

of the first tower, as seen from the wall of the second, is something unique. It should be a good deal higher than the Requin as seen from the Col of same name. A visit to the third tower, from above, must also be very interesting. On our day it was much too icy. Jakob Rumpf of Kienthal village, having been there twice, now knows that highway and all its towers and gaps thoroughly. He is sureness itself—careful, serious, and sympathetic in every way. He has great strength and is altogether 'a good man to go tiger-hunting with.' His occupation as guardian of the Gspaltenhorn hut—often overfilled—will prevent him, during the summer, from doing guide-work. But in the beginning of September he is generally free, and so also are then very likely the red, weather-beaten rocks of that great and most astounding Alpine ridge.

OUR 1919 JOURNEY.

BY GEORGE MALLORY.

(Read before the Alpine Club, May 4, 1920.)

PICTURE four men bounding across Paris in what may be called a super-taxi. An animated discussion was proceeding between three of them, to the complete stupefaction of the fourth, who seemed to regard his companions as eccentrics beyond all hope, perhaps quite insane—but what else could he expect? Above the comical fat face of this bewildered individual immodest capitals in gold round his official cap announced 'Cox's Agency.' His business was to ship the three tourists across Paris. That the gentlemen who had reserved seats in the train to Grenoble should now be arguing as to whether after all they wouldn't take the train to Chamonix—it was impossible, *fantastique*. Nevertheless, the train to Chamonix, when they reached the Gare de Lyon, looked a nice train, and the three resolved to take it.

This irresponsible proceeding which threw to the winds, despite my protests, the deep-laid plans matured during the summer, took place on the evening of July 28, 1919. On the following morning, coming up the valley towards St. Gervais, we were feasting our eyes on snow mountains. It was seven years since I had seen the Alps. To me they were a vision startlingly fresh and new—new as when I first saw them, and

so overwhelmingly greater than the images I had conjured up that I seemed never to have seen them before. I realised that a thread of experience had been broken. I hardly connected what I saw now with what I had seen before. My mind was void of comparisons and particulars. I was starting again from the threshold; my mind was open like a child's to receive what it could. Whatever we might achieve, and we were wholly without plans, all would be adventure, vivid, surprising, delightful.

But however enchanting this new world seemed to me, I inevitably referred my observations to the intention of climbing peaks. The whole of the Mont Blanc group looked remarkably white; the snow was not of yesterday. The steep side of the Aiguilles was not plastered, but arêtes and ledges were everywhere piled with it; great quantities had peeled off, but elsewhere the even couches were dazzlingly white. Even on the W. side of the valley large patches under the escarpments showed how little the winter snow had melted, and perhaps there was more snow to come now. The upper sky was hazy with fish-like clouds, and lower clouds were blowing up from the S. and gathering upon the summits. The valley was hot and stuffy. We were hardly half-way up the path to Montanvert when a storm appeared to be on the point of bursting; but it was dissipated somehow or another and passed with no more spite than a few casual drops. I emphasise the phenomenon as one typical of the season. Till the middle of August when I left the Alps the weather always appeared to be unsettled; but it was always merciful. A midday haze, rather than cloud, repeatedly obscured the peaks and thickened perceptibly until about the hour of sunset. The nights were commonly much warmer than is usual in fine weather. However, local prophecy was always optimistic and it was always right.

I now come to the sober history of our mountaineering activities. We decided to spend the first day on the Requin. Having regard to the snow there was nothing else to be done—except the Moine, which hadn't a vote.

It is not to be supposed of this party that they said confidently among themselves 'We will do the Requin.' One of us pointed out with admirable fortitude that it would be wholly unreasonable, on a first day, to rise before 6 A.M.; and his determined attitude easily carried the day. Accordingly, a formula was adopted acceptable to all consciences, 'We will go and look at the Requin.'

The looking took place next day chiefly during the breakfast hour. We had successfully found a way near the Trélaporte side of the glacier, and turned the corner so as to see the farther side of that remarkable arête of which the Requin is the final sentinel before it leaps down towards the Glacier du Géant. The problem which now confronted us, since it was already 8.15 A.M., and the night in any case had been too warm, was to avoid an arduous snow trudge up the Glacier du Plan, which would necessarily be our fate if we followed the usual route. Being quite untempted by Guido Mayer's route (Kurz, p. 174) two courses were open to us; we could either attempt to follow G. W. Young's party (with Joseph Knubel, etc., see Kurz, p. 173), climbing the S. arête in its entirety, or join this arête above its abrupt extremity by working up a small tributary glacier (see Kurz, p. 173). The second alternative was chosen. We ascended in the direction of a well-marked couloir, descending from a point apparently in the middle of the S.E. face of our peak. This face was for the most part clear of snow, for the very good reason that all such superfluities had been shot down its steep wall on to the very slopes where our route lay. The prospects were good enough once we got there. But knee-deep snow on a first day is a formidable obstacle, and when the snow reaches half-way up the thigh—but I won't attempt to describe our agonies. It was about 11.30 A.M. when we took to the rocks on our left above a shoulder where the subsidiary arête to the S. of us, as we mounted the snow, abutted the mountain. Porter led us swiftly on the rocks, and bearing always slightly to the left we reached the S. arête at 12.45 P.M. The prospects at this point were not rosy. It would be unreasonable to allow less than an hour and a half from the Épaule to the summit, and between us and that preliminary goal lay a considerable stretch of rocks, formidable by their steepness and crowned by the Chapeau, a most unpleasant-looking obstacle. Porter apparently was the fittest of the party and capable of much; of Elliott's state no more need be said than that in the secondary contest with his particular enemy, *mal de montagne*, his head, like Henley's, was 'bloody,' but still 'unbowed.' My own physical condition was somewhere between these two. If I could flatter myself in more optimistic moments by computing that in one direction I could do not much less than Porter, I was ready to admit, after anything like a struggle, that I might be capable in the other direction of no less than Elliott.

With our varying estimates of the task before us we pro-

ceeded at 1.15 to ascend the arête. I confess that I allowed my imagination to suppose that, if all things worked together for our success, we might conceivably reach the Épaule by, say, 2.45, and reach the summit, if we decided to go on, at 4 o'clock, or in any case descend by the usual route to the Glacier du Plan. The arête at all events would present no impassable gendarmes; it was simply the unserrated upper edge of a great tooth slightly inclined, where we were, from the perpendicular. Our pace, however, was not very rapid. It was necessary almost everywhere to climb one at a time, and, if convenient chimneys were found breaking the steep wall, they were not all to be climbed without some consideration, nor, one or two of them, without notable fatigue. My optimistic allowance of time to the épaule must have been almost consumed when we reached the base of the chapeau. Perhaps there was no point in going on. But for my part, I had an invincible desire to reach the crest beyond the Chapeau and look down on the other side. Porter's good nature was willing to gratify my curiosity, and we both counted on Elliott's stout heart. Under these somewhat whimsical circumstances, for it was clear enough now that we could not reach the summit, Porter proceeded to climb a crack in a steep slab, executed a delicate traverse to the right, and somehow managed to convey himself straddle-legged up a smooth edge of granite to a platform. It was a 40-ft. lead of great difficulty, a truly remarkable exploit at that late period in a strenuous first day. Another half-hour of difficult snow and rock work was required to reach the crest.

It was now 3.45 P.M. The Épaule was still half an hour, perhaps an hour, farther along the arête, even had we contemplated a descent on to an unknown glacier. Our course was obvious; we retraced our steps. We were off the rocks at 6.30 P.M., and reached Montanvert with the last light.

July 31.—It was two days later when we started forth again, this time for the Col du Géant. We had rested luxuriously after our look at the Requin; the mountains at the head of the glacier were still in a dangerous state, as were the Verte and the Dru, and nothing tempted us on that side. But it was thought that we might perhaps accomplish some part of the arête between the Aiguille du Géant and the Calotte de Rochfort.

The walk from Montanvert to the Col du Géant is not an expedition to be lightly undertaken—or not at all events by

a party still unfit. Above the ice-fall one may expect more labour than excitement, and if he is late there the labour may be excessive. On the other hand, to be there betimes demands a bout of crevasse-leaping in the dark. While so much snow was still unhardened on the glacier, and when the nights were so unsatisfactorily warm, the prospect of a heavy snow grind was a prime consideration. We started, however, no earlier than 3.30 A.M. in the expectation that the first glimmer of daylight would help us up the glacier, and with the hope that we might yet be early enough to find hard snow above the ice-fall. Our calculation was justified on the first head; when we found ourselves about 4.30 A.M. happily past the corner, in the middle of the glacier and approaching the ice-fall, we were well satisfied with our performance. But what were the prospects: we were walking on snow, firm enough it is true; but where was the crisp suggestion of frost? Allowing for a colder temperature higher up we could still be certain, if we followed the usual route, that we should trudge soft snow in plenty.

I hope that it was more in adventure than in laziness that we resolved to circumvent what Nature proposed. It was a favourable occasion to try experiments on a glacier, and the E. side of the ice-fall was not uninviting, by reason of a plausible trough which separates the more broken part of it from the lower rocks of La Noire. There was everything to be gained by this course if it would go; the W.-facing slopes above and beyond would be little affected by the sun, if we could but reach them soon enough, and we should have a shorter line to the Col du Géant. Those who are confronted by the deep blue sea turn to the Devil and hope for the best. Such was our optimism on the present occasion. The Devil at least is as an unknown quantity; his lure is caprice and he may make a mistake.

To describe in detail the sequel to our decision is a task which I trust will not be expected of me. Of all the mountaineering adversaries which a mountaineer may meet, the most surprising, resourceful, attractive, the gamest when he chooses to fight, is, beyond question, a big glacier. But the contest is indescribable. A climber who takes a short cut on a glacier can but look at his watch and count the lost hours. I can only relate of this adventure that our experiences were not unusual. We did not on the frail edge of some blue cold pinnacle, too elegant to be sound, run the risk of being engulfed along with it. Nor did we hew steps tediously up any per-

pendicular wall of formidable dimensions. But the way was exciting enough—first on the right of the trough, then in the middle of it, and finally across a bergschrund to a little snow slope under the rocks till we leaped from the ultimate tongue of La Noire to the white fields beyond. Here the crust would hardly bear us ; we became full of devices to float upon it ; we took quick little steps, we leaned upon our axes, we dug in our toes and crooked knees towards the slope, or painfully walked with boot soles turned out to press the thrust along the surface. At times we positively went upon all fours, the ubiquitous ice-axe playing spar to the shipwrecked. I believe we must have tried every manner of going that is swifter for a biped than to go upon his belly. Anything we found was better than to go through ; in treading delicately we could have given lessons to Agag. The sun was always chasing us—a bright menace—and we fled like bats, remained almost constantly in shadow, and almost never floundered. It was not altogether a straight line that we followed, but it seemed as we went miraculously direct. The slope was such that for the best part of the distance we never could obtain a clear view ahead ; the choice of line was speculative in the extreme. We had no knowledge as to where the crevasses lay ; we could only guess. But though the crevasses, when we found them, were perturbingly immense, the Fates were always kind ; some chasms which seemed to cut us off completely were found to be choked with helpful snow, others were cunningly bridged by frail arches of ice or just not too wide for a judicious leap. It was exciting, exhilarating, and sometimes hard work. Little time was lost. We met the tracks from the other side not far from Le Petit Flambeau and reached the Col about midday, sufficiently weary and contentedly elate, as all should be who have avoided irksome labour and yet achieved their object.

August 1.—The next episode which I have to record is the saddest event short of disaster that can well happen to a party of mountaineers. From the moment that Elliott first mooted the proposal that we should come to Chamonix at once instead of Dauphiné an apprehension had always been present in our minds—that Elliott's knee would stop obstinately, in the way like Balaam's ass. To criticise the vagaries of this remarkable joint would be unbecoming in anyone but its possessor. Suffice it to say, that for Alpine labour it has been usually brought to a benevolent disposition by a careful course of previous suggestion. But the couloirs

of a government office during the summer months last year had contrariwise been a training in idleness. By the completion of our first expeditions it was brought to a state of open rebellion. It jibbed on the Requin, it creaked on the Glacier du Géant; and now was groaning vigorously on the Col. By evening it was evident that it refused to be cajoled. Elliott, who alone could gauge his hurt, told us plainly what it meant. At the least a week's complete rest was needed to restore his knee; it was unlikely to be fit even then for serious climbing. The only wisdom was to return to England at once.

It was a strange contrast next morning on that little high plateau so splendidly set, between the clear, vivid, hopeful, dawn calmly glorifying the peaks—a perfect morning on the one hand—and on the other a despairing party, setting forth not to win new summits, but to reach Montanvert in time for *déjeuner* and the train for Chamonix. We pottered for a time along the arête leading to La Tour Ronde to see the unparalleled beauty of Mont Blanc, and then mournfully, and very painfully I fear for Elliott, followed the tracks down the glacier.

The Trélaporte face of the Charmoz had attracted our attention on the way to the Col du Géant. I had wondered where exactly Joseph Pollinger had led his party so long ago as 1899. It was pointed out that wherever it was the route had been damned by Kurz as 'une des plus pierreuses.' But this judgment I found incredible. Why should any place on that excessively steep face of hard granite be exposed to abnormal danger from falling stones? Stones might have fallen on the day of Pollinger's ascent, but were stones constantly falling there, or more frequently than in a hundred other places, on routes sanctified by venerable names and the common usage of climbers, where rocks were far more brittle and more disintegrated? The only way, we had agreed, to resolve this perplexity was to go and see. 'And why not?' I said to myself as I mounted the path. 'If ever two men are a better party than three it is on a steep rock face. And if we succeed we shall get a bit of our own back.'

When it happens to him who bears the lantern that he loses his balance irrecoverably, with the result that the lantern is dashed against a rock and extinguished while the palm of his hand receives an ugly gash—when ruffled by one or two such small adventures it is difficult to believe that all is going well. Accordingly, my mood on the morning of August 2, as

we contoured the lower slopes of the E. arête of the Charmoz; was not perfectly optimistic. My right hand though sore enough was still serviceable, but I regretted a portion of skin unfortunately removed from an important finger-tip. Porter had already been critical of my lead, in his gentle manner (probably with justice); I was supposed to be conducting the party by the light of previous experience, and I was particularly anxious to find a good way. But our line was evidently too high; we became involved with difficult rocks, and were forced to struggle up a most unpleasant pitch when we ought to have been walking on easy ledges. The Glacier de Trélaporte presented no difficulties when we reached it; but it was annoying to observe that we should have done much better to make for an obvious notch only a few feet above it by ascending a snow couloir on the other side. It was annoying, too, that the slope was just so steep that it was necessary to chip steps for some distance up the glacier. We sat down at length for breakfast about 5.40 A.M. on some rocks immediately below the bergschrund, not much later than I had expected. But it still seemed a vaguely unsatisfactory expedition when we went on again. We were lucky to find the bergschrund passable at the right-hand corner. I remembered that G. W. Young's party, when they climbed the Grépon, had some difficulty at this point. But generally speaking, difficulties were not to be expected on this lower part. We were following the line towards the conspicuous Red Tower followed by all previous parties on this face. I had once been so far as that level myself and remembered no formidable obstacle. However, we soon found ourselves cutting steps above the bergschrund towards the rocks away on our left with no little labour, on account of three deep grooves whose sides were both steep and hard. We took fifty minutes from our breakfast place to the rocks. Hereabouts I knew that one should traverse away to the left; but the slab which presented itself for this purpose looked singularly uninviting. I wasted twenty minutes climbing a steep wall, and defeated here, attacked the slab below; the roughness of the rock made it an easier passage than it looked. We proceeded without hesitation after this, bearing slightly to the left, until we found ourselves at a corner where a buttress abuts a wall; we were separated from some chimneys away on our right by a patch of deep snow. The obvious plan was to make at once for these chimneys, as Porter recommended. But my judgment was affected by vague

recollections. I was tempted to make a reconnaissance in the other direction, and there unfortunately I saw sitting on a ledge a large friendly cairn. I became possessed of the obstinate conviction that the wall above should be climbed and not the chimneys. Two somewhat desperate and futile attempts led to further waste of time, until eventually we crossed to the chimneys, which were found to go easily enough and led to the bay, a marked feature of the mountain, at the level of the Red Tower. It was now 8.30 A.M. Porter, who was carrying most of our burden, had been wonderfully patient behind an errant leader. But I was ill-satisfied. There had been no fizz about our performance, and while one may forgive hesitations and futilities when the obstacles are really formidable, he desires the preliminaries of an expedition such as this to go with a click.

From the point we had now reached much could be seen. The face of the Grépon presented its grim bare slabs in continuation of the line we had followed. Away to the right, on the other side of the bay, were the S-facing rocks of the Charmoz E. arête, and most conspicuously the Aiguille de la République. The nick behind this elegant spike offers no attractions as a line of attack for the Charmoz. The problem is to reach the arête, where it assumes a comparatively horizontal habit above this step. The topography of all the country which now lay within our immediate view was related as we saw it to one central feature, a couloir of which the origin was concealed, but which descended towards us, apparently from the direction of the Charmoz; the Grépon was its true right wall in this lower part. Its true left wall was a conspicuous rib, a high buttress of the arête in question and leading exactly to the point which we wanted to gain above the Aiguille de la République.

Our objective, therefore, was perfectly clear, and we had little doubt that it had also been Pollinger's. The only doubt remaining was how and where to join our rib. Its extremity was a forbidding red wall, perhaps a hundred metres above us. The gully might prove the best way round, and at all events deserved inspection. Not many minutes were spent in determining our plan before we moved upwards again, on smooth but broken plaques. It became evident as we approached the gully that its condition, if not its nature, was sufficiently repulsive; we had no wish to contend against a vigorous young torrent in a smooth open groove, nor to go up where whatever was so inclined would be coming down—

not unless we were obliged. A convenient traverse led back to the right of the red wall above us, and we halted twenty minutes for a prune and a pipe. The next two hundred feet contained no obstacle of supreme difficulty; but with snow on sloping ledges and an angle that permitted no liberties it was an exacting pitch, and we found the hour 10.30 A.M. when we reached the narrow crest of our rib above its first formidable obstacle.

It is idle perhaps to analyse those swift changes of mood or sensation which are the common experience of mountaineers. They may come to us at any time through some incident in our adventure, through altering circumstances of our progress, or merely from the fact of a halt when we come together and review our situation.

We paused only, and looked upwards; and I became aware that the whole face of things, for me at all events, had completely changed. I saw by Porter's expression that it had changed for him too. His smile had too much enjoyment to be grim, and was too serious for mere amusement. We looked up at the ferocious crags, and felt, I imagine, as a hunter feels when he gets sight of his tiger. I have in mind an optimistic hunter; for we were certainly elated. And yet we had not too much to be happy about. In four hours we had made perhaps 1500 ft. from the bergschrund. We computed nearly as much again to the summit, and the great difficulties were all in front of us.

A few steps above us the buttress was notched, before rising again in an obstacle no less abrupt than the red wall which we had outflanked. We turned towards the gully and found a chimney. It was necessary to push up through a hole behind a chockstone—a tiring struggle, because the hole was iced, and while cutting out a way much care had to be taken to avoid bringing down too large a flake. From the shallow cave above the chockstone direct progress was strictly barred. The left wall offered the only hope. Luckily it was possible for the second to give a shoulder, so that the leader could be thrust over the edge on to a sloping slab above. It was an unpleasant position standing there with no particular handhold, but for the encouragement of an excellent belay. A minute crack running vertically up the slab alone seemed to break its even surface. Luckily the point of the axe could be inserted; by turning the shaft over to the left and keeping the point pressed in it could be sufficiently secured; the left hand in this way did the required pulling, while the right

fingers prevented a slip. Without an axe it would have been impossible to get up this slab, in height about 20 ft. The second dexterously availed himself of a stirrup-rope, which was just long enough to be within his grasp for the first struggle. We were still, as it were, in the middle of a pitch, but there was now a choice of alternative routes, of which the leader chose the worse. After ascending vertical flakes he had again to surmount a difficult slab when some distance above support. The second bore his burden up a chimney having a less malicious disposition, which proved moderately tractable after a difficult start.

My next recollection after these salient events, which I see quite clearly engraved in my mind with the familiar characters of nervous tension, is of issuing from some sort of groove which we had followed without difficulty above the chimney last mentioned. We now found ourselves once again on the crest of our buttress, followed a ledge to the right, and saw above us on this side a deeply-cut chimney, or subsidiary gully it might almost be called. Beyond the fact that we accepted what was offered with grateful hearts and some little show of enthusiasm, neither Porter nor myself could recall even a few hours later precisely what happened next. We agreed that it was, like Prospero's island, a wholesome place, where the air breathed upon us sweetly; the rocks were steep and sound as one could wish to find them; the wedged axe was useful more than once, and strenuous but not desperate exertion was required. Buoyed by confidence in Nature which had been so kind to us, happy, optimistic, we proceeded swiftly for about 200 ft. Even the final pitch, partially iced, a steep wall with very small holes—a difficulty we reckoned of the first order—detained us only for a few minutes, and when at 1.15 we gained a platform once more on the edge of the rib we were now proud of our progress. Here we halted for lunch.

The reflections engendered on this high perch were for the most part comforting: but two little doubts cast perceptible shadows. The sky was clouding over and mist was gathering about the peaks. A sphinx, presumably one of the Charmoz summits, could be discerned, when we looked round the corner of the gully, coldly regarding us; but suddenly we could no longer see it. Neither of us much believed, after the past few days, in the malice of this omen. But even an innocent mist was undesirable if we were to find our way down by a route unknown to us. The second doubt was perhaps more

serious. Kurz's account of Pollinger's ascent makes mention of a 6-7 metre chimney. Why then was nothing said of the remarkable chimney we had just come up? Could 6-7 be a misprint for 60-70? Such an explanation was far from satisfying us. Had Pollinger, in fact, ever been where we were? Kurz said not even so much as that this party had ascended a steep buttress; on the contrary, he spoke of a gully. The more one thought about it, the more clear it became that we had not followed the line of the first ascent. Whatever peace of mind may be drawn from the assurance that a man has been there before you could be ours no longer. What lay between us and our goal? And would it go? We judged that the distance could not now be great. We should soon know the issue. Such thoughts if they gave ground for some anxiety were chiefly exhilarating, entirely undepressing, and served, as did the sombre shadow of a cloud, to hasten our steps.

Immediately above us the rocks sloped back more gently than before. My pipe was scarcely well alight when we went on straight ahead. We had proceeded perhaps 150 ft. when I knocked it sideways against a rock and out of my mouth; it slithered down snow, past Porter, apparently doomed; and then by some miraculous good fortune turned a somersault, took a header, and stopped. Porter, roused to sympathy by my cry of anguish, made no hesitation in unropeing himself and quickly recovered my precious pipe. It was a good omen, but also a warning. The rocks were getting steeper—steeper than they had appeared from our luncheon place—and a little higher I now saw were probably impracticable. We chose the obvious alternative, and mounted snow on our right into a gully continuing our previous line. The first pitch pulled us up. We had reckoned with rocks but not with ice, and I feared delay. It was necessary to set to work with the axe, chipping awkwardly with the left hand from a strained position. The issue hung on one small step cut in the frailest imaginable structure just clinging to the rock. From this it was necessary somehow to pull oneself over the awkward bulge above it. The obstacle was the most obstinate we had yet encountered—the sort where a man sticks and decides that he can't, but, knowing he must, continues wriggling till he does.

We came forth finally from this second story of our great chimney or little gully to find a change of circumstances, showing that the end was near. The buttress had narrowed almost

to a knife-edge, as a good buttress should, before the point of abutment. Its structure was becoming fantastic, and even was showing a dangerous tendency to indulge in superfluous ornament. Some curiously devised overhangs and angular projections in the first 20 ft. above a narrow gap invited strange contortions in the climber; but we were too excited to contort ourselves for long; this obstacle was carried with a rush—in so far as that expression may be suitable to the balanced performances of mountaineers. We quickly mounted the beast's back beyond in the expectation of seeing the end. We were not, in one respect, disappointed. Whatever we saw was probably the last of its kind, and it appeared to mark the limit of our day's adventure. Separated from us by a square-cut gap was a gendarme about 100 ft. high—it was no fantastic shape prancing upon the edge of space, but a solemn and utterly forbidding sentry with his back to the wall. We were faced by an obstacle unassailable. On the right vicious slabs swept down to the Aiguille de la République; by traversing across the head of them it might be possible to reach a farther wall apparently near the junction of the buttress with the arête. Porter thought this quite without hope; it could be the hope only of desperate men. It seemed to me just conceivable that a way might be found on that side, but the demand of nerve and strength would obviously be so great that I doubted whether we should be justified in launching the assault at so late a stage in our day's hard work. To the left the situation appeared still more hopeless. The gully on that side had now opened into a bay; towards this the rocks fell away with appalling steepness, while the tower itself capped the precipice with an overhang. And beyond this, on the arête of the Charmoz, now so near, I noted a perpendicular wall some 30 ft. high, which might be impassable should we gain the arête.

With all my optimism blown away like smoke I climbed down into the gap, and proceeded to traverse carefully to the left side towards the overhang. At least, I thought, I will look round the corner. My curiosity was gratified by a ray of hope. Here was a little bay perched above the precipice; it might be possible to get up the farther side of it. The entrance was difficult, but I managed to crawl under the overhang and land my knees on to a sloping slab. On the farther side I climbed in a corner up to a mantelshelf on my left. Above this was a short wall. It was evidently very difficult, and I couldn't tell whether it would go. I sent back a

depressing account to Porter. My confidence was at a low ebb, but his reply showed that he possessed, or he assumed, the glorious gift of blind faith. It was necessary in any case for him to move, for I should want more rope if I was to make the attempt. Happily I was able to take up a position so as to press him inwards as he passed the overhang, and help his arrival on to the sloping slab which the rucksack might otherwise have rendered extremely awkward; and by similar means I calculated we should be able to return. On the farther side of the recess was a patch of snow. Here Porter drove in his axe. It was not a sufficient protection, but it might serve, and it was the best available. If he had wavered at this point I doubt if I could have tackled the pitch. I mounted again in the right-angled corner and traversed out leftwards on to the mantelshelf. I was now almost directly above my second, and above me was a wall as nearly as possible perpendicular—a short obstacle—only some 15 to 20 ft. high, but, I confess, an alarming one. I was conscious during a few seconds' hesitation of confused reflections, proceeding from the thought that but a short time before I had been in the mood to tackle such a pitch with a gesture of confident enjoyment, with the *élan* of a leader leading to victory. Now it was different; the spirit was unwilling. Was the flesh any weaker for that, I wondered, or if more effort of will is required to start, is there less effort available to get up? . . . I looked down with a backward, uncomfortable glance, to see Porter in the most workmanlike fashion belaying the rope round his axe in which neither of us felt security. I positively disliked him for his imperturbability. Still, there he was, imperturbable, efficiently cheerful, a moral fact from which I saw no escape. I looked away from him, half in anger that he should combine so much genial amiability—more than usual—and so much veteran's righteousness round his damned belay; half in sorrow that any such fool could be found as to enjoy, apparently, our present situation; and at the same time, as I looked upward again, in some further strata of consciousness I was amusedly delighted that Porter was playing the game so well.

As to the difficulty of what followed I feel singularly incompetent to pronounce judgment. The steep little wall was climbed, safely, as it had to be; but the fingerholds seemed distressingly small, and it was necessary to change feet on a minute foothold. Balance, no doubt, was chiefly required; perhaps it was not a particularly difficult pitch.

Porter followed more easily than I had expected. However, my memory is left with the picture of a short, intense, effort of mind and body in a situation as exposed, as I care for.

I had imagined once this wall was climbed that we should find a way up, one way or another, on this side of our arête, and I was disappointed after ascending a few feet higher to perceive that we could not proceed in that line. Porter, however, made a good lead up to the right, and by means of a slanting crack rejoined the arête. The great obstacle had been surmounted, but we withheld our cheers. Our hopes were not yet certainty. I had to take a shoulder to mount the next step in the arête, raced up 50 ft., crossed a gendarme, reached a farther point, and then shouted to Harold to follow. As he came up stepping off his axe and by some ingenuity recovering it, I was seated on the final pinnacle, duly placed to crown our buttress, and looking away over the arête and down to friendly Montanvert.

We were now divided from the summit ridge of the Charmoz by a sharp snow arête interspersed by a few rocky obstacles. With feet dug in on the Montanvert side and arms over the crest, we worked quickly along to the first of these, the perpendicular wall I had already remarked. It was easily surmounted and our way was plain before us. The mountain no longer resisted; the day was ours. At 3.45 P.M. we joined the summit ridge.

The weather luckily had not been unkind. Cloud was blowing on and off our peak; but not so as to enshroud us thickly. And in any case we could have followed tracks in snow, as we soon proceeded to do. An uneventful descent took us back to our abode at the due hour, in time for dinner.

A few words must be added in retrospect about our climb on the Charmoz. For persons hardly fit and certainly not yet hard it was a sufficiently strenuous day. But it was a proper expedition for two guideless climbers. They simply rubbed their noses against the rocks, and if they could not have climbed these rocks safely they would have retired. The only risks taken were in descending by the usual way, over the Nantillons Glacier. The ascent was never exposed to falling stones. A third man would necessarily have caused delay at several places, and a party of more than two will never, I expect, have much time to spare on this route. It is true that we wasted about 45 minutes below the Red Tower, and it would have been possible to have saved the 20 minutes' halt which we took at 9.30. Possibly the presence of ice in several places

cost us another 45 minutes, but we were early on the glacier, and I don't think our pace was slow; from the time we reached the bottom of the long chimney, and particularly after lunch, it was as fast as I have ever travelled on difficult rocks. We had time to spare no doubt for the descent. Personally, I have a respect for the Nantillons Glacier. I would always like to pass the séracs before sunset—after the westerly sun has done its worst and before the critical hour or so when frost sets in for the night.

I have described this expedition at some length for purely literary reasons. It is possible to indicate the nature of an expedition quite briefly. But I confess I have not the art of making a story without some details, and to make a story seemed the best chance of interesting you.

The incidents of rock-climbing usually afford more material for description than hours spent on snow and ice; there are notable exceptions, such as Mummery's ascent of the Col du Lion and our late President's ascent of Mont Blanc by the Peuteret arête; but I think it will generally be found that much more ink has been used in describing difficulties on rocks than those on ice and snow. From my point of view this is regrettable. For the best that climbing can give us, variety is needed; but ice and snow seem to me to afford finer experiences than rocks. I should be inclined to accept as an expression of the first mountaineering instinct Shelley's simple words, 'I love snow and all the radiant forms of Frost.' I don't love an Alpine peak devoid of snow. I hate the Dolomites, for instance, though I have never seen them, for their sterile aridity which no photograph can conceal; they seem to me an unquiet sort of desert. I envy no mountaineer so much as those who made the Brenva ascent when it was still comparatively safe; and it seems paradoxical that I should have been at pains to describe an expedition that contains so little of what I consider the finer element.

This attitude may seem ungenerous. But I don't deny the delights of the Charmoz, and I hope I am grateful for them. The Aiguilles are deservedly attractive. They have an indefinable quality of good breeding. Fishermen say of the salmon, I am told, that he is a gentleman—he refuses to give himself meekly away; he plays up till the last; he has the quality. The Aiguilles are not so much gentlemen as ladies. Porter and I were agreed that our Aiguille behaved with admirable spirit.

To complete the tale I set forth to tell I have still to make reference to two expeditions, though I shall not describe them.

Interest in the nature of our enjoyment of the Alps is concerned not only with particular peaks, but with the campaign as a whole. To those who find themselves in Chamonix wishing to be on the Col du Géant, it may seem desirable for the sake of the campaign to take a peak on the way ; or they may merely wish to avoid repetition of a snow trudge they know too well. The latter was our case, and we planned to reach the Col du Géant, excluding the greater part of a toilsome walk by traversing the Aiguille du Midi from the Plan de l'Aiguille. It was perhaps mere laziness, but the enterprise was not without point, for it appeared from Kurz that no satisfactory ascent of the Midi had been made on this side. So far as I know only two parties have recorded expeditions here—the first, Mr. Dent's party in 1899 reached the N.E. arête in bad weather, and descended hastily on the far side without reaching the summit rocks ; at all events they made the first ascent of this face. The second party, Mdlle. Engster with a guide and two porters, were less successful.

Both parties used the great couloir which comes down from near the summit. Whether this was altogether a wise proceeding I have not sufficient knowledge to judge. One would certainly expect it to be a safe line of ascent in normal conditions, but to descend it late in the day when the sun has come round (it faces W.) is a very different proposition, and a party ascending this face must reckon with the possibility of defeat higher up, where the cutting might be very arduous or either of two obstacles impassable.

The line chosen by Porter and myself is to the left of this one all the way.¹ Crampons were used in the couloir—we should have required steps without them. The rocks in the middle section were easy. The general angle of the hanging glacier and snow slopes above is decidedly steep. We kept to the edge as far as possible, and thus avoided any slopes of bare ice on either hand. There were difficulties in only two places, firstly, in crossing the bergschrund, which appeared possible at only one point. It was necessary to get up a crack in an ice-wall. Secondly, where the final ice-wall meets the rocks, which were partially iced. This proved extremely difficult.

It was late, 12.15, when we reached the top of this peak, and the weather looked really bad. Nevertheless, I have little doubt we committed an error of judgment in deciding to descend to Montanvert ; various considerations came in ; we reckoned

¹ V. p. 131 for sketch.

we shouldn't be fit for a long climb next day, and at the hotel we should find letters. In any case we took the wrong line, though it was also Mr. Dent's, making for the Rognon, near the ice-fall of the Géant Glacier. It was a very laborious descent in deep soft snow till we reached the tracks on the Glacier de Plan coming from the Requin.

We found ourselves eventually at the Rifugio Torino contemplating a reconnaissance on Mont Blanc. I was not happy about the prospects, and found myself awake at intervals during the night going over again in my mind the arguments for and against this expedition. Was it really a suitable expedition for a party of two? And for this party? And there constantly recurred the vision of a certain bleak edge of snow, or it might be ice, where we had seen powdered snow whisked in a fierce tourbillon such as might blow a party off the mountain. The wind was moaning during the night, and was still unquiet when we were called. Porter exhibited a tendency to wait for more propitious signs. But an interval of silence was followed by gentle snoring, and it was impossible to believe his judgment to proceed from a clear, unbiased mental process. The question as to whether we ought to start became involved in another—what would be good for Harold? The urgency of moral suasion was now applied.

A little later we were treading the steps up to the Col by lantern light. We had hardly popped our noses above the rim when we were furiously assaulted by an unseen enemy, whose first act of violence was to blow out our candle. You may remember that there is a hut less glorious than the Rifugio Torino situated at the level of the Col. Its emptiness was slightly cheered at that early hour before the dawn, by two pipes peacefully smoked and a conversation dim, solemn and fragmentary. The barbarian invasion, as it seemed, of Italy from the north did not cease; the hordes swept shuddering over the pass or fled screaming round the crags; and another project was born into the world. Below at the Rifugio two other Englishmen were presumably stirring towards resolved activities which they might already be half regretting. It was a favourable moment to try suggestion.

As a sequel to this thought four men—the two others were Professor Pigou and Mr. McLean—after lingering just so long as to know from its magic touch on peak after peak that the old fire was still alive, jogged down the steep path on the Italian side. Two of them at least had no passports, and to the interest of outwitting tracks on a moraine was to be added

that of outwitting the gendarmerie. It was this thought, and the liberal advice of the inhabitants, when we were sitting in the shade at Purtud, after eating a breakfast worthy of that green oasis, that drove us from the alternative of passing there a day and a night. Those who have spent a hot summer's day, as hot as an August day can be—and have not started very early—in walking first up the Val Veni, and, farther, up the Miage Glacier, will appreciate the moral worth of our resolution. But I must admit that I found it a most enjoyable walk, and it was ultimately enlivened by circumstances which will remain unforgettable. Later in the afternoon of this same day the same four men might have been observed cutting steps up the Glacier du Mont Blanc on their way to the Quintino Sella hut, and with them, curiously enough, a fifth member to their party—a singularly passive member from all appearances, for he was frequently left sitting upon any convenient ledge and thereafter hauled up another stage, let down into a crevasse with a sickening swing, to be hoisted out on the farther side, and eventually pitched and pulled at the same time off the glacier altogether on to *terra firma*. This hapless personage was no less a burden than four small logs tied together at the end of our spare rope. The ascent to the Quintino Sella hut is steep—I doubt if any ascent to a hut is steeper; and the four weavers' beams arrived there that evening the least exhausted members of their party. There was wood enough already at the hut, as Professor Pigou had foretold; but his was merely that cynicism about the world as we find it which is born of present discomfort; the true critic might have asked what sort of a job it would be cutting and splitting those little logs for a fire, and how it might agree with the only tool available, the somebody's ice-axe, which must never be mine.

On the following day we traversed Mont Blanc. We did not find it a difficult ascent—following, I imagine, more or less closely the line first chosen by Mr. Kennedy. But it has rarely, if ever, been my fortune to spend a more agreeable day on the Alps—a day more than agreeable, a satisfying day. It is not altogether easy to account for this feeling. In the ordinary way I find a close correspondence between the intensity of the struggle and the keenness of enjoyment. In this case the real struggle had taken place on the previous day; in so far as mountaineering qualities were required for this expedition they were required chiefly for the ascent to the hut. Perhaps this fact was partially responsible for our enjoyment. The second day was a long, unchecked, and glorious reward for

the first. Is there any other mountain, I wonder, where the first day counts for so much? I call to mind the approaches to various huts; and how few are worth recalling for any interest in their unpleasantness! Another cause suggests itself as contributing to this day's enjoyment. The companionship of tried friends on the mountains is undoubtedly a blessing: but the converse is not true—that of untried friends need not always be a curse. A care for the brotherly relation has its uses, we are all agreed, in the mountaineering fraternity, but the discovery of a brother in the mountaineer can hardly be so interesting elsewhere, or so delightful, as upon the mountain side.

There is a further delight which I connect with this last expedition of my climbing season. The tentative advances and temporary defeats, hesitations and delays, linked together by a continuous persistence where the way is intricate and success is withheld for weary hours, or perhaps in the final decision—all that is a wonderful experience, and perhaps we like ourselves best for the efforts and endurance which the resistance of a great mountain demands. But easier successes have also their joys, and not the least of these is the mere rhythm of motion, the smooth, unchecked, harmonious advance of a party, where a great mountain offers from its abundance an infinite variety; though no remarkable skill may be required to surmount the obstacles, no little skill may be used to preserve that harmony, to achieve that intimate combination between the members of a party which is itself not only the most important of means, but a sufficient end and a sufficient delight.

And, finally, is not an ascent of Mont Blanc under any circumstances supremely satisfying? Or is this merely a hymn of praise to my mistress? I confess I have never walked up to the summit from the Grands Mulets; but I should be far from despising such an enterprise. A great mountain is always greater than we know: it has mysteries, surprises, hidden purposes; it holds always something in store for us. One need not go far to learn that Mont Blanc is *capable de tout*. It has greatness beyond our guessing—genius, if you like—that indefinable something about a mountain to which we know but one response, the spirit of adventure.