argentière Glacier and being pulled back to safety.

The arête was now found to consist of enormous blocks, many of them 40 ft. or 50 ft. high, but composed of good rough rock, well provided with excellent holds. At one point a rock-tower stood up on the ridge, which had to be turned by cutting along a steep ice-slope. The ice ran down very steeply on the left, and the rock overhung so much on the right that the party had to sidle round in a crouching attitude.

After a time the way was barred by another gendarme, about 18 ft. high, and the leader climbed round it on the Argentière side and disappeared behind, but immediately shouted back that this was the summit of the Aiguille Sans

Nom; and such it proved to be. Its top was barely 8 in. square, and was found to be unadorned by cairn or stone. Each in turn, as he climbed round, placed his hand on the top, which was reached at 9.13 a.m.; and then a small cairn of three stones was built there.

The height of the Aiguille Sans Nom I find stated as 13,088 ft. We made no attempt to determine its height, as we were unprovided with a boiling-point thermometer or any other instruments. Perhaps I may be permitted to give a schoolboy's account of the use of this instrument. Once in an examination I set the question: 'Explain how the height of a mountain may be found by boiling water on the top'; and one of the answers I received ran as follows: 'If you go up a high mountain, it is so cold that when you boil water it will not boil. The natives, who live up there, think it is boiling, but travellers who come up on an expedition know it is not. So, if you boil water and it does not boil, you will know that you are so many thousand feet above the snow-line.'

After a halt of 7 minutes we climbed down the far side of the summit gendarme, which was nearly perpendicular and almost destitute of holds. Its descent was by no means easy, and it was just as if a difficult boulder had been promoted to be the summit of a peak. We now had a good view of the summit arête, which we proposed to follow to the Aiguille Verte. It consisted of gendarmes and snow intermixed, and ran fairly horizontally for some distance. We soon took another brief halt of 7 minutes, and then climbed steadily along. As a rule, we could scramble along the skyline; but progress was not very rapid, and when at 10.37 we halted 27 minutes for a meal the summit of the Aiguille Sans Nom did not look very far behind us. Soon a precipitous gendarme barred our way, and we had to turn it on the Argentière side by cutting round very steep ice; the ice was hard, and the step-cutting took so long that we began to feel very uncertain of our having time to complete the climb. However, we got round it, only to be confronted shortly afterwards by another rock-tower, which had to be turned in just the same way. These two rock-towers on the ridge are well shown in Mr. Sydney Spencer's photograph from the Col des Grands Montets. After this the difficulties abated for a space, and we could make our way steadily along the ridge towards the snowy cap of the Aiguille Verte--the magnet that was drawing us on.

The rock now thinned out on the arête, and snow took its

place; we made good progress for a time, till we were pulled up by a short snow arête. It was so narrow that it approximated to Euclid's definition of a line; and, in addition to this, it was so steep, and so powdery withal, that it seemed a marvel how it hung in position. We felt that if we tried to force our way up this there was a strong probability of the whole structure collapsing with us. We were, fortunately, able to find a way round; and when we struck the road again, we found ourselves on a snow-arête which we could see would lead us to the desired goal. It was steep and narrow in places, especially at one point, where we had to sit down and make our way cautiously along with one leg on each side. We could almost feel it crack at one point, and one of our guides afterwards confided to a Chamonix acquaintance that at that moment he would willingly have given ten francs to be safely across it. However, it stood firm, for we treated it very tenderly, and crawled along on our hands and knees when possible.

Gradually the condition of the snow improved, our progress became quicker, the arête merged in the final snow-cap, and at 1.26 P.M. we walked at our ease on to the summit of the Aiguille Verte. Our guides were in high spirits at having made the first traverse of the Aiguille Sans Nom and a new way up the Aiguille Verte, and we spent 19 minutes on the summit, from which we enjoyed a clear and cloudless view in all directions.

We considered our adventures over as we began the descent by the Moine ridge, with the idea of halting soon for a comfortable meal in some sunny spot out of the wind. But we soon found the rocks covered with snow and in the worst possible condition, and had to put forth our utmost exertions to get off the rocks before dark. We felt that every minute was precious, and it was not till 4.35 that we halted and snatched a hurried meal. After this much step-cutting was necessary, and we had continually to clear away powdery snow from the rock-ledges. Then we got on to a snow-slope, but found it in bad condition, and were obliged to kick steps backwards for a long time down the slope, and descend with great care, constantly driving our axes in as deep as possible. The Glacier de Talèfre was still far below, and when at last we thought we saw a way off we found about another thousand feet of rock still awaiting us. We disregarded the conventional route, and clambered down where we could, and the last glimmer of daylight was fading away when we finally got off the rocks at 7.25 P.M.

AIGUILLE VERTE

AIGUILLE SANS NOM



Photo by S. Spencer.

[Swan Electric Engraving Co.]

AIGUILLES SANS NOM AND VERTE FROM THE COL DES GRANDS MONTETS.

We were now obliged, in the growing darkness, to traverse a trough which was twice raked by stones, two of us being hit by small ones, while larger ones whistled over our heads as we crouched against the slope.

We now came to the bergschrund, and Démarchi, who was leading, cut steps down in the dark, while the rest of us rammed our axes in as far as possible and held on to his rope with all our strength. As we peered over we could barely see anything, and the bergschrund loomed out like an immense chasm; but when our turn came to descend we found the reality not so bad as we had imagined.

We lit the lanterns at 7.45, and came quickly down the snow, which was extremely soft; we often sank in up to our knees, just as if it was still hot afternoon instead of night. We reached the moraine at 8.32, discarded the rope to which we had been attached for just 20½ hours, had a meal by a little stream, and started off again in half an hour. We soon struck the track from the Jardin, and found the iron stanchions that abound on it where it descends to the Mer de Glace very helpful by lantern light, although in broad daylight we should probably have despised the presence of such adventitious aids. We could now see the lights of the Montenvers in the distance, and they in return saw our lanterns, and inferred that we were safely on the way home. We came steadily down the Mer de Glace, got off at the usual spot, enjoyed a refreshing drink at the spring which supplies the Montenvers, came along the Ponts track, and reached the Montenvers at 12.5 A.M. Our expedition had lasted for 24 hours 3 minutes, of which only 2 hours 11 minutes had been spent in halts, so that we had been actually on the move for 21 hours 52 minutes.

A DAY ON THE GLACIER DE MOIRY.

BY A. C. DOWNER.

A BRIGHT summer afternoon at Zinal, a merry strolling party, guides, a porter, we ourselves, ladies and a friend to see us start, the Besso standing up in the sunlight, the Navigenze roaring over the stones, the Hôtel Durand behind us, and 5.10 P.M. of the clock on July 23, 1902; these are the colours on the palette of memory. We wandered on together as far as the bridge, and then our friends bade us farewell, kodaking us pitilessly as we turned to go. Our party consisted of Messrs. G. E. Gask, J. Walter Robson, and the