

ROUTE.

22. Punta Tre Amici. G. Farinetti, A. Grober et G. Prato.
2 Septembre 1867.
No guides.
Ref.: Vaccarone's *Statistica* at end of 'Boll. C.A.I.'
xix.
23. Punta Grober (M. Loccie). A. Grober et G. Antonelli.
3 Septembre 1874.
Guide: G. Necer.
Ref.: 'A.J.' vii. 320.
24. id. paroi Sud. E. Manfredi en 1901.
Ref.: 'Rivista C.A.I.' 1906, p. 474.
25. id. arête S.E. Fratelli Gugliermina, N. Schiavi
et G. Alliata. 19 Août 1896.
No guides.
Ref.: 'Boll. C.A.I.' xxx. 2.

Refer also for further valuable articles :

- 'A.J.' xii. . . . 'Monte Rosa from the South,' by
W. M. Conway.
'Boll. C.A.I.' xxvi. . . 'La Punta Gnifetti e il Colle Sesia,'
by Guido Rey.
'Boll. C.A.I.' xxx. . . 'Monte Rosa,' by G. F. Gugliermina.
'Boll. C.A.I.' xxxii. . 'Sulla parete meridionale del Monte
Rosa,' by G. B. and G. F.
Gugliermina.
'The Alps in Nature and History' (Dr. Coolidge), chap. ix.
and 'Alpine Studies' (Dr. Coolidge), chaps. xiv. and xv.
'In Valsesia,' by Professor G. Lampugnani (G. B. Paravia:
Turin. 1907)—a well-illustrated and delightfully written
brochure.

FOUR DAYS ON MONTE ROSA.

By HERBERT V. READE.

THE purest of human pleasures may, as Bacon opines, be a garden, but in this *JOURNAL*, at any rate, it may safely be asserted that the highest of human pleasures is to make a new Alpine expedition of the first order. By an expedition of the first order I mean, not one of those desperate climbs which can only be achieved by an exceptional party under the most favourable conditions, such as the crossing of the Col du Lion, or the ascent of the Finsteraarhorn by its N.E. face—climbs where success may seem almost beyond hope, and failure is likely to mean irretrievable disaster.

Nor do I mean any of those 'fancy' routes on unimportant peaks, or ingeniously devised passes leading to nowhere in particular. Such climbs may do great credit to the enterprise and skill of those who invented them, and may be well worth repeating if you find yourself in their neighbourhood, or if you wish to avoid an easy and conventional way from one centre to another; but few will put them down as climbs which ought to be done, and will have them in mind year after year until they are accomplished. I mean rather one of those expeditions which come to rank as standard or classical, which, though not necessarily among the great climbs of the Alps, are yet climbs which most mountaineers will expect to do sooner or later, which the old hand will confidently recommend to the young one, which are remembered with an abiding satisfaction. Such climbs need not be extremely difficult or laborious, but they must have, as Aristotle observes, a certain magnitude (*μέγεθος*), and it is essential that they should be among the big mountains. Minor peaks may afford admirable and delightful climbs but not first-rate expeditions. To give examples would be easy enough; to define a first-rate expedition in a way which would cover all and exclude none worthy of the name would perhaps be impossible; but I am not without hopes that some day one of our veterans may attempt a list, or, better still, that from some symposium may issue a *catalogue raisonné*, with references to the *locus classicus* where each expedition has been worthily described, notes, illustrations, and everything else which the younger generation may properly demand.

If the discovery of an indisputably first-rate expedition, which can be handed down to posterity, a *κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί*, be the highest of human pleasures, it is one that few climbers nowadays can hope to enjoy. But such expeditions have often been the joint work of several parties, separated, perhaps, by many years, and the finishing touch, the discovery of a new route which, in combination with a familiar one, makes a climb of the first order, has sometimes been added in quite modern days. Some such combination, indeed, is, in the case of peaks, usually required, for it may well be maintained that an ascent and descent by the same route can seldom be ranked as a first-rate expedition. Or again, the discovery of a missing link, the solution of a comparatively small problem, or a fresh combination of familiar elements, may reveal a far finer expedition than had previously been known, and yield a joy but little less than that of the pioneer. May it not even be greater? For the pioneer may have been all unconscious of his achieve-

ments ; he did not realise that he was creating an Alpine classic ; he builded better than he knew. He lived in those spacious days when virgin peaks and passes rose on every side, and guide-books served but to indicate ' the petty done, the undone vast.' His task was to explore, to attack the most imposing of the untrodden peaks, the most promising gap in a ridge which had never been crossed, or to make another attempt where some predecessor had failed. How was he to tell which, among his many first ascents, would be held a desperate adventure, seldom if ever to be repeated ; which would come—his route improved and his chief difficulties avoided—to be regarded as a ' good training walk ' or ' an easy day for a lady,' and which would finally by common consent be placed in the first rank ? To weigh, compare, and classify has been the work of later generations ; until a climb has been done many times, in varying conditions, it may not be possible to put it in its place. The tariff should express the final verdict, but how often are its classifications disputed, and how many climbs there are about the merits of which those who have done them most furiously differ ! But at any rate the climber of these later generations can draw upon a body of ordered knowledge, and has only himself to blame if he does not profit by the mistakes or the wisdom of his forerunners. He should form his standard as he improves his mountain craft, and though the ' first fine' care-less rapture ' of the creative artist can never be his, he may attain to joys that the pioneer knew not, the joys of the ripe connoisseur who has seen all the best things from La Bérarde to Pontresina. If such an one succeeds in devising a fine new expedition, at least he is fully aware of his good fortune.

Yet another joy which may fall to the lot of the climber in these latter days is the revival of some expedition which has almost fallen into oblivion. Every reader of the older mountaineering literature knows that there are climbs, even among the big peaks and near the popular centres, which were highly esteemed by their discoverers, but are ' never done now.' Sometimes there is a reason for this—they have been superseded by a better route, or have been found dangerous—sometimes there appears to be none. For, indeed, the reputation of climbs is not always according to their deserts. Most, perhaps, are given their proper class, but some are awarded no marks, because no one in modern times has brought them up for examination. He who, incited by tales of ancient days to follow in the footsteps of his spiritual ancestors, rediscovers an expedition worthy of a first class, has almost the joy of a pioneer, and may claim that he has done the State some service.

It was the good fortune of our party in 1908 to do both these things, to retrace a long-neglected pass which deserves to rank as one of the finest ways from Macugnaga to Zermatt, and to put almost the finishing touches to an expedition, which had not before been completely accomplished, on the summit ridge of Monte Rosa. The first sketch of our tour, planned by George Gask and the present writer a year or two earlier, was modest enough: to cross the Colle delle Loccie from Macugnaga to Alagna, go to the Colle d'Olen and the Gnifetti hut, and thence by the Lys Joch to the Punta Gnifetti and follow the ridge to the highest point of Monte Rosa. When Farrar joined us it became much more ambitious. For a first day we were to cross the Cima di Jazzi from the Riffel to Macugnaga. Then, instead of going down from the Colle delle Loccie to Alagna, we were to make our way across the S. face of Monte Rosa to the new Sesia hut, cross no less a pass than the Sesiajoch to the Gnifetti hut, rest a day there, and then do something far finer than merely following the porters' trail up the Punta Gnifetti. Now of the Sesiajoch indeed terrible things were told, but our trust in Farrar, after the adventures in 1907 which have been narrated in an earlier volume,¹ was unlimited. Moreover there was a good hope that the party would be strengthened by V. A. Fynn, whose climbing hat alone would be enough to inspire confidence in any party, even if they had not seen him coming last down an ice-slope. So we gladly gave ourselves into his keeping.

The party first met at the old Gamchibalm hut. Gask and I had progressed by stages through the rain from Kandersteg to the Blümlis-Alp hut on July 7, and after finding the weather too bad for a start at 2.30, and again at 3.30, got off at 5.30, and were rewarded for our perseverance by a brilliant day on the Blümlis-Alp Horn. In the afternoon we glissaded and walked down from the hut in two hours to the new hotel at the Gries Alp, where Farrar joined us the next morning, having taken his first training walk on the Niesen and plodded up the Kienthal. It was raining once more, but we kept our appointment at the hut, and found Fynn, arrived from Mürren over the Sefnen Furgge, already in possession. Even with the four of us² the diminutive lean-to was overcrowded, but though the number of cubic feet per head must have been far below the standard approved for a common lodging-house, the quite unimpeded circulation of air between the sides and the rock-wall which formed the back ensured that it should never be overheated, if always overventilated. The

¹ Vol. xxiv. p. 293.

² [—and a friendly mouse—]

next day was perfect, and we enjoyed the Gaspaltenhorn, though the conditions ruled out a design of trying a descent by the S.W. arête, whose formidable towers and chasms were finally conquered by Geoffrey Young's party in 1914. We crossed the Gamchi-lücke and descended the Tschingel Glacier to the new inn at Selden, just 12 hours of actual going. Next day a porter conducted us in $2\frac{3}{4}$ hours to the finely situated hut at Wild Elsigen, on the very edge of the wonderful cliffs that enclose the Gastern-Thal. The path almost attains the dignity of a rock-climb in places, but the really exciting part of the walk was down in the valley, when we had to cross the glacier stream, the first section by a single plank found on its banks, and the second section by an unpleasantly rounded tree-trunk, only a few inches above a whirling torrent which made the head swim but offered no hope that, in case of a slip, the body could do likewise. On July 12 we traversed the Balmhorn from N. to S., a long and rather disappointing climb, for which we may not have found quite the best way. Our time to the top was $9\frac{1}{2}$ hours, $2\frac{1}{2}$ spent in ascending the E. face, on to which we were beguiled by a long horizontal traverse from the N. arête where that was blocked by a tower. Our descent, which began on the S.E. arête, ended on the easy S.W. face, which brought us to the Dala Glacier some way below the Gizzi-Furgge, our next stage. That was reached at 7, and Ried, by a very weary party, at 10.45, after $16\frac{1}{2}$ hours actual going. The weather had only just been good enough, a cold and misty afternoon ended in a showery evening, and the next day rain came down steadily, making it certain that the S. face of the Bietschhorn would be out of condition for some time. So on the 14th we moved to Zermatt and the Riffelhaus, feeling that, at any rate, we had made the best of the changing weather, and that the party had found itself.

The first attempt at the grand tour was singularly inauspicious. On July 18 we started in brilliant moonlight, but it was ominously hot even at 3.30 A.M., and we did not feel very confident. Such chances as we had of reaching Macugnaga that day were extinguished by a wilful and deliberate ascent of the wrong peak. The Cima di Jazzi was known to three of us only as an unimportant item in a view, and though our mentor had been up it, I will not be indiscreet enough to say how many years ago that occurred. From the upper part of the Gorner Glacier it is merely one of several undistinguished if not indistinguishable snow-humps, its superior height is lost, and without protest from those behind me I led them triumphantly to the top of the nameless

point 3655. Then we discovered what we had done, and as a large cornice extending some distance blocked any attempt to force a pass, we went round to the broad W. ridge of the Cima, and so to the top. But the mistake had cost us quite two hours, in which the weather had been getting worse, and as mist on the Italian side now prevented us from seeing any promising route down the E. face, we decided to make for the nearest pass, which was the Mittelthor. Not even this was allowed us. It was now snowing, with a strong wind; we could see nothing, and presently found ourselves on a rapidly steepening ice-slope, coated with a little loose snow, which demanded great care. When this disclosed a formidable bergschrund, it was obvious that there was only one thing to do. Steering by compass, we picked up our old tracks, and returned in what might almost have been called a blizzard, had not blue sky been visible at intervals, in time to catch the last train down to Zermatt. Twelve hours actual going from the Riffelhaus to the top of the Cima di Jazzi and back may or may not be the worst on record.

Well, it was all for the best. If we had got over to Macugnaga, we should only have spent an idle week there or ignominiously retreated to Zermatt by diligence and rail, for two days of unsettled weather were followed by three of rain, and it was not until July 21 that things improved. Then (without Fynn, who was called away) we took train to St. Maurice, diligence to Lavey, and walked up to the little village of Morcles, from which Farrar and I traversed, next day, the two Dents de Moreles, little rock peaks which make a great show from the Lake of Geneva, about as good a climb as was possible in the conditions, and with the descent to the station at Charrat-Fully in the Rhone valley, long enough (13¼ hours actual going) to satisfy anybody. Here Gask, who had not been 'fit'³ and had turned back early in the day, rejoined us. We slept at Martigny, and on the 23rd returned to Zermatt. On the 24th we went up to the Riffelhaus again. I find a snappish note in my diary to the effect that we might very well have started the day before, and had wasted twenty-four hours of fine weather; but again, as things turned out, the delay was fortunate.

This time we decided to begin by nothing more formidable than the New Weissthor. Starting early, on account of the fresh snow, we were at the pass (4¾ hours from the Riffelhaus)

³ Owing doubtless to the extremely primitive sanitary arrangements at the 'hotel' at Morcles.

by 7.45. Few places so easily accessible can have so superb a view ; if it is not a popular walk from the Riffel it certainly ought to be. Range beyond range, just defined by the soft clouds floating in the valleys between them, the mountains disclosed themselves to southward and eastward, until the eye lost itself in the azure distance that seemed infinite. We could not regret our failure ten days earlier, when nothing of this was visible, though we now saw that a little luck would have taken us round the impracticable ice-cliff down which we had been cutting, and brought us to a place whence we might have followed tracks over our present pass. An hour of easy rock, and snow steep and soft but sound, brought us to the Eugenio Sella hut, and we were soon on a grassy hillside where we rested, bathed in a tumbling stream, and slept for three happy hours. On the way down to Macugnaga, which we reached in 8½ hours actual going from the Riffelhaus, we had our first view of the next stage in our journey, and it rather staggered us. Few passes can have a more formidable aspect than the Colle delle Loccie, as it there confronts you. Crevasses, séracs, ice-cliffs, and, finally, an ice-slope which, seen full in face as we had it, appeared almost vertical, and enough in itself to make the reputation of a pass, even if everything below it had been easy and straightforward. We could only reassure ourselves by the ancient formula 'it can't be as bad as it looks,' and in two of us there rose the unspoken thought that Farrar always enjoyed step-cutting.

Though the day had been short and easy, we thought it wiser to rest before the two expeditions which were to follow without a break, and spent twenty-four hours in Macugnaga, leaving the next afternoon for the little inn on the Belvedere, an hour and a half above the village, between the two branches of the Macugnaga glacier. We had a thunderstorm on the way, but it was of the kind that 'clears the air' instead of breaking up fine weather. The inn was primitive, and it was rather disconcerting to hear that there was no meat to be had. But there were chickens, it seemed, and who, we said contentedly, wants meat when he can have chicken? Well, there are chickens and chickens. There is the Oxford chicken, lean and athletic as befits the surroundings ; there are Surrey fowls, and there are *poulets de Bresse*. On this occasion the chickens were bantams, which, though served head and all to make the most of them, seemed more in the nature of a *hors d'œuvre* or savoury than of the main dish. However, with soup, macaroni, and cheese we did well enough, and for the next day required only butter, which was provided. The incident is recorded for the benefit of others.

On July 27 we were off at 3.20, on a path as far as the Petriolo Alp, then moraine, and dry glacier after two hours. There really is not much to say about the pass, except that it was, as we surmised, much simpler than it looked. The lower ice-fall was easy enough, and though big ice-cliffs overhung the right bank of the glacier, we were exposed only for quite a short time. Crampons helped us considerably, higher up. The route must, of course, vary from year to year. The 'Climber's Guide' speaks of rocks, by which difficulties may be avoided; we did not touch rock the whole time, and were never tempted to do so. The ice-work was interesting throughout, but never very difficult (I remember one place where I stood on the leader's shoulders to surmount a crevasse, and there was a slight difference of opinion as to whether it was necessary to remove my crampons first), and in $3\frac{1}{4}$ hrs. from first taking to the ice we were at the foot of the final slope. This, we must respectfully maintain against the authority of Ball, is not really steep, though when it is ice it would no doubt be found quite steep and long enough; we had good snow, and were up it in twenty minutes, and on the top of the pass in just six hours' actual going from the Belvedere.

The situation was fine, the view splendid, and the weather perfect, but the important thing for us was to discover the Sesia hut across the S. face of Monte Rosa, and this, with the aid of our old friend, Farrar's prismatic monocular, the ideal glass for a mountaineer, we were able to do. It lies on the rock buttress rising from the point marked 2783 on the Italian map. The traverse of the face under the Punta Gnifetti to get there may well look, from the valley below, a formidable undertaking, but it is, in fact, neither difficult nor dangerous. For most of the way we went on easy snow-slopes, and by descending a little, so as to strike the buttress near its foot, we were able to avoid any exposure to risk of falling ice from above. A little rock-scramble brought us in less than two hours to the crest of the buttress, and once there we were able to take off the rope and go at our ease. Only just below the hut was it necessary to cross a slope, for about ten minutes, over which hung some evil-looking séracs, and this could be done almost at a run.⁴ We reached the hut at 4.30, in $3\frac{1}{4}$ hrs. from the top of the pass, and our last anxiety was removed when we found some fuel there, left by a previous party. We knew that none was regularly provided, but to carry wood over the

⁴ We were protected by the footwall of the Parrot Glacier under the lee of which one could always crouch in case of any projectiles.

Colle delle Loccie was not to be thought of, and the alternative of telegraphing to Alagna for a porter to be sent up had been dismissed as extravagant and probably useless. Having a spirit-stove we were secure of hot food, but an unwarmed hut at that altitude would have been cheerless, to say the least of it.

We had gone early to bed, thinking ourselves as safe from interruption as any party in the whole range of the Alps, when noises unmistakably human assailed our astonished ears, and three Italians, equally astonished to find tenants already in possession, burst in upon us. The feelings which, in such circumstances, the most sociable of climbers find it hard to subdue, gave place to pleasure when we discovered that the disturbers of our peace were the brothers G. F. and G. B. Gugliermi,⁵ well-known explorers of the Monte Rosa and M. Blanc chains, with a clerical friend (Rev. L. Raveli), and our satisfaction was complete when we learned that their object was not the same as ours. If two parties are to share a small hut, it is perhaps preferable that neither or (as in the present case) both should be guideless. The professional, unless he be one of the best, is apt to resent the interference of the amateur, and to insist that his own party shall have the first of everything; the division of the necessary labour is difficult to manage; and the compromise by which the guide, suitably remunerated, acts as cook and housemaid for both parties, leaving the amateurs free for the higher thought or the higher carelessness, makes the conscientious climber feel that he is hardly playing the guideless game according to the rules.

It was not advisable to move before daylight, but both parties were off soon after 4, the Italians starting up a rock-ridge, we, fortified by some useful information about our route, up a snow-slope. But a little higher up we rejoined them, and all breakfasted together at the top of the ridge, which was easy going for about $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours. Then they bore away to the left, to make a new route up the E. ridge of the Punta Giordani, which looked sound enough, and was safely accomplished.⁶ We went diagonally up a short snow-slope to the right, and in twenty minutes arrived at the main feature of our climb, a long steep rib of mixed snow and rock, mainly the latter, leading straight up to the summit ridge of Monte Rosa. But it seems that this is not the rib or arête which is

⁵ They are old friends of Farrar's, and they and he had much to say each to other. The padre was also splendid.

⁶ See route 4, p. 126. We were able to watch them all day, and they joined us again at night at the Gnifetti hut.

so vividly described in Mr. H. B. George's account of the first ascent ('A.J.' i. 49). Their rib was just a little further to the right, and is the one actually bounding the frightfully steep ice-couloir which might be considered the 'true Sesiajoch,' but is overhung at the top by a great ice-cliff, and is therefore quite impossible. A party coming from below, as they did, would naturally keep straight on up the possibly more difficult rib, but anyone coming across from the Loccie, as we did, would naturally go to the hut. Our rib was of the same general character, steep sound rocks, interrupted occasionally by little snow-arêtes, but must be distinctly easier, to judge by Mr. George's description.⁷ Their time on it, however, was only 3 hours 35 minutes, while we, a party of three against their four, took just 3 hours. We had thoroughly good climbing, but no real difficulty, and at 11.20 we were at the foot of the final slope, which is the same, whichever rib is followed. Here they had rather thin snow on ice, which required care; our snow was deep and soft, which meant steady ploughing for an hour before we reached the last rocks. Nothing fell while we were there, or seemed likely to fall, but in some conditions the slope might be dangerous. Another 35 minutes of straightforward climbing brought us to the summit ridge—their time also was about an hour and a half. There are some purists who insist on honouring with the title of 'the true pass' that depression in a ridge which happens to be the lowest, even if, as in the present case, it is hopelessly impassable. To me it appears that the true pass is the place where the ridge can most conveniently be crossed, even if it be somewhat indeterminate. The lowest point of the New Weissthör is equally useless, and the pass is about 100 ft. above it. We were only about 60 ft. above the top of the ice-cliff which crowns the couloir, and perhaps 100 ft. lower than the summit of the Parrot Spitze (4463 m.), which we reached in twenty minutes. Other persons have been disrespectful enough to deny that the Sesiajoch, as we and our predecessors did it, is a pass at all, and have even compared it to getting from one street to another over the roof of a house, merely avoiding the chimney-pots. It is true that a slight divergence to the left, on the final rocks,

⁷ Their route is No. 12, p. 127. Our route, No. 20, and theirs are very much the same until the level of the lower part of the Parrot Glacier, when they kept straight on and we bore away to the left for the hut. Of course, the position of the hut determines the line now followed from it to the summit. The hut is shown on the marked photograph and upon the map.

would have brought us straight to the top of the Parrot Spitze itself. But the fact remains that the Sesiajoch is a splendid route over the main ridge of Monte Rosa 'between the Parrot Spitze and the Punta Gnifetti,' from Alagna to Zermatt, and, pass or no pass, it ought regularly to be used. Yet it seems to be unknown to the present generation of Zermatt guides, and there is no record of its having been done by an English party for years. Why this should be so is a mystery. It was crossed by Moore and George in 1862, by Moore and Walker in 1865 ('A.J.' ii. 134), by Mr. Coolidge in 1869 ('A.J.' iv. 384), and descended by the Misses Pigeon, accidentally, in the same year, one of them being last on the rope. Mr. Gardiner mentions that he crossed it in 1876 ('A.J.' viii. 379), and Sir Martin Conway, writing in 1884, says that it was then well known, and 'has been crossed in both directions several times.' But of late years, perhaps from an undeserved reputation for danger, it seems to have dropped out.

From the Parrot Spitze we went down the easy snow-ridge in about fifteen minutes to a point from which we could see the top of the couloir, with its icy bastion, and, after re-ascending a little, ran down to the tracks leading from the Capanna Margherita to the Lys Joch, and were on the top of that pass in forty minutes. The weather had been perfect until midday, then it gradually clouded up, and now snow was beginning to fall; but in another hour, at 4.30, the tracks had taken us safely to the Gnifetti hut. The total going was just under nine hours.

In the night there was much thunder and lightning. Puzzled by what seemed to be a fixed light just outside the window of my room, I got out of bed to investigate, and found that a metal pipe, connected with the gutter which drained the roof, was glowing with a steady blue flame. The phenomenon was, I suppose, what sailors call 'St. Elmo's fire.' It snowed most of the next day, but we must have rested in any case, and the hut is comfortable enough, being almost an inn, with plenty of food, though no fresh meat or vegetables were provided. On the following day the weather improved, and after a fine afternoon and evening we resolved to start the next morning, not without some fears as to the amount of fresh snow that might be awaiting us.

The expedition that Farrar had planned was to traverse all the peaks of Monte Rosa in one day. Sir Martin Conway, in the article quoted above, had said that it might be possible for a quick climber, starting very early from the Colle d'Olen, to climb all the peaks from the Vincent Pyramide to the Zumsteinspitze and get down to the Riffel the same evening. The

Gnifetti hut has of course made any such expedition much easier, and all parts of the traverse had been done by various climbers, but no one, to Farrar's knowledge, had visited all the points, from the Punta Giordani to the Nord End, in a single day.⁸ Twelve peaks, all admitted to the sacred roll of those over 4000 mètres, in one expedition, would be a feast for the gods, and the two members of the party who had never been on the mountain until that week felt that if they could add this to the three previous climbs, nothing less than Caesar's *Veni, vidi, vici*, would do them justice.

The amount of the climb that could be done by lantern light was limited, so we did not start until 3.30. After following the Lys Joch route for ten minutes, we bore E. to the easy ridge running S. from the Vincent Pyramide, went up it for a little, then traversed on its E. side, ascended the snow field connecting it with the Punta Giordani, and easily reached that, our first peak (4055 m.), in 2 hours. To the Vincent Pyramide there was a straightforward snow-and-rock ridge. The rocks were a little awkward in two or three places, and it would have been quicker to traverse under the ridge, for the early part of the way, if the snow had been good; but, alas, it was only too clear that there had not been enough melting in the day and frost at night to consolidate what had recently fallen. We were sinking in already, and realised that a tremendous job lay before us. Less than an hour and a half took us to the top of No. 2, the Vincent Pyramide (4215 m.). We ran down a snow-slope, up to a broad ridge and along it, and in 50 minutes more were on No. 3, the Balmenhorn (4114 m.). A ridge led to the Schwarzhorn, No. 4, and at one place the rocks were not quite easy. On the top (4231 m.) we had a hasty meal at 9.15, then descended by a short steep snow-slope on the W., which was in the worst possible condition. The surface kept on coming away in large slabs, several feet square and several inches thick, and it seemed highly probable, in spite of all Farrar's skill, that one of them would take us with it. The spot was not one where, as Leslie Stephen said of the Eiger Joch, the rest of our lives would have been spent in sliding down a snow-slope, and that employment would not have lasted long enough to become at all monotonous. The friendly névé was only some fifty feet below us, but a tumble would have been at least disconcerting; and who could say that some distant telescope might not reveal the disgrace to the world at large? From that time until we arrived at the Punta Gnifetti the snow was heart-

⁸ It is believed that this has since been done.

breaking. Farrar, who had got the bit between his teeth owing to our having cast some doubts on the possibility of completing the proposed climb, insisted on leading throughout. 'If I can't do anything else, I can do snow-plugging,' he modestly asserted; and it was the longest bit of 'snow-plugging,' now mainly up-hill, that I had ever seen. To No. 5, the Ludwigshöhe (4346 m.), was 45 minutes of it. A short descent followed, then an hour and twenty minutes up to No. 6, the Parrot Spitze (4468 m.), where, though the ascent was mostly on a fairly narrow ridge, the snow was almost the worst of the day. Then, at 11.35, we followed our tracks of three days before for a short distance—not that they helped us!—but were soon able to run down to the path already marked by the feet of porters with provisions. This was a little better, but steady up-hill work, and the last bit the steepest. At 1.30 we were on point No. 7, the Punta Gnifetti (4561 m.); and after ten hours' going, with one halt of fifteen minutes for food, we felt entitled to an hour's rest and a hot meal in the Capanna Margherita. It was excellent, but the prices charged, very properly, to non-members of the Italian Alpine Club, made us resolve to join that admirable institution forthwith.

I was put on to lead for the rest of the way. Farrar's monopoly of the hard work had left me remarkably fresh, and Gask, who had led us up the Sesiajoch, remained as our balance in the bank, large enough to meet any emergency. To No. 8, the Zumsteinspitze (4573 m.), was a slight descent, then an easy ascent up a broad ridge, 35 minutes in all, with better snow. Then came a mixed arête, snow and rock, a good though not difficult climb, which we did in 1¼ hrs., going fast, to No. 9, the Grenzgipfel (4631 m.). No. 10, the Ostspitze (4633 m.), and No. 11, the Dufourspitze (4638 m.), took 15 minutes apiece of similar work.

But it was 5.15, and we had known for some time that the Nord End, our twelfthly and lastly, must be abandoned. The descent to the Silbersattel and the ridge leading to the summit, thick in new snow and apparently corniced in places, might have taken an hour and a half there, so that night near the top of the highest point (the descent direct from the Nord End would no doubt have been worse) was not a chance but a certainty, if we tried it.

Turning homewards, we were down at the saddle in 50 mins., and after a fresh spell of ploughing through the softest possible snow, at the Bétemps hut in another 2 hrs. It was consoling to hear, afterwards, that a lady there, hearing we had just come from Monte Rosa, put us down as a terribly slow party. At

10.15 we reached the Riffelhaus once more, 16½ hrs. actual going, 18¾ with all halts.

The fresh snow had beaten us, only that and nothing more. With reasonably good conditions we should have saved something like three hours, and included the Nord End comfortably. Farrar, in 1898, had gone in the reverse direction from the Punta Gnifetti to the Schwarzhorn in an hour and a half, a bit that took us nearly four hours, of which only about half an hour would be due to our having more up-hill work. Let no one think of it as a monotonous 'grind,' to be performed merely for the sake of adding peaks to one's record. There is a very fair amount of good climbing, the alternation of up and down, and the constant changes of view give variety even to the snow-walking, and the mere feeling that one is traversing one of the loftiest ridges in Europe, with the superb visions of Italy below, are enough to make the expedition one of the very first order. Combined with the other three days, it forms as fine a tour as can be found in the whole range of the Alps.

We thought we had earned a real off-day. But to the Riffelhaus came a message from Fynn that he was back in Zermatt and had just time for one more climb with us. The train took us down in the morning, but our legs had to take us up to the Trift Inn in the afternoon. Next day we made a leisurely and delightful traverse of the Rothhorn to the Mountet Inn, and the day after Farrar and I—the others going down the valley homewards—went back to Zermatt over the Trifthorn, shirking the Gabelhorn because we had not brought our crampons. So at least we said, but we might have found it a little long in any case. Farrar remained to take further advantage of the perfect weather. I had to return, feeling that I had 'done' more peaks in thirty days than anyone has a right to expect, and that though all of them were near the old centres, a climber who had slept in eighteen different places could not be called a 'mere centrist.'

IN THE CAUCASUS—1914.

WHOEVER once visits the Caucasus mountainland, that region of sublime beauty and strange half Oriental charm, must for ever long to return.

If he has been favoured with glorious weather and consequent great success of the travel and climbing plans, the longing may prove irresistible.