had much business to transact, one of the most important items being the question of what was to happen at the end of our lease in 1924. Although it is not yet definitely settled, I hope that with the help of Mr. Withers, who is conducting the negotiations, we may be enabled to remain in our present rooms at a reasonable rent.

Besides the help of the committee, I have always had the wise advice of Captain Farrar. No amount of trouble is too much for him to undertake, if by it he can benefit the Club. I doubt if at any time we have had anyone who has had the welfare of the Club more at heart than he has. Also my special thanks are due to the Hon. Secretary, Captain Eaton, and to his diligent assistant, Mr. Oughton. I thank the members of the Club for their kindness and courtesy during my term of office ; they have always treated all suggestions brought before them from the committee in a sympathetic manner.

Gentlemen, I hand over the Presidency to General Bruce, my very old friend. We have climbed together in many parts of the world, and I know him to be the best of good fellows. If he can administer the Alpine Club with the same skill as he did the last expedition to Mt. Everest, all things will work with the greatest ease and the Alpine Club will prosper.

Some Alpine Expeditions in 1922.

By A. C. PIGOU.

OUR Alpine holiday in 1922 was original in one thing : the method of getting to the ground. The party, McLean, Hallward, and myself, were accompanied across the Channel by a five-seater Ford car. Arrived at Dieppe on the morning of July 1, we drove furiously along the good parts, and bumped in agony along the all too extensive bad parts, of certain French *grandes routes*. McLean, to whom I was obliged on occasion to surrender the wheel, has a way with him in the conduct of motor cars that provides fine training for his companions' nerves ! However, the only actual casualty that occurred took place while I was in charge. A minute French chicken hurled itself incontinently across our path and met an untimely end. On the evening of the third day, groaning somewhat with a disease that, in the darkness, we could not diagnose, the car climbed up the steep hill to La Grave and halted before the hospitable door of the Hôtel de la Meije.

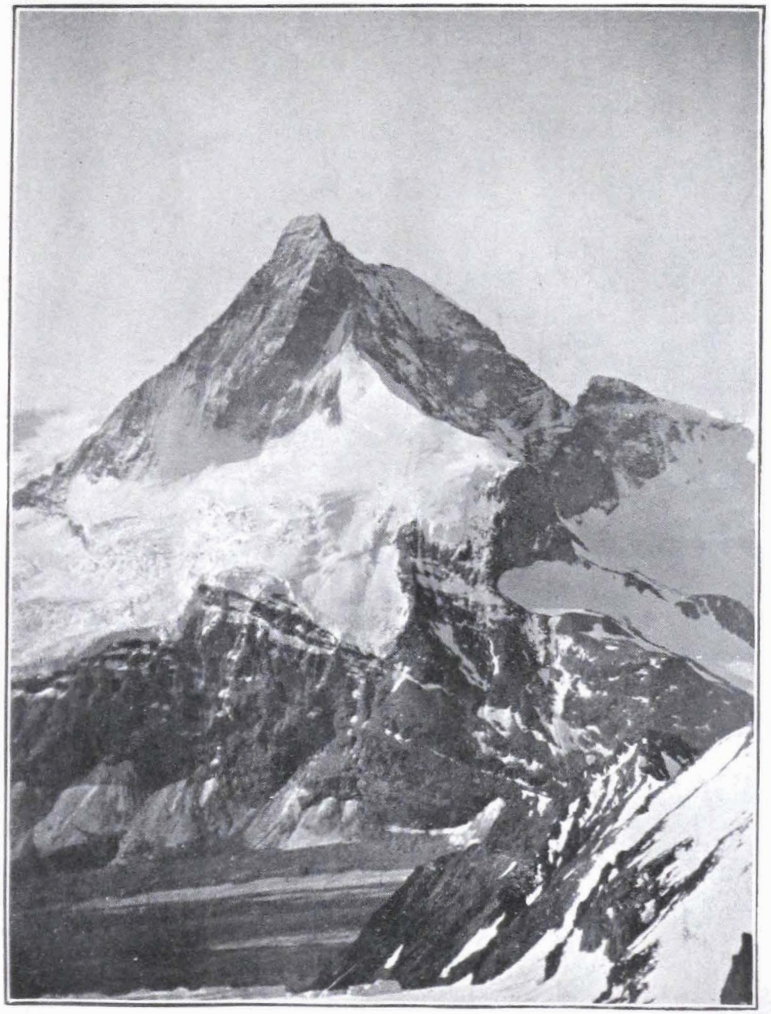
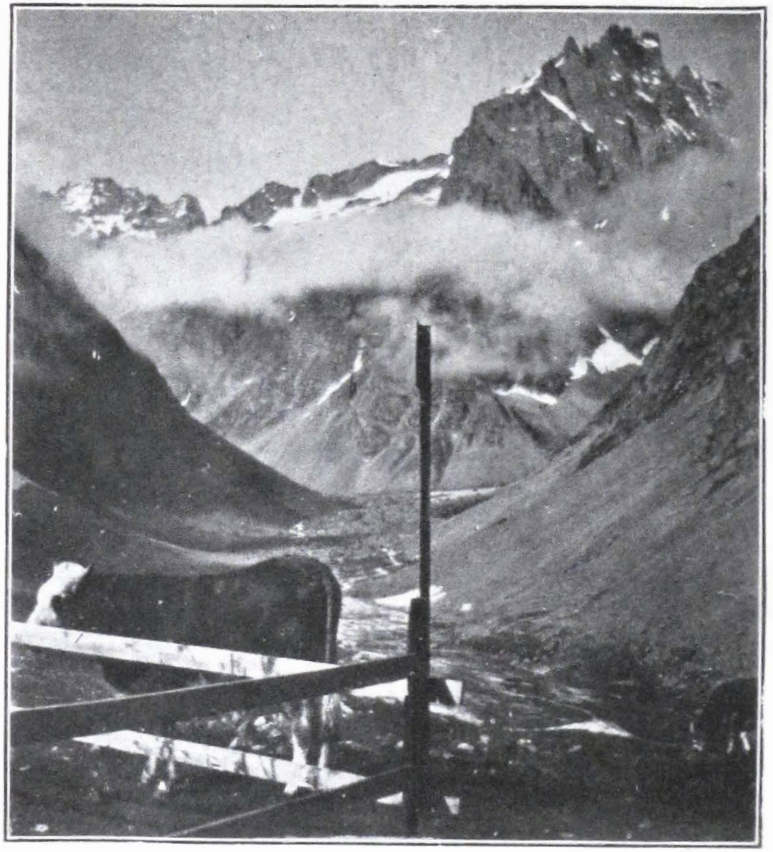


Photo R. Graham.

MATTERHORN.

Showing Z'Mutt arête from Pointe de Zinal.



ROCHE MÉANE

from Chalet de L'Alpe.

Next morning, rather worn with our journey, we wandered along the tunnelled road to look at Villar-d'Arène. The church is embellished on one side with two charming parallel 'chimneys' some sixty feet high, up which Hallward immediately proposed a race; but I, out of respect for the sacred edifice, coupled perhaps with other considerations, firmly declined the challenge. After lunch he and McLean ran violently up a steep place to prepare against the morrow. I, having successfully cured the car of its diseases, claimed a reward in idleness.

The morrow came and, with it, our training climb, the not very stately Bec de l'Homme. There are plainly any number of ways of getting up this mountain. We went to the foot of the Tabuchet glacier, crossed the ridge of the Pic de l'Homme by an extremely rotten wall, and then climbed up the Bec. It was a very bad route, and we took eight hours to reach the top. Hallward survived throughout; McLean suffered a little on the way up; I suffered a great deal on the way down. So ill, indeed, did I become that on the slopes leading to Villar-d'Arène McLean went on ahead to get the car and save me the two miles of road. At last, after being nearly cut off by precipices in the forest, I staggered, under Hallward's escort, into the Villar-d'Arène inn. We had no money, but our trustworthy appearance got us *café au lait*; and, just as our bowls were finished, the faithful Ford, hooting triumphantly, rushed into the square.

When we woke next morning the weather was still fine; so we walked up to the Chalet de l'Alpe—a charming spot, where, for fifteen French francs per day, you are lodged and fed luxuriously. During the night rain and storm fell on the house—a prelude to the season's happenings—but next afternoon it cleared enough to let us bathe in a cold pool, and to tempt upwards a French couple with their guide. My companions spent the evening in dance and song with the lady, while I underwent a discourse from her guide on the rottenness and peril of the Roche Méane, to which we had turned our eyes.

Dawn found us floundering among the horrors of the Casse Déserte. We were learning the inner meaning of the stones of Dauphiné. At last we escaped and, by rubble and snow, made our way to the glacier which divides the Roche Méane from the Grande Ruine. By this time we were none of us fired with the ardour of adventure—particularly adventure among rottenness; so we toiled up to the Brèche Giraud-Lézin for the lesser glories of the Grande Ruine. Even these, however, were not

to be won without an effort. It was difficult to get on to the rocks from the glacier, and they proved anything but firm. However, eventually we attained the summit, after overruling vigorous protests from one of the party, who asserted that the whole mountain was about to fall on us in a single solid block. We came down along a snow ridge leading to the Pic Bourcet, and then easily on to the glacier. Until we arrived once more on the Casse Déserte we were happy. Returned to the inn, we hungrily ordered *café au lait* and omelette, while our host sat down to explain to us in detail the various respects in which we must have strayed from the proper way. The *café au lait* duly arrived ; but there was now present in the chalet a gentleman of great influence, no less a one than the chief of the local police. The admirable omelette on which we had built our hopes was served respectfully to him !

Rain fell in the night and following morning, but the sky cleared later. We decided to go to La Bérarde, and, with the help of the map, chose our route—Pic de Neige Cordier, Col Émile Pic, Glacier Blanc, and Col des Écrins. This turned out a charming expedition, carried through in perfect weather. We hit a good route on to and up the Pic de Neige Cordier and were on the top at 6.50, five and a half hours from the start. During a long halt we watched with vindictive satisfaction the Chief of Police—devourer of our omelette—and his guides toiling and, as we hoped, suffering on the slopes of the Grande Ruine. Crossing the Col Émile Pic, we did not descend directly to the Glacier Blanc, but contoured round above it—a plan that would probably waste time in a less snowy year, but answered well for us. On getting to the Col des Écrins at half-past ten we all experienced a shock—for to our eyes expecting a gentle slope there suddenly appeared an exceedingly steep rock wall. So surprised were we that we doubted whether this was the proper opening, and went off to inspect another one higher up towards the right. But one glance at the tottering rottenness below was enough. We returned to the true col and discovered, of course, that the wall was amply garnished with enormous holds. Fortune continued to favour us. We found a good bridge across the bergschrund, and then, descending the Bonne Pierre glacier, by pure accident struck the top of a moraine, along which has been constructed an admirable path leading down to La Bérarde. We reached the hotel in time for tea, after a charming and varied day.

Our hopes of making the first traverse for the season over the Meije, which that day's sunlight had warmed, were

shattered next morning by a return of bad weather. Acting on the principle that it is a mistake, in a doubtful season, to wait about for big peaks, we resolved, if it should prove possible, to go back next day to La Grave across the Brèche. But, before that enterprise could be attempted, there befell us a great adventure. A sergeant of gendarmes invaded the hotel and demanded our passports. These, thinking no evil, we had left in our bags at La Grave. A terrific storm broke. We might be Allemands; we might be Bolsheviks: the doors of the gaol were opening for us. Fortunately a French visitor at the hotel took up arms in our behalf. With wild gesticulations the battle raged over our heads. Our champion carried the war into the enemy's country with an original argument. Why, he cried, to carry a passport across the mountains, so far from being the right thing to do, would be an act of madness: an avalanche might carry the sacred document away, and then where would its unfortunate owner be? But the sergeant did not flinch. He too, he shouted, was an Alpinist—had he not made the traverse of the Meije? Did he not know that, if an avalanche were to carry off the passport of a voyageur, it would in all probability carry off the voyageur also?—and of those buried upon the mountains passports were not required! Suddenly the storm, in the inexplicable manner of French storms, died down. For us there was no reproach—we were undoubtedly 'braves gens'; but it was the safety of the Republic that required these precautions. Let us remember always in future that, on the soil of France, the passport and the man should never in life be divided!

Nobody called us next morning or prepared for us any food. Nevertheless we were off at four, walking through a thick cloud. For a few moments the sky cleared and we saw the splendid, though whitened, bastions of the Meije. But at the Brèche snow was falling thickly, and there was a very dense mist. We hesitated a good deal about descending an unknown glacier in these conditions, but finally agreed at least to make a start. After we had gone down some way, one member of the party, on the basis of much book-learning, directed us steadily on a line towards the left and *upwards!* We submitted patiently until this route brought us immediately beneath a row of towering séracs. Thereupon revolt broke out. We resolved that in a fog the value of book-learning is limited, and that, if one wishes to descend a glacier, it is advisable to walk down, and not up. By acting on this simple rule we came before very long to the top of the Enfetchores rocks. The snow

stopped and the sky cleared, and, in spite of sundry wanderings from the best way, we reached in due course the Hôtel de la Meije. There the 'braves anglais' were loudly acclaimed for their heroic venture, and regaled themselves with tea.

At this point in my narrative I am tempted to a brief excursus. On the Enfetchores rocks we encountered three Frenchmen from Grenoble. Two of them were competent climbers, but the third, who was carrying a portentous load, had never—so they told us, and so his movements suggested—set foot upon a mountain before. This unfortunate young man was continually in difficulties—he might have killed himself at any moment—and yet the party did not rope. No doubt a local guide perfectly acquainted with the district could have found a route down these rocks where anybody, however incompetent, would be safe. But an unguided party is certain, from time to time, to get into places from which a novice may easily fall. And yet, if that novice is a spirited person, he will hate to ask for the rope; he will much prefer to undergo mental discomfort and physical danger. Surely there is an imperative obligation on his more experienced companions not to allow this to happen, and to shoulder whatever inconvenience there may be in roping too soon rather than too late. After all, we climb for amusement, not to provide illustrative material for students of natural selection!

In the ordinary course the journey from La Grave to Chamonix would be a wearisome affair of two days. For us in our car it was a very pleasant ride. Starting at about nine in the morning, and travelling by Grenoble and Albertville, we topped the hills overlooking St. Gervais at sunset, had a marvellous view of the southern part of the Mont Blanc chain, and reached Couttet's in time for a late dinner. It was now July 13. For the next three days it rained and snowed. We spent them in going by train to Zermatt and in watching, in lucid intervals, the mountains growing steadily more white. On the 17th, however, things improved; so next morning we left the Monte Rosa hotel at one and started, with no very definite objective, up the path to the Trift. As we passed the hotel we saw three parties girding themselves. After we had laboured for some time through the snows of the Trift glacier and were breakfasting, they passed us, all bound for the Wellenkuppe. Henceforward the work of snow-ploughing would be theirs and not ours, but, none the less, the idea of tramping behind them did not greatly attract us. The face of the Trifthorn was covered with unstable snow, but we thought

it would be possible to ascend the Triftjoch gully and climb the mountain by the ridge. However, we judged unwisely. When, after incredible toil, we had got half-way to the Joch, a snow avalanche poured down the gully, turned me over, and carried me down towards my companions, who were luckily out of the direct line. This was not good enough. When I had been extricated we returned as quickly as we could to the glacier basin. Then a debate arose. We had spent a considerable time upon our unsuccessful enterprise ; the sun was very hot and the snow very soft. None of us, we agreed, *wanted* to walk up to Wellenkuppe, but one of us, with that spirit which has made England what it is, felt that honour required us to do so. At length by a majority of two to one it was decided to retire : the party of idleness, *quorum pars magna fui*, had vanquished honour !

Our experience on this expedition made it plain that no high mountains would be accessible for some days. We therefore planned to journey to Chamonix by the High Level Route, climbing anything that offered on the way. To this end we went next afternoon to the Schönbühl hut. Arriving in light snow, we found four students from Leipzic dug in and waiting, rather foolishly we thought, for the Z'Muttgrat. They told us that a month's climbing in Switzerland cost them 40,000 marks apiece. For the Col d'Hérens and the Col de Bertol next day we had brilliant weather. We avoided the actual col on the first of these passes, fearing that it would treat us as the Triftjoch had done, and crossed higher up over a steep shoulder of the Tête Blanche. The deep snow made the going rather laborious, and we took fourteen hours to reach Arolla. On such occasions McLean and I are fortunate. The relative weights of our party are such that, if he or I go first and make the steps, Hallward, following behind, always sinks them a second stage. If, however, *he* goes first, the steps are at once founded on the solid centre of the earth. The practical moral is obvious, and, such is the heroism of youth, Hallward himself actually enjoys applying it !

The day of rest that followed these labours was spent in inspecting a grass tennis-court—undoubtedly the worst in Europe—of which the Hôtel du Mont Collon has become the proud possessor, in climbing the Dent de Satarma, with its slippery top, and in bathing in the blue lake. These enjoyments prepared us for the next stage of our journey. Starting at 3 A.M. we crossed the Pas de Chèvres and reached the Col du Mont Seilon at 8 o'clock. The weather looked doubtful, but,

with the help of deep tracks made by a party the day before, we climbed up and down the Mont Blanc de Seilon very easily. It never occurred to us that the proper way to get to Mauvoisin from here is by the Glacier Lyrerose. We set off, therefore, in the direct line down the Glacier de Giétroz. Getting off on the right bank below the icefall, we had the satisfaction of seeing a herd of chamois, but the annoyance of finding ourselves cut off by cliffs. We were obliged to cross to the other side of the glacier under dangerous-looking séracs. Lower down we found some chalets possessing excellent milk, and the top of a winding path that took us down into the precipitously walled Mauvoisin valley. We reached the hotel at 6.15, just as rain began to fall.

The third link in the High Level Road was unfortunately denied to us. Rain on the following morning delayed our start for the Panossière hut till 3.30 P.M. Then, after toiling up some very steep slopes, we lost the path in a fog. It was getting late; to suffer a night out in searching for a hut would have been excessively annoying; we abandoned the attempt and went down to Fionnay. The result was the loss of our expedition. Had we been at the hut next morning we could have got across the Col des Maisons Blanches. But by the afternoon, when we did arrive there, it was snowing hard. The snow continued all night, and, though at 8.30 next morning we made a start up the glacier, the fog and falling snow made it impossible to see anything, and, after a couple of hours, we were compelled to come back. We had not provisions enough for another night, so could not stay longer in the hut. We walked down by Fionnay and Lourtier towards Sembrancher, discovered, a few miles before arriving there, that on foot we should miss the Martigny-Orsières train, chartered a motor-car, and, with the combined help of petrol and coal, sat down to dinner in Orsières.

Recovered weather gave promise that the fourth and last link in the High Level Chain could be fashioned. The march to the Saleinaz hut, a fairly laborious one, was achieved in the course of the next day. From there we had hoped to traverse the Aiguille d'Argentière, but Maurice Crettex, whom we met in the hut, and who had made an expedition that day, assured us that the snow would be unsafe. We then thought of taking the Grande Fourche on the way to the Col du Chardonnet. It transpired, however, that some twenty persons proposed to attack that mountain, and we did not wish to be killed. In the end, therefore, we resolved to go direct to the col and see if anything could be done from there.

Starting at 2.15, we had crisp snow on the glacier and magnificent sunrise views. At the col it was obvious that neither the Aiguille d'Argentière nor the Chardonnet was fit to climb, and we came straight down to Lognan. The year before we had entered that hostelry at a like early hour after spending a gruesome night on the other side of the glacier. When he saw us now, M. Simon at first suspected that we had repeated that experience. However, our contentment with two eggs each in omelette form, in contrast with our demand then for six, won credit for the simple tale we told him. We walked down to les Tines through the woods and took train to Chamonix and to Montanvert.

A day of pouring rain and snow put all high ascents out of court. Sitting in idleness at the hotel, we planned, therefore, for the morrow a little expedition that turned out very successfully. Starting at six, we mounted by the Glacier de la Thendia to the Col d'Etala and traversed first the Petits Charmoz and then the Aiguille de l'M., returning by the slopes of the Crête des Charmoz. These last slopes are detestable, but the ascent of the Petits Charmoz from the Col d'Etala, if one sticks faithfully to the ridge, is a charming rock climb. The whole expedition took eleven and a half hours. We recommend it strongly to anybody who finds himself at the Montanvert when the high mountains are snow-bound.

The day had been sunny, and it seemed possible that the Requin would now be clear enough to climb. With this idea we started next morning at two ; but a loss of time and temper in getting on to the Mer de Glace, a sight of the whitened upper rocks of our peak, an error as to the way, and, above all, the thought of the sun-smitten glacier snows that lay between us and the rocks, drove us to substitute the Tacul. Two of us had been up this mountain before, but, even so, we missed the easy chimney at the top and had to fight our way up a rival and much more strenuous one. On coming down we found the snow slopes leading from the rocky buttress on the right of the Glacier des Périades to the middle of that glacier in a curious condition. By kicking about a little at the top we caused the whole surface to peel off in great strips, but below there was not ice or even very hard snow. When the avalanches had subsided we walked down very comfortably in the road they had made for us.

That evening we were joined by a new companion, M. V. Dixon. After a day's rest we climbed the Blaitière, just opened for traffic by another guideless party. To judge from the

appearance of the tracks they must have had very hard work. By dint of taking off our coats we just succeeded in squeezing through the narrow groove that leads to the top of the centre summit. As we were coming down—after McLean, stimulated by my ice-axe, had climbed up our spare rope at the Rocher de la Corde—the sky suddenly darkened, and our journey down the ridge was made in falling snow.

After another day's rest we crossed the Col des Grands Montets *en route* for the Aiguille d'Argentière. That mountain we ascended by the ordinary way in eight hours. There was a cold wind, and the rocks near the top were in bad condition, but there had been a party up recently who had cut steps in the ice. For variety's sake we came down by the ridge leading to the Col du Chardonnet. There was a great deal of powdered snow on the rocks and a considerable ice slope to cut down. Shortly below this, about half-way along the ridge, we turned off down a rather rotten gully on the left, and, by that and a steep snow slope, reached the Glacier du Chardonnet. Though only one stone fell as we were coming down, I doubt if the route is a safe one. On the glacier we made a snow-ice out of a tin of peaches and enjoyed ourselves very much.

Next day, August 5, McLean had to go back to England. After bidding him good-bye in Chamonix, Hallward, Dixon, and I went up a second time by train to the Montanvert. It rained as we went up, and continued to rain during the night; but at 6.30 things looked better. We crossed the Col du Géant —this year extraordinarily easy—and reached Courmayeur at half-past five in the afternoon. Next day it rained again as we walked up to Pertud. When we got up at two the morning after, with designs on the Aiguille de la Brenva, a fog of unpromising appearance drove us back to bed. By nine, however, the sky was fairly clear, and, true to our policy of not waiting about, we crossed the Col de la Seigne and the Col du Mont Tondu, reaching the Pavillon de Trèlatête some ten hours later, just in time to escape a terrific thunderstorm.

This storm preluded another impossible day, devoted to idleness and the very excellent fare which the Pavillon provides. Thereafter the skies cleared once more, and we set out at 3 A.M. for the Aiguille des Glaciers. Imitating Bicknell's party of two years before, we did not go to the col, but climbed directly up a rib some way to the left of it. However, as the upper part of this was covered with hard snow in which steps had to be cut, it is doubtful if we saved much time. The walk along the snowy ridge to the final rocks was a very fine one, and the view all

round magnificent. When, however, we came to the rocks of the North ridge we found them plastered with ice, much as the rocks of Great End are apt to be plastered at Easter. There was also a fierce wind, which blew small lumps of ice down on us. A short effort convinced us that the top of the mountain was, for the present, padlocked. We regretfully retired, this time going via the Col des Glaciers, and got back to the Pavillon a little after four. Then, intending to climb again next day, we went to bed for two hours before dinner.

The expedition that followed was the most interesting accomplished in our tour. From 3 to 7.45 A.M. we were occupied in climbing the Aiguille de Béranger by the ridge looking down on Contamines. Thereafter we passed on to the highest summit up the Dôme de Miage by a narrow snow ridge and along soft slopes. Arrived there a little after ten, we traversed all the other summits of the Dôme to the Col de Miage. This journey, which took rather less than four hours, is a most attractive one ; the ridges are beautifully fashioned and sometimes very narrow ; one feels remote from all the world. A growing wind and the sight of clouds gathering around and below added an element of excitement. We stopped for a meal on the col, and watched two Swiss youths, whom we had met before, completing the traverse of the Aiguille de Bionnassay. Then we walked down the rotten rib that leads to the French Glacier de Miage, found a way off it, crossed the glacier, and eventually got down to slopes of grass. There a roaring torrent barred our way. Hallward, a long-jump expert, leaped lightly among its swirling chasms, but Dixon and I, in spite of the help he gave us, made a very wet and undignified passage. Milk at the chalets cheered us for the final walk to St. Gervais, where we arrived at eight o'clock. Basking in a dream of hot baths, we were infuriated to be turned away from one hotel after another, all of them declaring themselves full. The sight of a motor-car gave us an inspiration : we begged for a lift to Le Fayet ; and there, despite the late hour and our bedraggled appearance, the Hôtel des Alpes afforded us, not only the much-desired beds and baths, but also a very excellent dinner.

Once again the gallant army set out and delivered an unintended, furious, and quite unsuccessful attack on an impossible part of the Charmoz face. Then, three days after the Miage expedition, Hallward and Dixon returned home, and I was joined for a little while by P. J. Baker. On the morning after his arrival from England we started at a quarter to six and climbed the Grands Charmoz. Two days later, he, Clapham,

and I walked up from the Montanvert to the Torino refuge, and, after portentous draughts of soup, the two last of us continued over snow, rubble, and ropes to the top of the Dent du Géant. That evening we were richly rewarded by some astonishing views of Mont Blanc as seen through wavering mists. On the way back from the col to Chamonix we had hoped to climb the Requin, but the somnolence of one member of the party delayed our start next morning till 7.30, bad route-finding on my part lost us further time, and we were compelled to let slip the prize. After a day's rest, Baker and I then tried to get up the Grands Charmoz by the ridge from the Col d'Etala. But we destroyed our chance by approaching the col from the Nantillons side and wasting hours of time. When, after great difficulties, we got to the col, it was too late to think of the Grands Charmoz and we had to be content with the little one. On our ascent to the col there is one spot which I vividly remember, and which I do not propose to revisit : a sort of through route at the top of a 20-ft. chimney. This through route tempted the explorer, but, when he had entered a certain distance, his progress disturbed a number of large stones above him. In consequence of this disturbance it was impossible for him to do what he earnestly desired, namely, to return by the way he had come—because, if he had done so, the stones must have followed and landed upon his head. Consequently, with infinite pain, he was compelled to go forward, forcing the stones to pass down between his body, which completely filled the hole, and the rock—a process occupying some forty minutes of agony and objurgation. But over events like these self-respecting mountaineers should draw a veil. Consolation and healing were found in the blue waters of Annécy, to which the indomitable Ford carried us, in torrents of rain, away from the storm-swept hills.

An Adventure on the Dent Blanche.

By G. M. BELL.

[Read before the Alpine Club, June 6, 1922.]

NEVER before at the end of June can the inhabitant remember to have seen the glaciers so bare and so seamed with unusual crevasses, the snow slopes and gullies turned to such sheets of ice, the rocks so free of winter snow, as in the dry year of 1921. ' Cette année il ne peut pas pleuvoir '—