

of rock with Captain Corry's little heap of stones. To the left, at the foot of the last slope, there are also a few rocks. The summit itself is snowcapped and heavily corniced to the N. and W. and less so to the E.

Owing to its isolation and the pointed shape of the peak, the view on all sides is very striking. We look right over the top of the intervening ridges to the extended snowy line of the Pir Panjal Range, the chief points of which, the Brahma, Tatticooti, and Sunset Peaks, are clearly visible. To the N. range upon range stands up with peculiar sharpness. The dazzling white Nanga Parbat ridge at once catches the eye, and forms indeed the extreme boundary to the N. The snowy plateau of Nun Kun to the E. is plainly visible, with, rising from it, the great peak hitherto unclimbed. Quite near, and facing us to the N.E., is the group of Amarnath peaks picturesquely enclosing a snowy amphitheatre.

Heavy clouds were piling up ; so we felt it unwise to delay our descent. This was indeed rather more difficult than the ascent. Fortunately we had quitted the main arête before we were overtaken by night. And the light of the moon, which was nearly full, enabled us to make our way down to our little shelter tent. The climb had taken about sixteen hours. It would be possible to do it, under favourable conditions, in two or three hours less than this, but the risk would rise in direct proportion.

THREE WEEKS OF THE 1911 SEASON.

By J. H. CLAPHAM.

THEY all ought to cherish its memory—those who made great new ascents, those who sat about the knees of the giants or found their steeper shoulders unexpectedly kind, and those who went shouting from valley to valley able to reckon with a growing certainty that cloud would never drive them back, but that a way would be found over peak or pass into a fresh land. A fresh land after a real climb at least every second night is the wanderer's dream, and in 1911 he often dreamed true.

On a Sunday afternoon (July 30) three of us left the men of Turtmann, heavy with their Sunday drinking in the shade, to the fumes of the Rhone valley. The Rhone valley was

hotter than the plains of Egypt, so at least a gnarled peasant down there said, who boasted that he had been an Egyptian military policeman in Arabi's day, and that therefore he knew. Very slowly, with the sulky persistence of the untrained, we rose through the steep forest of the Turtmannthal, took our first ritual wayside bathe in an inadequate stream at seven in the evening, and walked into the hotel at Gruben in our slippers. One of us, though broken in to rock, had never stepped on a glacier, so it was decided that a day should go in introductions. That meant two nights in the Turtmannthal, but to make the balance even we did not again spend two nights in the same place until we had climbed a couple of peaks at the head of the Val d'Isère. On the third day we crossed the Bruneggjoch—a better route than the books say—to Herbriggen and Randa, and discovered what the fine season had made out of icefalls of no reputation. We found our own way off the ice and, when all but hung up in the plunging gullies on the wall between the snow-line and Herbriggen, I went near to repenting of a rather vain-glorious ignorance of the civilised valley of St. Nicholas that I have nursed for ten years. Next day, after extracting the fourth member of the party from the train at Randa, we shopped and teaed and met friends, yet would not sleep, in Zermatt. Lounging up towards the Staffel Alp we were caught by the one real storm of the season, a storm that wavered along the Saasgrat and hid the peaks in turn. Even then there was a hay chalet near, where we lay to gossip, and when the rain was over and gone there was a walk through the scented forest to dinner.

That night Werner, the newly joined number four, preached for the first of many times a discourse on two old texts of his. They are very simple, and for all I know they may be a stale orthodoxy to the wise, but we had never tried to live them out till 1911. The first is easy of practice and it just says: Stay on your peak or your pass as long as ever you can. The second is in part as old as Whymper's 'Scrambles,' and it says: Go to your hut or your bivouac early, and if you have an off day start that also early, so that when you idle you may idle high. For two days the precepts were well observed, and they never were wantonly denied to the end.

I wished to revisit the Col de Valpelline and to take the Tête de Valpelline on the way, thinking that it must be a noble view-point. It is, and, though we came rather late to its crest, we spent nearly two hours there close to the sun looking across at the Dent d'Hérens and the great boundary ridge of



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DENT D'HÉRENS
FROM TÊTE DE VALPELLINE.

the Val Tournanche or trying to recall the names of those rust-red, iron-grey, or banded yellow peaks of the Upper Valpelline which make one of the finest schemes of rock colouring that I know. Then down, led on by hopes of refinding after seven years a sunny bathing-pool above Prarayé, fed by water—warmed on the alp—that slides into it unbroken down a long steep slab. A swift glissade between the upper and lower basins of the Za-de-Zan helped us to reach the pool before the sun had left it, for the Valpelline stretches out on a clean-cut line into the west; and we rioted naked in the pastures.

How early the start was in the morning I do not quite remember. Not very early, but anyhow we were drinking milk at noon by the Grande Place d'Oren 1000 ft. or so above Prarayé, and we spent the afternoon trying to invent Cumberland gully climbs—with very fair success—on the flanks of the Becca Vannetta. Before this we had found a cave, a double cave, for the night. There was no great call to bivouac, but we wanted to try sleeping out with no paraphernalia of porters and blankets. In the lower story of the cave were some sheep's bones and, it was said, some moss or other herbage. The upper story was a rock cleft with an overhang into which two men might wedge. To the older and tougher pair went the cleft, and yet those who were given the herbage and the bones said that they never slept. For my part I slept an hour or two before midnight, until the chill struck up from the rock through my spare shirts and things. Then I got out and lit my pipe, and from the darkness of a moonlight shadow watched the swing of the constellations, while below me Werner, who had also given up the cleft, appeared to be cuddling the ashes of the fire on which we had cooked our supper.

Whether it was a broken night or bad climbing I cannot say, but we were beaten next morning in an attempt at La Sengla from the Col d'Oren. No, not absolutely beaten; but we started so late and got so slowly up the rotten and difficult rocks that either the summit or our plan of sleeping at Mauvoisin had to be left. I knew that the hour which Ball gives for the climb must be wrong, but I supposed that with clean rock three or four hours would take us up and down. Now I doubt whether less than five or six would ever suffice, and as we were climbing that day it would have been seven or eight.* We decided against the summit. We had not much reserve food, and did not know what chance there was of picking up

* See Capt. Farrar's note in the August number of the JOURNAL.

enough for four at Chanrion. Then too we wanted to cross the Combin on Monday.

We might have taken our Sunday morning's rest somewhere higher than Mauvoisin had the next move been certain. My own idea was a bivouac above Chermontane or a midnight halt somewhere near the foot of the S.E. ridge of the Combin. We were to attack the ridge in light marching order, come back on our tracks and sleep at By. But I was outvoted or over-persuaded, and in the end we slept conventionally enough in the Panossière hut, after a killing ascent from Mauvoisin towards the Col des Otanes, through an alder-choked gully that recalled the lower slopes of the seaboard mountains of Norway—a gully with which no decent mountaineer should ever have got himself mixed up. It was my fault.

That night thunder broke over the Combin and we were glad that we were not being hunted out of a chilly bivouac at 10,000 ft. At two in the morning the air was still warm, the Corbassière ice hatefully slippery, and the face of the sky sullen. Dawn came yellow beneath the cloud above the little black peaks in the far N.E., like a bilious eye under a heavy lid. We did not mean to go back, and by this time we were in touch with the routes to Bourg St. Pierre and the Valsorey hut. If the day held we meant to see all we could of the mountain—for which two of us had often slept, but none had ever climbed—by combining the approach up the glacier from the N. with an ascent of the W. ridge and some sort of descent on the S. face. The day did hold. A little snow storm was blurring Mont Blanc and a very few flakes fell on us as we turned up the rocks shortly after seven; but the weather got no worse, and by ten we were on the Combin de Valsorey, having left our sacks some 750 ft. below at a point from which we could see a way down to the upper basin of the Sonadon glacier. Forty minutes in a hot cloud that had lately closed about the peak brought us to the Graffeneire. To the north and the east the masses of cumulus, dun and purple and brazen, laboured upwards one behind another scores of thousands of feet; but through the rifts we saw far into the south, and that is the view I love.

The southern face was easy enough, though icy in places, and no stones fell. By 3.20 we were boiling tea on the Col du Sonadon, once more in hot cloud, feeling that our day's work was nearly done. But the col is a full 5000 ft. above By and we took a wrong turning. As we went down the first slopes of the Mont Durand glacier the seniors felt sure that

they had sighted, once when the cloud broke, a rock ridge on the frontier line to our right whose E. end we must turn, so Siegfried said, to get to the Col de By. Hickman, who had seen his first glacier a week earlier, suggested with a decent modesty that it was not far enough down. This was treated as a voice of one advising from the perambulator, with the result that I had some stiff cutting across the top of an icefall, a descent last down a steep greasy buttress made of the beastliest of all the schists—the schist which seems to be stratified out of dirty burnt cardboard—and a second descent face in to a wet snow trough beside the lower part of the fall.

At the bottom we turned right and came to a most attractive little col, perhaps 20 yards wide, with two great topheavy rocks like toadstools standing sentinel on either side. There was the basin of By, dusty and sombre under the evening clouds that were now just above us; there was a bit of corrie glacier or snowfield at our feet, but we were certainly not on the Col de By. It must have been the Col d'Amianthe. The snowfield gave 500–600 ft. of superb glissade; the schisty slopes below it are easy going, the pastures easier still, and if the party had not got broken up, and if one had not gone lame, and if another—and he the heaviest—had not turned a complete somersault in jumping down very steep turf we might have been at By by 7.0. Actually it was 7.30. ❄️❄️

The woman at By, who is related to the Ruffiers of Courmayeur, proposes to build a little inn. She is a gifted and delightful host, and if she builds an inn it will succeed. I am the more thankful to have seen that wonderful basin again, the greatest and richest that I know, while she was still only intending. It lies there an immense irregular amphitheatre, miles across from the last spurs of the Mont Vélan to the harsh crags of the Mont Clapier, its eastern floor cut by the vale of the White Water, with a score of 'granges' and I suppose thousands of kine, looking out over the valley of Aosta at the Grivola and the southern sun. Nowhere can you talk cow more easily, and the cow-talk is particularly interesting because of the big private herds and private alps that are common on the Italian side. We slept that night, two by two, in the box beds of the woman's retainers. I can still see one of us lying late with open mouth and damaged face where the sunlight fell through the door on the hens, the children, the grown-ups, and himself. In our box the night's rest had been but moderate; yet I do not want to find anything more genteel when I return to By. My heart is up there among the

cows, though I had not Hickman's luck. Him the twelve-year-old daughter of the woman loved because of his ruddy countenance and his ingratiating address. 'Il est beau,' she said judicially, and I believe she was stitching on buttons or darning socks for him to the last.

You cannot work the Val d'Aosta all on foot, though Werner and I did once carry our packs five miles down its main road on an August day. We took a cart at Valpelline, and drove through the vineyards and the chestnuts and the market-women on mules into Aosta on the Tuesday night, and out again by the 5 o'clock diligence on the Wednesday morning. Some walked up the Val Grisanche and some up the Val de Rhêmes, all aiming at Fornet. Naturally the Val Grisanche people got there first. I was glad that I was of that section, because the uppers of my boots began to come away from the soles and Val Grisanche is a more likely place for cobblers. At the church-village a superior postmaster, leaning against his door-post in his shirt sleeves, said there was a cobbler up valley and a cobbler down valley, but no cobbler at Eglise. So we pressed on in a great heat to Fornet. There an excellent man known to many wanderers keeps beds, three of his own and more of his friends' at a pinch. He has an old mother who is a dear. She calls him 'the lad,' and she is a jealous guardian of his beds, a cautious retailer of his soft sugar. While he found the cobbler we bathed and made tea in the forest. The Val de Rhêmes people who came later, heated from the Col de Torrent, insisted on bathing in the village trough.

In that country the mountains run small; so, though we started late and never hurried, we had no difficulty in climbing the Granta Parei on the way to Val d'Isère next day. But in the honest memories of the day the peak is clouded with a great sorrow. There is much yellow marble in the rocks about the head of the Val de Rhêmes, especially in the Sassièren glen. Long ago Werner and I had found there a water-worn marble bathing trough, in which you could lie and be jostled downstream by a strong current. We had often talked of it. I dare say it had got longer and smoother and more obviously marbly with the years. Ever since Randa we had promised the others that bathe: it was one of the things that had decided our route. But we never found the place, though we searched until the going down of the sun. So we came late to Val d'Isère, and slept in the hay because of motorists and Alpine Chasseurs on manœuvres. It was good hay with rugs, and we slept ten hours. There was more cobbling to be done after

breakfast before we could move on, and this left time for gossip. Two friendly non-commissioned officers lent us shaving tackle for use by the village watercourse, discussed the armies of the Powers, and asked what the English fleet would do in case——. After that an old gentleman from Grenoble took me aside to tell me what he really thought of the government of the Third Republic.

Later we loaded up and strolled down the road to Tignes. The inn of Tignes has a bad reputation, and when I was last there deserved it. But let no one who visits the Val d'Isère fail to trade at the shop of Tignes. He must be quick, for the old lady who keeps it is ageing. When we got there she was filling up the wine-bottles of thirsty soldiers and selling them sugar 'for four sous.' So we sat about on casks and cases to watch the by-play. Then our turn came. She gave us seven good reasons why we should have more cheese, more wine, and more figs than ever we had intended. She tried to sell us lace, and when I weakly affected poverty to escape the clash of her tongue she looked me in the eye and said: 'My friend, people who are poor don't come all the way to this country. *We* are poor, but *you*——.' We ran away from her scorn, our sacks bulged out with her wares.

Just as day was failing and the night wind blowing cold from the ice we came to the Grange Martin, high up on the pastures of Mont Pourri. Father Martin was sulky and perhaps a little drunken. He growled about the damage done to his hay by sleeping tourists and the stinginess of a recent party. While I was picking out a likeness, beneath the drink, between him and a clerical friend of mine Werner was stroking him down with persuasive colloquial French. But I claim to have sealed the alliance with a gift of peppermint drops to Baby Martin. After that we had a pleasant evening enough. Before the day came we were cooking, and before we had done cooking a cheeseman from a neighbouring chalet burst in with a yell to wake the mixed population in Martin's bunks. Martin seemed content with six francs and a little assistance in rounding up his goats and calves; and we got away—

'When dusk shrunk cold and light trod shy
And dawn's grey eyes were troubled grey,'

to traverse the ridge of Mont Pourri with the help of recent articles in this JOURNAL. Therefore I am free to avoid technical talk.

The doctrine of summit halts was fortified that day by my

reluctance to start down-hill—because I had pulled a big stone on to the toes of my right foot on the ascent—and by Hickman's rather serious indisposition, which came to a head by the cairn. We stayed there well over two hours. Years ago, walking up the Val d'Isère, I wondered why the church spire of the village of Gurra was not knocked down by ice falling from the Gurra glacier, so near did they seem to one another from below. From above as I—brooding sleepily with reason in abeyance—looked down the long sluggish flow of the glacier, the permanence of the spire was more incredible than ever; for it stuck up lonely in the line of sight between the broken end of the ice and the slopes across the valley. Now I can invent an explanation, but I still like to think that there isn't one or that the spire is kept there by the grace of Our Lady of the Snows.

At 2 P.M. we moved on and only left the rocks of that great hog-backed ridge at 4.15. We had been on it since about 9.30. Its charm is that you can keep absolutely to the crest all the way, except for a few yards at the very end, where you must avoid some slanting needles of grey-green rock by a rotten traverse under them on the Val d'Isère side. The névé was of course much cut about with crevasses and worn, like every névé in 1911, into ridge and furrow by the long drought. To a tired man with broken feet this ridge and furrow, as it hardens towards nightfall, is provocative. But very steep alp is worse, and of that there is a great slope in the Thuria glen below the moraines. Daylight held until we found the highest tracks and there divided. Werner was to push on and get Hickman to bed as soon as might be; Bennett was to accompany my testy blunderings down-hill, through forest and unknown sleeping villages, through water meadows where the track vanished and corn fields where the crickets sang, down into the steaming gorge of the Isère and up again to a cluster of lights that we thought must be Ste. Foy. I longed to go to bed among the stooks, and when we actually got to the bridge I felt sure that the others could not have had our luck in path-finding. They must be sleeping out. But by a different route they had got in about ten minutes before us. And as we stumbled into the bar of the Hôtel du Mont Iseran, where the soldiers were drinking, Werner was making it clear to the pleasant women with big earrings who keep that excellent little house that, however full it might be of Chasseurs, we must have at least one bed. There was just one, in the room of a *sous-officier* who courteously let our sick man fill it. The rest



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MT. POURRI,
FROM LA CRAU, ABOVE ST^E FOY.



C. F. Bennett, photo.

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GRANDES MURAILLES,
FROM SUMMIT OF TÊTE DE VALPELLINE.

of us went to the hay again in a glorious loft with no walls, from which on the Sunday morning you could see, framed between the eaves and the floor, Mont Pourri from his crest to the cornfields about his feet and all those bewildering villages.

That Sunday was our only slipper-day. On Monday the official view was that I could only walk up-hill. So we got away at 7.15 to idle in the Ste. Foy glen, find a chalet for the night, and cross the Rutor next day. By noon we had lunched and bathed and become more enterprising. Much remained to do and only the balance of that week for the doing. In the end we hunted up a little col that we called the Col de Belle Combe, after the glen on the Italian side into which it leads, and pounded down to La Thuile at night. It is a useful and beautiful route for anyone who does not care to use the Little St. Bernard. Catching another 5 o'clock diligence, we breakfasted and lunched in Courmayeur, where we met Jones and Young just down from the ridge of the Jorasses. We were very respectful, but not very jealous. They were much greater men than we, but we fancied that they could not be much happier. Yet I hope they were. It is good to think of great hoards of the joy of the mountains piling up against the day when the clouds return after the rain.

I think we had completed the plan for the next two days before starting up the Géant zig-zags that afternoon. There was to be one day on the Midi for the view and one on the Moine ridge of the Verte for the climb—both new peaks to all of us as it happened—and on the third night we were to sleep at the Montanvert. It was assumed that the first day would be so short that we could rest on the turf above the Egralets rocks in the afternoon. This we did not do, nor did we get to the Montanvert on the third night. The Midi served its purpose so wonderfully well that we spent our full two hours on top, with a circle of friendly old climbs, from the Blaitière and the Charmoz to the Mont Dolent and the Jorasses behind us, and the best of them all, the descent from Mont Blanc by the Col du Mont Maudit, in front. Then the séracs of the Géant took an unconscionable time. The Couvercle hut, of course, was full, and every bunk taken; but the President of the Chamonix section of the C.A.F., who happened to be there, found for us one mattress which, laid crossways, kept our four hip bones from the planks.

Because it was late and I was idle the glacier of the Verte had been prospected only perfunctorily and in a failing light. At 2.30 next morning we were working leisurely up its centre,

where the ice gave back faint blues and silvery greys under the moon, whereas we should have followed a band of dead-white snow which, even in 1911, ran unbroken beneath the cliffs of the Moine to the moraines at the summit of the Couvercle rocks. But we only learnt this from aloft. For the rocks we were relying mainly on a hint from Young—climb the face, on buttresses if you can, to the nick behind the Cardinal and then follow the ridge conscientiously. My party said that I took too many buttresses and wasted time on the way up to the nick. I think they were right; but the buttress climbing was splendid; there was a weight of authority behind me and I remain impenitent. It was not much after 7.30 when first we saw over to the Dru. The rocks were in perfect condition, and we talked of reaching the summit between 10 and 11. But we were determined not to sacrifice climbing to speed, so time was spent in trying ridge routes that would not go and, as the hours tailed out, we certainly went slowly. For a great part of the way it is easy to keep below the ridge on the S. side, along the line of a bed of rock softer than that which has endured to make the crest. This seems to be the guides' route, and has some little cairns. We used it a great deal on the way down, but going up we only found it late and only used it when we were obliged. It avoids a quantity of excellent, though not really difficult, rock-climbing, especially the ascent of the face of a great triangular notch in the ridge very conspicuous from Trélaporte and the Charmoz; it introduces a slight risk of stones; and it rules out many glorious views. For the last few hundred feet the crest is mostly snow; in 1911 a flimsy-looking comb, fretted in places into lace-work of ice or fringed with jabbing icicles, under a whole system of which I remember crawling at one point. We were elaborately discreet, because one of the two parties that had left notes of the climb in the Couvercle book for 1911 had spoken of these snow ridges in the most terrifying mountaineering French. Really they were quite safe, but you could not hurry. On the descent I timed this bit, and found that it took us almost an hour.

As it was nearly 1 o'clock when we came out on to the final snow cap, and as we wanted to recross the snowy part of the ridge without too much delay, the long halt and a good meal were postponed until we were back on the rocks. Had we dawdled there less and not wasted half an hour at the foot of the rocks between six and seven, we might have slept at the Montanvert after all. As it was we raced the darkness down the furrowed slopes of névé under the Moine that we had



C. F. Bennett, photo.

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AIGUILLE VERTE, FROM AIG. DE BLAITIÈRE.

marked from above. My foot protested. I fell repeatedly over the ridges and all tempers ran short. Happily the Couverele held only one visitor, a member of this Club, and though we went short of supper, each had a mattress and blankets 'at discretion.' Next morning we started at 7.15 in search of a better breakfast than meat lozenges, water, and the crusts left by other parties. Five gluttonous hours at the Montanvert in the height of the day were corrupting; but we managed to cross the Mer de Glace and make our way through the woods to Lognan in the late afternoon.

At Lognan we fell to idler levels and threw up in advance all thought of a peak on the Saturday, our last climbing day. We slouched up to the Col du Chardonnet and made merry there for two hours and a-half. Coming down on the Saleinaz side we were glad that there was no call to hurry; because an unexpected *Schrund* had to be turned on steep and slaty rocks. Passing through the Fenêtre de Saleinaz we were puzzled to find the air on the Trient plateau full of the scent of burning wood, even the sky filmed over with what seemed to be smoke. Not until we got down did we learn to connect this odd appearance with the forest fires of that abnormal summer. Below the Col d'Arpette was a moraine lake with ice floes, and there we bathed. Some of us had never bathed with floes and wanted an experience. Those who had, I fancy, wanted to remind themselves whether it was as glorious an experience as certain of our own poets have said. I thought not quite, but then I lack fire. Werner disagrees with me, and he is by far the stronger swimmer. The long descent from the Col d'Orny is so dusty that we went into the Lac de Champex also that night. It was exactly three weeks since we came into the Rhone valley, and it is thirteen months ago as I finish writing this. For the first time in twelve years I have not seen dawn on the snow nor heard the fall of water from the ice. They say it has been a bad season. Bad indeed: in it I have lost a friend and the Club one of the great names of 1911.
