

the summit of the Matterhorn is gained. The top of this famous mountain is a long thin ridge of snow, with some light undulations, the highest portion being near the western end ; and, indeed, the general shape of the peak is very nearly what it appears to be from Zermatt ; of course the western end, being further from Zermatt than the eastern, appears to be the lowest.

Mr. Grove and his guides stayed a very short time on the western end of the ridge, and then descended, as the day was well advanced when they reached the summit, and as it was uncertain how long a time the descent might occupy. They passed a second night in the grotto, and the next day descended to Breuil. A short time after Mr. Grove's expedition some guides of the Val Tournanche, who conceived the strange idea of taking a girl up the mountain, and who got her to the place where the gallery begins, discovered that it was possible to go from the head of the southern arête to the top of the mountain by a route shorter and less difficult than that leading over the gallery and northern arête. On a portion of this new way they fastened a rope. An English traveller, Mr. Leighton Jordan, who ascended, it is believed, by this route, not only explored the whole of the summit ridge, but actually descended some distance on the ice-covered northern side. After this the late autumn snow at length restored to the Matterhorn the repose which it had enjoyed for so many ages before Alpine Clubs were invented, and before men strove to set foot on the summits of great mountains.

THE AIGUILLES ROUGES OF CHAMONIX.

BY A. M. CARR-SAUNDERS.

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 3, 1925.)

THE range of mountains which I am going to describe to-night must be well known by sight to most members of the Club. But, unless I am mistaken, the acquaintance of many English climbers with the Aiguilles Rouges of Chamonix is confined to the views of them obtained from the peaks of the Mont Blanc range. It may be a matter of chance that I have met very few English climbers when exploring the ground myself, and that I have not infrequently met climbers at

Chamonix or Argentière waiting in bad or doubtful weather for a chance to get on to the Mont Blanc range, oblivious of the fact that the Aiguilles Rouges offer good climbs which can be attempted when the weather is indifferent. I think that they are well deserving of attention for themselves, but they must inevitably suffer from their nearness to the Chamonix Aiguilles with their obviously greater attractions. Nevertheless, even if I underestimate the extent to which they are known, I do not think they are so familiar as to make some detailed description of them altogether unwelcome.

The neglect of the Aiguilles Rouges, if neglect it be, by English climbers does not stand alone. Climbers of other nations have apparently neglected them equally until recent years. And this neglect extended into the region of cartography. The only map in existence until 1921, when M. Vallot published the results of his own observations, was very inaccurate. Heights were as much as 100 metres wrong, and peaks were displaced horizontally as much as 600 metres. But this has now been put right by the publication of M. Vallot's map in 'La Montagne,' No. 145 (1921), accompanied by a very useful description of the topography, and followed by an article by M. de Lépiney in the form of a climbers' guide to the range. It can be purchased in pamphlet form from the C.A.F.

The topography of the range is simple. It lies parallel to the range of Mont Blanc, and stretches a good 20 miles in a N.E.-S.W. direction. To the E. is the Chamonix valley; at a level of about 6000 ft. is a well-marked shelf on which the Flégère Inn and other convenient starting-points are situated. The peaks rise from this shelf, and reach their highest point in the Belvédère, just exceeding 10,000 ft. in height. On the other side the geography is a little less simple, owing to the fact that a ridge given off to the W. from the Belvédère divides the Vallée de Bérard on the N. from the Vallée de la Diosaz on the S. The route from one of these valleys to the other is by the Col de Salenton. In the Vallée de Bérard is an inn which, while chiefly used for the Buet, is available for attacks on the Aiguilles Rouges from the W. On this side of the range the glaciers reach some little size, whereas on the Chamonix side the two glaciers which do exist are so insignificant as usually to escape notice. To the W. there is no shelf as on the Chamonix side, and the peaks fall precipitously to the hanging glaciers, which themselves drop steeply towards the valley.

I propose to give some description of the range, beginning

at its southern end with the Brévent. In using the name Aiguilles Rouges to cover the whole range from the Brévent to the Col des Montets, I am using the name loosely. Properly speaking, so M. Vallot tells us, the southern end of the range from the Brévent to the Col de la Glière is called the Chaîne du Brévent, while the term Aiguilles Rouges is restricted to the range N. of the Col de la Glière. The best climbing is to be found in the Aiguilles Rouges, thus defined; but for the sake of completeness I propose to mention the Brévent, especially since a climb on that peak has acquired a certain notoriety at Chamonix. The rock of which the greater part of the range is composed is similar to that found in the Mont Blanc range, but it tends to be loose and rotten. On certain peaks great care is in consequence necessary. The small amount of snow, however, renders falls of stones more rare than they would be if the range was higher. The Brévent is composed of a different kind of rock, and the climb I am going to describe on that peak is not, so far as the condition of the rock is concerned, typical of the range as a whole.

While describing the climbs it should be remembered that, in addition to the interest which the climbs have in themselves, they have an added attraction from the fact that they command the most superb views of the Mont Blanc range. Further, the more northern peaks include part of the Bernese Oberland in the view, and to the W. from all the peaks the magnificent dolomitic range of the Chaîne des Fiz is visible.

Most visitors to Chamonix have seen the precipitous wall of the Brévent facing the valley. This face can be climbed by turning to the left above Planpraz, traversing horizontally to the foot of the nearby vertical E. face of the Brévent until the foot of the obvious 'grande cheminée' is reached. This chimney can be entered at the bottom and climbed to near its top, where further progress is impossible. This was the route followed by M. Beaujard on the first ascent. It is more usual to climb the rocks to the left for some distance before entering the chimney. The upper portion of these rocks is by no means easy, and the chimney itself is decidedly difficult. At the point where progress is no longer possible a way out can be found to the left, leading to a long and easy traverse to a point immediately below the summit, whence a chimney of some 70 ft. in height leads to the top, the climb ending with a scramble through the iron railings. We may have been unlucky, but during our climb two falls of rock took place, and we were lucky not to have suffered disaster.

On that account I do not recommend the climb, and I would not care to repeat it. It gives a false impression of the nature of the rock in the range in general, which is elsewhere of a wholly different nature. In addition, in the final chimney there may be some danger from ginger-beer bottles.

A brief mention may be made of the very attractive rock towers and pinnacles which jut out from the main ridge immediately N. of the Col du Brévent. Among them are the Clochers du Brévent, the Clochers de Planpraz, and the Clochetons de Planpraz. They give some first-rate climbing, and afford evidence that immediately N. of the Brévent the rock changes in character, and provides a much more attractive programme for an off day than the climb of the Brévent by the face.

I would especially recommend the Clochers de Planpraz, so prominent in the view from Planpraz to the right of the Brévent path. Other similar pinnacles exist further to the N.

Starting northwards along the ridge from the Col du Brévent, and passing over the somewhat featureless Aiguille de Charlanoz and Aiguille Pourrie, we reach the Aiguille de la Glière. This summit is easily reached from the Flégère Inn. From the Glière is given off to the E. a ridge which ends in the Aiguille de l'Index, on which the climbing is everywhere excellent. The usual route is from the Flégère to the Col de l'Index, between the Glière and the Index. The Index is then climbed by the W. arête. This is the easiest way, and gives two and a half hours of difficult climbing—difficult in the sense in which it is used in classifying English climbs. It is classed by M. de Lépiney as 'assez difficile'; he has two higher categories of difficulty, and it thus follows that there is climbing in the Aiguilles Rouges of considerable degree of difficulty. The chief trouble is the crossing of a slab which has to be effected in order to reach the bottom of a very steep couloir. The couloir leads eventually to an overhang, which makes it necessary to find a way out and to finish the climb by the S. arête. The Index may also be climbed by the S. arête throughout, and by the E. face, but these are more difficult routes.

From the other side of the Glière there extends into the Vallée de la Diosaz another ridge on which is situated a fine peak, the Aiguille du Pouce. The very existence of this peak is little known, and the climbing on it less known still. This summit can be reached from the Glière by following the ridge which joins them, and this gives two hours interesting but not very difficult climbing. The somewhat easier route is by way of the N. face, to reach which it is necessary, if coming from the

Flégère, to cross the main ridge by the Col de la Floriaz. This is in fact the best way of reaching the W. side of the peaks facing the Diosaz Valley, since there is no inn in that valley from which a start can conveniently be made. The S. face and the W. arête are said to offer extremely difficult and fine climbs.

Immediately N. of the Glière come the Petite and the Grande Aiguille de la Floriaz. The latter is well known as a view-point, but is of no especial interest otherwise to climbers. It is less well known that the Petite Aiguille de la Floriaz, which is nearly as high as the Grande Aiguille, gives two good climbs which can be conveniently made from the Flégère, one by the S.E. and the other by the N.E. ridges.

Between the Aiguille de la Floriaz and its rival view-point, the Belvédère, come the Aiguilles Crochues. A pass immediately S. of these points can be reached in about two hours from the Flégère, and thence the points known collectively as the Aiguilles Crochues can be traversed in about two and a half hours. There are three principal summits, of which the southernmost is the highest, and the traverse gives a good and by no means easy climb. It is curious that this very attractive expedition, so easy of access to Chamonix where generations of rock climbers have spent their holidays, should not have been made until 1920.

Perhaps it is because of the fact that the Floriaz and the Belvédère, the highest peaks of the range, are easy that climbers have jumped to the hasty conclusion that the range had nothing to offer them. If that is so, it is certainly a mistake. Both the Floriaz and the Belvédère provide good climbs for those who take them in preference to the ordinary route. The Belvédère, for instance, which can always be recognized by the curious cops of sedimentary rock which crown the summit, gives a good climb up the S.E. face. It is perhaps the finest view-point in the whole range.

North of the Belvédère are a number of peaks close together with a somewhat elaborate nomenclature. Many of these names are local names which were in existence before climbers came upon the scene. Some of them were christened by M. Charlet-Straton, one of the first explorers of the range. M. Vallot obtained much information from M. Charlet-Straton as to nomenclature when I was staying with the latter. It was he, in fact, who first taught me that the range had a very distinct interest of its own.

The first peak N. of the Belvédère is the Aiguille du Lac

Blanc, a decidedly difficult climb somewhat spoiled by the uncertain nature of the rock. Next comes the Aiguille de la Tête Plate, which may be climbed without much difficulty by its S. face, and is followed by the Arête Plate, a long and, in its lower northern section, broad and easy ridge. The Aiguilles des Chamois, which follow next, appear to be little known. They are said to give very fair climbing by more than one route. My only knowledge of them is derived from a climb up the northern ridge from the Col de la Persévérance, which crosses the ridge immediately to the N. of them. The lower part of this ridge is, in places, by no means easy. Higher up it is less difficult, but my explorations ended before reaching the top. I was, in fact, only led to scramble about these rocks one day when our true business was connected with the Aiguille de la Persévérance, which rises steeply on the other side of the Col de la Persévérance. This col is a narrow notch in the main ridge easily reached from the Chamonix side, but descending precipitously on the Bérard side. On that side it looks impracticable as seen from the top. The name Persévérance was given to this, in some ways the most attractive, point in the whole range by M. Charlet-Straton after he had climbed it with Madame Charlet-Straton on their third attempt. The first two attempts were made on the Bérard side, while their third and successful attempt was from the Col de la Persévérance. A rock tower rises steeply from the col, and it is usual to avoid the direct climb by traversing out on the steep Bérard face. It is soon possible to climb straight up and rejoin the ridge. Shortly after rejoining the ridge, the way is blocked by a low vertical wall of rock which cannot be circumvented. This is climbed by a stiff crack, from the top of which a sound but steep and narrow ridge leads to the summit. There is another and more difficult climb also from the Chamonix side by the S. arête.

M. Charlet-Straton is, of course, well known as having made the first ascent of the Petit Dru, and the *cabane* at its foot now bears his name. He also came near to making the first ascent of the Aiguille du Géant. Less well known is the climbing record of Madame Charlet-Straton. Miss Straton, as she was before her marriage, climbed in those mid-Victorian days when such exploits must have seemed truly remarkable. Sometimes she was accompanied by her friend Miss Lloyd; more often she climbed with her guide only. She made the first ascents of the Aiguille du Moine and the Pointe Isabella, which bears her christian name. More remarkable still was the first

winter ascent of Mont Blanc which she made in January 1876, and it was after this that she married her guide M. Charlet, who took the name Charlet-Straton. The *Persévérance* was her only notable subsequent climb. I had the remarkably good fortune to make her acquaintance when I was a school-boy, and I have spent a large part of many happy holidays in her house at Les Frasserands above Argentière. Madame Charlet-Straton died during the War ; her death was, no doubt, hastened by the death in action of her son Robert, a sergeant in the Chasseurs Alpains. M. Charlet-Straton is happily still alive, and, I may say, much appreciates visits from English climbers who may find themselves at Argentière.

The steep Bérard side has attracted some attention. It does not seem to have been climbed.¹ I had a good view of its upper part when I made the climb by the usual route in 1914. Joseph Ravanel, who was with me, was much interested in the accident which had befallen a party in the preceding autumn. The accident² took place when the party was trying to make the first descent from the top down the Bérard face. A rope was said to have been left behind, and, with the object of finding it, Joseph set out to explore the face. This exploration lasted some two hours, and the impression I gained was that, while the face is everywhere difficult, a careful exploration should lead to the finding of a practicable route which would add a fine climb to the list of those which can be made from the Bérard side.

My climb was made on August 1, 1914, the only fine day in a week of wretched weather. The experience of English visitors in Chamonix seems to have been utterly unlike that of visitors in Switzerland. The possibility of war seemed very remote in a prospectively neutral country. In the Chamonix Valley excitement had reached fever pitch. Soon after reaching the valley we heard the village bell tolling at Argentière. Hurrying on we found the placard posted up ordering general mobilization. Events followed thick and fast. Amid the tragic incidents of hurried departure for the front, I remember a less tragic incident—the visit to the Charlet-Stratons, with whom I was staying, of the proprietor of a neighbouring hotel.

¹ It has been climbed recently by Armand and Georges Charlet, famous young guides of Argentière. The former described it to M. de Ségogne as the most difficult climb of his career, which means much.

² *A.J.* xxvii. 79.

He was terribly agitated ; his cook had been called up, and, worse still, insisted on leaving by the evening train. The dinner would be spoilt, and the reputation of his hotel for its excellent cuisine would be ruined. Wouldn't I, he implored, intercede and put before him the gravity of his decision in the eyes of English visitors ?

Close to the *Persévérance*, towards the N.E., there rise from the ridge the *Aiguille Martin* and the *Aiguille de l'Encrenaz*, fine-looking peaks but unknown to me. The *Aiguille Martin* is said to give a very fair climb, while there is said to be an easy route up the *Aiguille de l'Encrenaz*. At this point a spur is given off to the E., which ends in the *Aiguille de la Remuaz*. It is this peak which is so well seen from above *Argentière*. With its magnificent reddish cliffs, it appears to form the true end of the range. This is not so in reality, because the main ridge is continued to the N. from the *Aiguille de l'Encrenaz*. There is an easy way up the *Aiguille de la Remuaz*. The col between the *Remuaz* and the *Encrenaz* is climbed by means of a moderately steep snow slope. From the top it is a very easy scramble up the peak. The reward is a remarkably fine view. For those who are on the lookout for an expedition of the opposite kind, M. de *Lépiney* has described a very difficult direct ascent of the S.E. arête.

The main ridge which is continued to the N. is not visible from the valley of the *Arve*. It is seen from the road to *Finhaut* after the *Col des Montets* has been passed. I have not visited this end of the range. The two chief points, the *Aiguille Morris* and the *Aiguille de Mesure*, are said not to be difficult. I suspect that they have seldom been climbed. There is a most magnificent rock tower on the E. ridge of the *Aiguille de Mesure*, which M. de *Lépiney* climbed in 1920, and which he describes as very difficult. The *Aiguille de Mesure* is the last summit of any importance. The ridge sinks towards the N., rising again slightly to form three or four points known as the *Aiguilles de Praz Torrent*. This northern end of the ridge is familiar at least in profile to those who have climbed the *Buet* from the *Bérard* side, as it divides the upper *Vallorcine* Valley from the *Bérard* Valley.

The fact that so many fine climbs have only recently been made in the *Aiguilles Rouges* justifies, I think, the statement that they have been neglected. However this may be, my object has been to show that they have much to offer to the climber. Since the peaks are for the most part between 9000 and 10,000 ft. in height, they can be climbed in a short day

when the weather makes success with the greater peaks on the opposite side of the valley doubtful. But I think that the climber who has made his first acquaintance with the Aiguilles Rouges as a second-best on a doubtful day will return to them on fine days and will find his time well employed.

THE TRANSYLVANIAN ALPS AND THE HIGH TATRA.¹

By L. A. ELLWOOD.

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 31, 1925.)

‘**S**ET peaks from Skye in the valley of Ceresole, and you have the Tatra.’ Such was the fascinating description of those mountains a friend visiting them in 1923 sent me on a postcard bearing the postmark ‘Strbske Pleso.’ I could not find this unpronounceable name mentioned in any available guide-book or atlas, and I soon found that though of the physical geography of the district my knowledge was slight, of the present political geography it was less. Such ignorance was doubtless unusual, and I need only refer here in outline to the present geography of the Carpathians.

The Carpathians are a chain, separated from the Alps by the Danube, of some 800 miles in length in the form of a semi-circle running E. to W. and having its eastern extremity turned inwards. If we count its foothills it could thus be said to extend from the Danube, near Bratislava (Pressburg), to the Danube at Orsova, near the Iron Gates. Formerly the whole of the range was within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with the exception of the S. side of the southern flank, which was in Roumania. Now the northern division of the range forms the frontier between Poland on the N. and Czecho-Slovakia on the S., while the eastern and southern portions are entirely in Roumania. Much of the range is made up of thickly wooded eminences which hardly merit a more flattering name than hills. But there are three groups which rise to the dignity of mountains: the Tatra, in the N., whose highest peak is a little under 9000 ft. in height; the Pietrosu or Rodnaer group in the E., and the Negoi or Fogaras group in the S.

My brother and I decided to visit these three groups and

¹ See map at end of this number.