

speaker, and how far we scouts or pioneers are from having exhausted even our Alpine playground as a field for intelligent and systematic research.

And even if the value to others of his travels may be doubtful, the Alpine explorer is sure of his reward. What has been said of books is true also of mountains—they are the best of friends. Poets and geologists may proclaim—

‘The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands.’

But for us creatures of a day the great mountains stand fast, the Jungfrau and Mont Blanc do not change. Through all the vicissitudes of life we find them sure and sympathetic companions. Let me conclude with two lines which I copied from a tomb in Santa Croce at Florence—

‘Huc properate, viri, salebrosum scandite montem,
Pulchra laboris erunt præmia, palma, quies.’

A PILGRIMAGE TO MONTE VISO.

By WM. ANDERTON BRIGG.

NO mountain in the Alps is more happily named than Monte Viso, for none is better seen of all men, whether they be climbers of the high peaks or dwellers in the plain. It stands so near the great valley of the Po and so far from any rivals that it is clearly visible from all sides, and is a striking feature in the view, not only from the plains, but also from almost every peak in the Western and Central Alps.

The late Mr. Wm. Mathews was the first to climb the Viso,* and Mr. Coolidge contributed an exhaustive article to the ‘Journal’ in 1881.† These and a note on its recent history‡ render any further description of the peak, on my part, unnecessary. And if English climbers had visited and described it as often and as well as our French and Italian climbers—I refer especially to Sig. Guido Rey’s paper in the ‘Bollettino’ (vol. xx. No. 54), M. de Cessole’s in the ‘Revue Alpine’ (vol. x. p. 33), and Sig. Valbusa’s exhaustive monograph in a recent issue of the ‘Bollettino’ (vol. xxxvi. No. 69)—I should have had no excuse for this article. But the Viso lies so far south of the ordinary track that few English climbers seem to visit it, and none, so far as I know, have written

* *Peaks Passes and Glaciers*, 2nd series, vol. ii.

† *Alpine Journal*, x. 458.

‡ *Ibid.* xxii. 186.

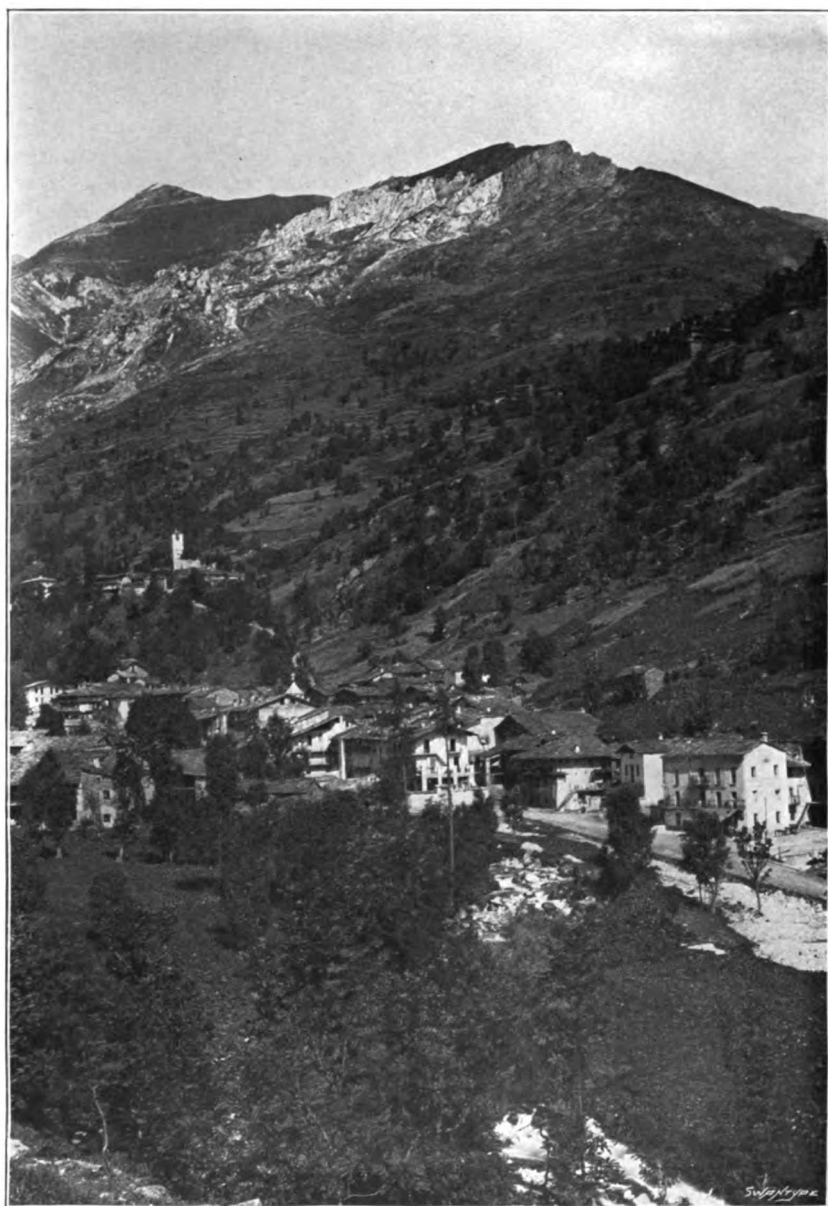


Photo. by Eric. Greenwood.

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CRISSOLO.

about it recently; while recent experiences, even on better known mountains, have always some value.

The Viso is usually climbed from Crissolo in the Po valley, and less frequently from Castel Delfino in the Val Varaita, and on the French side from Abriès in the Queyras valley. There are carriage-roads to all three places connecting them with the railway, and one of these would have been our quickest and easiest way of reaching the mountain. But we were old-fashioned enough to prefer the more seemly if slower way of approaching the presence of a great mountain by reverent stages, just as one does the shrine of a great temple or the throne-room of a great monarch, by successive courts and ante-rooms, for so are its beauties enhanced. The pilgrim mountaineer who has approached Mont Blanc by way of the Tarentaise or the High Level Route is in a much better frame of mind to appreciate its beauties than the sleepy and dust-covered *voyageur* who is bundled out at the Chamonix station or at the Hôtel Royal at Courmayeur.

There are three great 'pilgrim ways' to the Viso—from the south by way of the Maritime Alps, from the west by the Dauphiny and the Cottian Alps, (itself their crown and glory), and from the north, as we approached it, by a traverse across the Waldensian Valleys.

These valleys, which are, roughly speaking, three in number—the Val de Pragelas, Fênestrelles, or Perosa, the Val Germanasca, and the Val Pellice—all run from west to east into the plain of Piedmont and pour their united waters into the Po. The district drained by them is encircled on the north by the valley of the Dora Riparia, down which the Chambéry-Turin Railway runs, and bounded on the south by the valley of the Po. Much has been written about them and their history in other branches of literature, but nothing, so far as I know, in these pages, and not much in Alpine works at all. They lay, indeed, in the route of Sir Martin Conway's journey along 'the Alps from End to End,' but I suspect, from his guarded allusions to them, that he circumvented them by road or rail. The new 'Ball,' however, contains all the traveller and climber can want, and makes any detailed description of our route unnecessary. The maps especially we found very useful.

Susa, in the Dora Riparia Valley, would have been the best starting-point for our trip, but we decided to begin at Modane on the French side of the Tunnel. We made it the starting point of a pilgrimage northward to Mont Blanc in

1901, already described in these pages,* and to make another from it southward would complete a few more links in our acquaintance with the main chain of the Alps.

We took train from Chambéry to Modane on the morning of July 25, 1908, after sending off our heavy luggage to La Bérarde in the Dauphiny, and drove up the Mont Cenis road as far as Bramans, whence a walk through the pine woods in occasional rain brought us, in three hours, to Les Planais, where we found decent accommodation, not in the rude chalets we had expected, but at a small mountain inn (the Refuge du Mont Cenis). A company of French Alpine troops and a suspicious gendarme who asked for our passports showed that we were approaching the frontier.

Envious mists had prevented us seeing anything but the lower slopes of the Alps of the Tarentaise on the north side of the Arc Valley, and we were not much luckier next day.

We left at 7 A.M. (July 26), and, after following the Petit Mont Cenis road to the Fesse chalets, mounted by a steep footpath through a wood, and along a hillside to the Savine chalets in three hours—guided thither by one of the shepherds whom we came across in the mist, just when we had lost our bearings. Another hour took us to the Lac de Savine at the foot of the easy slopes of the Dents d'Ambin, and we were tempted to do what 'Ball' seems to expect of all wanderers like ourselves, and 'spitz the col' by climbing the peak. But there was no time, and it may be taken as a general rule that for a guideless party to attempt this addition to the day's work means getting down to the night's quarters much later than is comfortable.

We accordingly went on to the frontier close at hand, where the path crosses the Col de Clapier and plunges down steep slopes into the Clarea glen. There was a *douanier's* hut on the col, but no fortifications or soldiers, and the gendarmes only inquired after contraband tobacco.

The first part of the path is carried down a rock staircase called the Escalier, and it was not easy to imagine how Hannibal, who is supposed by some writers to have chosen this route for invading Italy, got his elephants down it. Even mules would find it difficult. Henri Arnaud, however, led his little band of heroes this way in their '*glorieuse rentrée*' into their own country in 1689, and we could sympathise with them in being compelled by their enemies to

* *Alpine Journal*, xxi. 215.

turn up over the steep cliffs on the right hand instead of going straight down to the valley.

More fortunate than they, we made our way down the glen, stopping for milk at the Molaretto chalets, and walking delicately along the outer edge of a 'wasserleitung' which is built up against the cliff, and forms the only path out of the lower end of the glen to the smiling orchards and meadows of Jaillon below. We had a striking view of the great valley of the Dora Riparia, bounded on the south by the Waldensian hills, which we hoped to cross on the morrow, and guarded at its outlet towards Turin by the white monastery of St. Michel la Cluse, perched on a high promontory of rock. The view is almost if not quite as fine as that of the Dora Baltea from above Aosta.

We dropped down into the Mont Genis road some miles above Susa by winding narrow lanes, whose smooth cobblestone pavements the natives were making even smoother by the sleds on which they were carrying their hay down to the village, and reached the town at 7 P.M.

We spent an hour next morning (July 28) looking at the old Cathedral, where the bronze triptych made to commemorate the ascent of the Roche Melon in 1358 was being exhibited in preparation for the approaching annual pilgrimage up that mountain, and at a well-preserved Roman arch erected to record the submission of King Cottius, and inscribed with the names of the fourteen Alpine tribes who owned his sway, and we did not get away until 8.30 A.M.

We reached Meana in one hour by a winding lane, and then, crossing under the railway and up through a chestnut glade, reached and followed the many zigzags and long reaches of a splendidly engineered carriage-road to the Col des Fenêtres in four hours from Susa. It was a hot day, and as the only *cantine* (a military one) was closed, we had to be content with milk at some chalets, which were dirty even for Italy. How much better these things are managed in Tirol!

We had been surprised at the absence of traffic on a road so well adapted for it, and not until we reached the fort at the top and found that the road, instead of going down into the valley on the other side, was continued along the hillside to the W. in the direction of the frontier, did we realise that it had been built, not as a highway, but for military purposes, just as the king's paths in the Eastern Graians have been built for sportsmen and not for tourists.

A sentry met us on the col and asked for our passports and—cameras! The former, of course, we gladly showed, but

our three 'camerarii' (if I may coin the word) were unusually reluctant to produce the latter, although each of them, like Simeon, had one in his sack's mouth. The 'model,' however, whose artistic efforts are confined to 'posing in the foreground' and suggesting impossible 'subjects,' came forward and displayed the useful but inartistic contents of his sack with such apparent goodwill and innocence, that the sentry, though suspicious, reluctantly allowed us to depart without more trouble, being, in fact, told to do so by a sergeant who had strolled up. and we went on our way with mixed feelings, for the true artist would rather lose his clothes than his camera. We had fewer cases of 'shocking exposure' than usual after this, which was, of course, explained by the 'lack of subjects.'

The reason for all this vigilance became apparent as we went down the green uplands to Fènestrelles and saw on our left a great fortress, running up the hillside, and guarding the highway up the valley over the Col de Sestrières and the Mont Genève to Briançon in France, so that the Italian Government naturally objects to any casual stranger photographing it.

Fènestrelles is a little town lying at the foot of this fortress, with a large church built, as the inscription on its imposing façade proudly states, by the great Louis, to commemorate the extirpation of heresy in these parts. We saw a man threshing ('willeying' is, I believe, the technical term) wool on its front steps by means of a flail made out of a piece of iron wire with a small hook at the end.

We slept at a quaint little inn built round a small courtyard, where we dined in the company of Italian tourists and officers, and listened to the regimental buglers in the village street as they played the good-night on brazen horns which seemed still to echo with

that long stern swell
That bids the Romans close.

We left next morning at 7 A.M. (July 29), and, crossing the stream, mounted upwards by the ruins of an old fort, whose embrasures, pointing down the valley, told of a time when the upper part of the valley belonged to France, and, following a wooded glen, traversed the interminable mule-track beyond to the Col d'Albergian, which we reached in 6 hrs., from Fènestrelles. We had some good views of the country to the N., and noted especially the Bessanese at the head of the Val d'Ala, whose last rocks had foiled one of our party in 1899.

We had seen the inevitable fort as we approached the col, and expected more trouble, but the Italian officer who met us there was kindness itself, and took us down to his little barracks and gave us an excellent cup of coffee. He spoke very fair English, the first and last we heard during our walk, and seemed very pleased to meet any one from the outside world, after his six weeks' sojourn among the mountains. He had about thirty men under him, stationed in simple but scrupulously clean barracks with cubicles in the sleeping quarters.

We spent an hour there, and, after hearty farewells, made our way down through the mountain mist, over ugly cliffs and stony wastes to the Ortière chalets in the Val del Piz, where we stopped for more coffee-boiling with a Protestant herdsman, whose intelligent features suggested inherited tendencies. We went on past Balsiglia, with its natural rock fortress, where Arnaud's little band defied for some days the united armies of France and Savoy, and at Champ de Salse called upon the Protestant pastor, M. Tron. He was unfortunately away from home, but Madame Tron was good enough to give us afternoon tea, and her son accompanied us for a mile on our road down the valley, here called the Val Massello.

We had to hurry down past the chestnut groves and limpid torrents foaming into marble basins of this lovely valley, and it was falling dark when we reached Perrero at 8.20 p.m.

Small as Perrero is, it is said to support two inns—one being of the Roman Catholic interest and the other the Protestant—but we only discovered the former (the H. Caccia Reale), or rather the enterprising landlord lay in wait for us, and took us in and cooked us a good supper, late as it was. The rooms of the inn are built round a courtyard, and can only be reached by outside staircases, which are more inconvenient than those built on our system, but more economical of space and better ventilated, besides giving careless architects who may have 'forgotten the staircase' a second chance.

We left next day (July 30) at 8.30 a.m., and walked a mile or two down the valley, past a mill for grinding talc, which is brought down from the hillside on a wire rope, and, crossing the stream, walked up through the maize fields and orchards of the Riclaretto hamlets to the bare grassy uplands which encircle the head of a great glen running eastward down to St. Germano. We traversed round from here to the Col de Seiran, admiring the blue outlines of the Eastern Maritime Alps in the far S., and went down to Pra del Torno in the Val Angrogna—a lovely wooded valley, now peaceful and

deserted, but the scene of some bloody fighting in the bad old days.

These valleys owe much to the generosity of English sympathisers, but Pra del Torno might well have been graced by a more suitable church, built as it is in the Scotch Gothic style, appropriate perhaps in Thrums or Drumtochty, but terribly out of keeping with its lovely surroundings here.

We followed the valley down to Torre Pellice (or La Tour as it is commonly called), bathing on the way in a splendid pool, and stopping for afternoon coffee at the Pome d'Oro, in the hamlet of St. Lorenzo. The path mounts high above the stream to reach this place, and sinks again to La Tour, through woodlands and meadows, and past white campaniles grouped in true Italian fashion.

We reached La Tour at 7.30 P.M., and found excellent quarters at the Hôtel de l'Ours. La Tour is the capital town of these valleys, with a college and several cotton-spinning mills, and cheerful well-made streets. It would have been a good centre for exploring the remoter valleys, but we had not seen yet the Viso, or indeed any other mountain worth climbing; and the more ardent spirits among us were getting restive, and made disparaging allusions to rambles in Lakeland and mountaineering on mule-tracks. So we decided to make a push for Crissolo by the Colle delle Porte, the nearest way.

We accordingly left La Tour, crowded with peasants come in for the fair, at 7 A.M. the next day (July 31), and walked down the level road to Luserna, where the road for the Colle delle Porte crosses the Pellice river and mounts by the W. side of the Rora Glen. But we read the map in 'Ball' carelessly, and, crossing the Rora stream, mounted up through a wood on its eastern side, and it was not until we saw the village of Rora, far below on the other side of the glen, that we realised our mistake, and it then seemed too late to return. We accordingly followed the path up to the head of the valley, where excellent flagstones of unusual size were being quarried and carried down one at a time in frail mule-carts, and coming out above at a single chalet, marked Montoso in Ball's map, found ourselves suddenly looking straight down on 'all the Italian plain.' It was indeed the view of a lifetime. Not, as so often, veiled in mist, but glowing warm in the afternoon sun, the green grey plain lay like a great sea lapping the foot-hills of the Alps, seamed with straight dusty roads and winding stone-strewn river beds, and dotted with red-roofed towns—Bricherasio, Pinerolo,



Eric Greenwood, photo.

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MONTE VISO FROM COL. BERNARD.

Cavour, Villafranca, and the rest—whose very names are as music. On the eastern horizon shone the white roofs of Turin and the Superga, to the S.E. Saluzzo nestled at the foot of a long hill promontory, and in the far S. lay Cuneo, a thin line of pearl, backed by the blue range of the Maritime Alps.

For once the frozen ridges of the high Alps, seen but dimly in the far N., had to give place to the subtler beauties of the historic plain, and we gazed long and lingeringly.

Chaucer must surely have seen this view when he sang :

There is at the west end of Itaile,
 Doun at the root of Vesulus the colde,
 A lusty playn, abundant of vitaille,
 Wher many a tour and town thou maist byholde . . .
 That foundid were in tyme of fadres old,
 And many anothir delitable sight
 And Saluces [Saluzzo] is this noble country hight.

We wended our way upwards over swelling mountain pastures round the head of a great 'combe' which ran down in darkling folds to the plain, and, turning westward at 6.30 P.M., struck the Col Bernard (which, by the bye, is not mentioned in 'Ball'), but which is, I think, just to the S. of the Pta d'Ostanetta of Ball's map, and at last—and at once—the great Viso soared up into the evening sky, half hidden in streaming clouds. It was a dramatic *coup d'œil*, worthy to compare with the first view of the Ortler from the Stelvio, the Dent Blanche from the Trift-joch, or the Matterhorn from the last turn in the Zermatt road.

It was clouding over and daylight fast departing, but, like true pilgrims, the 'camerarii' stooped down and paid homage in their wonted fashion.

Crissolo, in the narrow valley of the Po, was hidden by the low hog-backed hill which divides that valley from the affluent torrent of Tossiet, but we could see the white tower of St. Chiaffredo's shrine that overhangs the village, and, racing eagerly down the intervening alps, we passed through several smaller villages, and, joining the road from the Colle delle Porte, felt our way down into Crissolo at 9 P.M.

And so at length was our five days' pilgrimage accomplished, not, indeed, without labour, but not without reward. Swelling snow fields, pitiless rock slabs, and steep ice slopes are good; but so also are sunny alps, cool woods, and clear rushing streams. And over these valleys, moreover, broods a haunting glamour and a pathos, subtle but penetrating, and not easily shaken off.

Crissolo is still much as Mr. Coolidge and Mr. Freshfield described it in these pages more than twenty years ago,* and the Hotel del Gallo, where we stayed the first night, is still open. But we preferred the new and quieter Hotel della Corona, with its tiny bedrooms, open staircases, and sunny balconies.

We found the place full of Alpine soldiery, come down for the Sunday's rest—tall gunners from the Abruzzi, sturdy infantry, and smart Bersaglieri. There were a few visitors, mostly Italians come to see the famous source of their great river, but there were no climbers.

We spent our first off-day in this pleasant spot, and I ask for none better. There are not many 'side-shows.' St. Chiaffredo's Church, a quarter of an hour's walk away on the hillside, is worth a visit, with a splendid view of the Viso from the terrace in front, and a collection of votive offerings on its walls—muskets of the Emancipation time, fetterlocks, crutches, and such like. There is also a cave (del Rio Martino) which the others, less idle than myself, spent a couple of hours in visiting, but their reports were not enthusiastic. 'Speleology' is perhaps an acquired taste, and I was led to believe that there is something to be said for Mark Twain's plan of doing some part of a trip by deputy.

We had been told that Claudio Perotti, to whom we had sent a post-card, was the best guide, and we were lucky enough to find him at liberty. He is a sturdy red-bearded man of forty, full of strength and energy, Syndic of the Commune, and holder of the 'World's Record' for the Viso (200 odd not out). With larger opportunities he would have made a great name among guides. He can speak French.

He showed a touching confidence in our climbing powers, and straightway decided that we must cross the mountain by its N.E. face by a route, as we afterwards learnt, taken first by Mr. Coolidge, in 1881, and only twice repeated since, with a variation at the beginning, which avoids the dangerous 'Coolidge couloir.' Had we known more about it, we might have weakened in favour of the ordinary route by the S. face, but *beati ignorantes* has many good days to answer for.

We were four in number, and we expected Perotti would have asked for at least one other guide, but he laughed at the idea, and only asked that the sacks might be sent round to the Quintino Sella hut on the other side:—a suggestive contrast to the guides of Sulden, who, this year, refused to

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. x. p. 453.



F. Capello, photo.

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THE VISO AND VISOLOTTO, FROM THE COLLE DELLA GIANA.

take our party (all members of the Club) up the Cevedale, a mountain which can be climbed up and down again from the hut in three hours, unless each one of us had a separate guide!

We walked up from Crissolo in the afternoon of August 2 to the Piano del Re, a wild mountain alp at the foot of the Viso, and slept at the Albergo Alpino, a decent mountain inn which would be none the worse for a 'spring clean.' The river Po rises close by among great boulders, even as Chaucer sings:

the Po out of a welle smal
Taketh his firste spryngyng and his sours.

All good Italians have to see this place once, but then fortunately do not require the accessories of mountain railways and tea-gardens which some other nations seem to think a part of their Nature worship.

The Viso had been hidden in mist as we walked up, but this had disappeared before bedtime, and it was fine when we started next morning (August 3) at 3.50 A.M. Two hours took us by the Col dei Viso path to the foot of the rocks, where we roped, and began the climb by a rock couloir a little to the E. of the snow couloir by which Mr. Coolidge made the first ascent of this the N.E. face.

We spent the next nine hours on this splendid rock face, making our way by gullies and traverses and rock pitches, climbing strenuously but slowly, for we were five on the rope and not in good form, and Perotti was suffering from a cold. We followed the route taken by Sig. Guido Rey and M. de Cessole, and, except for the first bit, by Mr. Coolidge, and their descriptions, of which summaries appeared recently in the *Journal*,* are so clear and full that any by me would be superfluous. I was last on the rope and not, therefore, well placed for getting an accurate impression of the difficulties of the climb. When the men in front have tackled a difficult bit and are anxious to get on, there is a tendency for the man below to make use of the rope in order to oblige them. And whilst there were some places where the rocks were a bit rotten and others where one had to fumble a bit for holds, there was nothing supremely difficult. We had good weather, the snow slope near the top was in splendid order, the rocks were free from ice, and no stones fell, so that we had no excuse for being so long as we were.

We had plenty of time during the ascent to admire the

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xxii. p. 136.

view to the N. Mont Blanc and the Tarentaise Graian and Pennine ranges in turn were greeted as old friends, not always, however, without discussion, at the rope's length, as to their identity, and it is indeed wonderful how many different names a peak may have given to it under such circumstances. Mont Blanc alone, like a true monarch, wore his crown of clouds; the rest stood bare—Grande Casse, Grand Paradis, Grand Combin, and queen of them all, Monte Rosa, glowing through the haze like a great opal. It is in distant views like this that snow mountains assert their supremacy, and the great Matterhorn, dwindled to a mere *aiguille*, made a poor show in that stately company. There was some haze in the far east, and I cannot positively say that we saw the Ortler or the Bernina group; but when we were on the Disgrazia this year we thought we saw the Viso. Nor do I remember being much struck with the view over the plain; I remember better the blue ridges of the Maritimes standing out sharply against the clear sky. The Mediterranean was not visible. On the French side lay a welter of grey brown mountains and the Alps of Dauphiny.

We reached the summit at 3.20 P.M., but did not stop long, as there was a cool wind, and we were anxious to get down to the Q. Sella hut, where the two porters we had sent over the Col dei Viso with our sacks would be waiting for us.

We took a long time to get down the easy S. face, which is all rock, and only reached the hut by some delightful glissades over winter snow at 6.15 P.M. We had long given up our original plan of going down to Castel Delfino the same evening, and were looking forward to a fairly comfortable night at the hut. But when we found there was no wood for the stove and only two or three blankets, we hesitated, and when we found further that the hotel people had contented themselves with putting the extra food we had ordered into the bill, and not into the sacks, we decided to make a push for the valley, for we had finished all our other provisions. Perotti could not go with us, as he had to get back to Crissolo that night for another party, but we vainly imagined that there must be a path which we could follow even in the dark, and accordingly set off.

All went well at first. The path was good, although covered in places by winter snow, but the night was drawing in and the little lakes we passed looked very cold and cheerless. But soon we came to the head of the gloomy Forciolline glen, and the path seemed to disappear into the torrent.

'Ball's' directions are not always plain sailing, even in day-

light, and when we read in the dim twilight that in coming *up from Castel Delfino* 'it is necessary to climb up the steep 'rocky barrier on the W. side of the stream by a green gully 'and a rocky hollow and over a shoulder, in order to gain the 'upper basin' where we were standing, our hearts sank within us, for there was nothing but a steep slope of rock on that side, and we were much too tired to play tricks on it. But we could not stop there all night, and as there seemed more chance of finding an outlet on the left-hand side we went on. The glen, however, grew narrower and more broken, and although we tried sometimes to fancy we were on a path it was a sorry make-believe, and we had to content ourselves in the end with scrambling down the big boulders, keeping close to and sometimes crossing the roaring torrent, which in one place made quite a respectable waterfall, until, with the last gleam of daylight, the rocks opened out a bit and we found ourselves on more level ground. M. de Cessole, in his paper, calls this glen 'fastidieux,' and I thank him for the word.

The village was still hours away down in the valley, and so far as we could make out from the map there were no chalets near, although there were plenty of enormous rocks which looked for all the world like chalets in the deceitful moonlight. So, as it was a warm night, we decided to accept the fate which comes to all climbers sooner or later, and sleep out.

We chose a big rock with sufficient shelter against the thin night breeze, but none against the dewfall, put on what extra clothing we had with us in our bags, took our suppers as eaten, and made the best of it. It was not really cold, and with a full moon and a starry sky to keep us company we slept tolerably, and envied no one, and rose at sunrise refreshed, but still hungry. There was, of course, no bill to pay, and our Treasurer was as pleased with this new source of economy as the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be with a new source of revenue.

We found, of course, on starting that we had been sleeping not far from the path, and not more than half an hour above the first chalets (those of Soulières) in the woods below, where we stopped on our way down for some milk. We reached Castel Delfino in the hot Val Varaita in 3 hrs., and spent the day there, feeding on strange meats (the afternoon tea was made from herbs) and sleeping in the cool shadow of an old tower built in the fourteenth century by the Dauphins of France, when the higher parts of the valley still belonged to them.

We stayed at the Auberge de la Croix Blanche, a common

country inn with only one living room, but decent beds, a poor exchange for the sweet spaciousness of the previous night. There is, I believe, another hotel (the Hotel di Francia) which I have seen described as *aliquanto primordiale*, and I cannot think of a better epithet for ours.

We might have got away by the carriage road down the valley to Turin, but it seemed more becoming to leave 'the presence' of the great mountain as we had entered it—reverently and on foot; so we decided to 'retire backward,' as it were, into France by way of the Col de Lautaret to Maljasset in the Val d'Ubaye.

We chose this route in preference to that which leads by the Col d'Agnel to Abriès in the Guil Valley, as Mr. Coolidge's description of Maljasset in the Journal* and in 'Ball'† had made us anxious to see it.

Either route would lead us up to the head of one valley and down the corresponding valley on the other side, which after all is an easier and more natural method of travelling than our previous switchback plan of crossing mountain ridges diagonally.

We left Castel Delfino without any regret at 6.30 A.M. (August 5), taking a mule with us to carry the sacks as far as the col, and walked up the Val Varaita in the hot morning sun, past the picturesque villages of Bellino and Celle, which latter we found blocked with a train of mountain artillery, to the 'grangia,' or alp of Cejol. The parish priest of Celle walked with us for an hour—a stout hearty man, who seemed glad of any one to talk to in this quiet valley.

The Pelvo d'Elva towered up on our left hand and looked most unattractively steep and barren in the hot sun.

Beyond Cejol the mule-track leads through a narrow defile, aptly called the Barricata, which must be much exposed to avalanches in the spring, and up green pastures gay with flowers, to the Lautaret chalets in the centre of a wild *cirque* of jagged rock peaks called the Dents de Maniglia.‡ We stopped a few minutes to cook some food and gather the 'chive' which grows wild here—the only place where I have found it in the Alps—and then, having dismissed the mule, ascended by easy scree slopes to the col, where we expected to find soldiers, or at any rate gendarmes, as it is on the frontier between France and Italy. But the route is so little used apparently that neither country seems to think these precautions

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. x. p. 123.

† P. 37.

‡ *Alpine Journal*, vol. xv. p. 290.

necessary. We had a farewell glimpse of the Viso from the chalets, and a view of the Dauphiny Alps from the col.*

We jogged quietly down the long green valley on the other side to Maljasset, trying to find a path, with indifferent success, through the steep wood which overhangs the eastern shores of the Lac du Paroird, once a fine sheet of water, but now only a mud flat, and in the end wading the stream that flows through it.

Maljasset, or Maurin, as it is commonly called (which we reached at 5.30 p.m.), does not seem to have altered at all in the twenty-five years which have elapsed since Mr. Coolidge described it in these pages, and has yet to make the first step towards becoming worthy of its claim to be 'one of the finest mountaineering headquarters of the S.W. Alps.' † Some mountaineering centres are born great, others achieve greatness, others, again, appear to resent even having greatness thrust upon them; and Maljasset is one of them. There is, indeed, an inn (*chez André*), but it is of the rudest kind, with only one bedroom, which we found already occupied, and we had to sleep in the 'best bedrooms' of the landlord's friends in the village. Nor were there any guides hanging about, and the only unemployed person was a gendarme, who asked for our passports and flattered us by suggesting we might be English officers come to study the frontier!

But, after all, a centre must have a circumference, and a mountaineering centre must have some mountains round it. And, although Maljasset has such peaks as the Chambeyron and the Font Sancte, they are not snow mountains. One is almost tempted to apply to it the remark of Dr. Johnson to a young poet, and say that the claims of Maljasset will be remembered when those of Zermatt and Chamonix are forgotten—but not till then!

It would not be a bad place, however, to spend a few quiet days in, and some allowance must be made for the 'jaundiced eye' of mountain lovers who had been 'mountaineering' for a fortnight without cutting an ice step, and were pining for the keener air of the Dauphiny Alps.

There is a carriage road down the Val d'Ubaye, and, following the good mountaineering rule of never walking when you can ride, we packed ourselves next morning (August 6) into the only vehicle of which the village boasted, a crazy two-wheeled pony cart, and started at 7.30 a.m. with as much dignity as a bumpy road would allow. The first hour took

* See further as to this col, *Alpine Journal*, vol. x. p. 350.

† *Ball*, p. 87.

us down a wild and barren tract to the Châtelet, a great rocky barrier through which the torrent has forced a narrow gorge, and the second through a fertile valley basin to St. Paul sur Ubaye, where we lunched at the Hotel Brémond, and then, in the hot noontide, turned up to the W. and left the Ubaye valley by the well-graded carriage road of the Col de Vars. We had a fine view from the top of the Brec de Chambeyron in the E. and the Pelvoux in the W., and, descending on the other side by rolling pastures and pine woods, finally zigzagged down a very striking mass of limestone weathered into fantastic shapes into the town of Guillestre, in the valley of the Guil, at 5.30 P.M., thankful for having escaped any more serious mishap to our carriage than a broken backboard.

The best hotel at Guillestre has been closed, and the others are not very good.

We drove down to the railway station next morning, passing under the ramparts of Mont Dauphin, took train to La Bessée, drove to Ville Vallouise, slept at the new inn (clean and good) at Ailefroide, and crossed next day by the Col du Sélé—our first and last glacier excursion—to La Bérarde, where we picked up our luggage and correspondence, rested Sunday, and went home next day by way of Bourg d'Oisans, Grenoble, and Chambéry.

If I have pitched the story of our little pilgrimage in a minor key, I would plead that Alpine music is not all grand opera nor yet all musical comedy, and there is still room, I trust, for the humbler melody of the 'oaten flute.'

THE TRIDENT DE LA BRENVA.

BY THE EDITOR.

I SPOKE of my main object in going to the Alps in 1902 to neither small nor great save to my old friend Tempest Anderson, who had just returned from a close inspection of the eviscerated Soufrière, and had narrowly escaped the vengeance which Mont Pelée deals out not only to those who dwell at his feet but also to such as presume even from a distance to examine the methods of his murders. His talk was of Wallibu and Rabaka and such like euphonious streams, and recent memories of them drowned the appeal of the Dora Baltea and Arveyron: so I departed alone.

I had set my heart on the Trident de la Brenva and was ablaze to set my feet on him too. So after a delightful little