The following are Miss Gertrude Bell's first ascents or new routes, the original names, as given by her, being employed :

	Gerard's Peak [15]	August 31, 1901.
Mittelgruppe	Vorder Spitze	September 3, 1901.
	Gertrude's Peak	
	Ulrich's Peak	
	Mittel Spitze	
	Klein Engelhorn	September 7, 1901.
	Gemsen Spitze	

I am much indebted to Monsieur Paul Montandon for kindly annotating the paper.—*Editor* ' A.J.']

With reference to the title-illustration to this article, ' Engelhörner from Rosenlaui,' the following are the names of the peaks corresponding with the figures :—

1 = Jägiburg.
2 = Point 2426 m.
3 = Hohjägiburg.
4 = Vorderspitze.
5 = Gertrudspitze.
6 = Ulrichspitze.
7 = Mittelspitze.
8 = Klein Engelhorn.
9 = Gemsenspitze.
10 = Gemsensattel.
11 = Kastor and Sattel.
12 = Kingspitze.
13 = Urbach Engelhorn.
14 = Gross Engelhorn.
15 = Untere Engellücke.
16 = Sagizähne.
17 = Aebnisgrat.
18 = Gross Gstellihorn.
19 = Klein Gstellihorn.
20 = Dossensattel.

The First Direct Ascent of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur from the Brenva Glacier, and other Climbs.

By T. Graham Brown.

(Read before the Alpine Club, November 6, 1928.)

I SUPPOSE that love-of-mountains (like any other kind) may come at first sight, or by long acquaintance ; or that it may come by proxy—as love came to many a prince in old times. We can imagine how eagerly he uncovered the portrait of that

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[15] ' Gerard [Collier's] Peak,' August 31, 1901, *i.e.* Kastor, the higher and S.E. of the ' Twins.'

future wife whom he had not seen ; how he wondered if the artist had been too enthusiastic ; how he overhauled the poison cabinet—in case . . . Love by proxy is not uncommon with us ; but we have this advantage as we turn over a photograph in the dark winter months, or read of old climbs—we know that the real thing will be finer than the portrait.

I must confess openly that I became devoted to the South side of Mont Blanc before I had seen the mountain. One of the small accidents of life put Mr. Mason's ' Running Water ' into my hands. Fascinated by his account of the Brenva route, I turned to my Baedeker. The Brenva Glacier was marked with what obviously must be an ordinary tourist route ; but a ' Mt. de Brenva ' lay to the E. of it. There, on one of its buttresses (I thought) must lie the Brenva route and the famous ice arête. On this false basis I manufactured a mountain paradise, and climbed it in my dreams.

But another accident, the breakdown of a motor car, introduced me to the reality under conditions which made it almost unreal. In 1926 Brocklehurst, Herbert, and I had traversed the Grand Combin and Mont Vélan, and late on the second day had arrived at the Great St. Bernard with the incomparable view from Mont Vélan still vivid before our eyes. On our descent into Italy next day we were delayed by this small mishap and had to travel up to Courmayeur by the last motor-bus from Aosta. It was late, a clear night and a full moon, when we had our first near view of Mont Blanc—and the reality was more glorious than any dream. The great mountain looked inconceivably remote in the bright moonlight, and yet welcoming ; urgent to be climbed by all its ways, and to be seen from all its sides.

At Courmayeur we joined A. E. Barker ; but I will not weary you with details of the uneventful traverse by the Dôme route which was our first introduction to Mont Blanc, save to speak of the wonderful sunrise we witnessed. We were early on the Dôme du Goûter, and there the sunrise caught us. We saw the great dark shadow-cone with its iridescent fringe in the West over France. More fortunate than Leslie Stephen, from this place we could see both the mountain and its shadow. It is a trite saying that we are pawns in the game ; but here, at the commencement of the gambit, we stood in the middle of the board at ' King 4 ' and could see on either hand the black Queen and the white. I have now had the good fortune to see the shadow both at sunrise and at sunset from Mont Blanc, and this sunrise was incomparably the

greater sight. The huge cone fell on to France and gradually huddled up to the foot of the mountain as if shrinking from the alien plains.

That summer Brocklehurst and I said good-bye to Mont Blanc from the top of the Tour Noir—a fine view, but not one of the ' three.' For having fallen under the spell, each victim must not only climb the mountain but must see it from its three great vassal peaks—the Aiguille de Trélatête, the Aiguille Verte, and the Grandes Jorasses—the three classical points of view in the Mont Blanc Chain.

I would dearly have liked to linger with you on these splendid peaks to-night ; but evening has fallen, time is brief, and the ascents are long. You must forgive me if we move quickly.

Aiguille and Col de Trélatête.

The evening of August 12, 1927, found E. S. Herbert and me with Christian Jossi and Peter Bernet, at the Cantine de la Visaille ; next morning we set out at 2.15 for the traverse of the Col de Trélatête. Our way led us past the Chalets de l'Allée Blanche and we arrived on the col at 10.30, whence we ascended the central summit of the Aiguille. The termination of this ascent must be one of the finest in the Alps—comparable in many ways to the last step through the corniche of the Wetterhorn. I say ' must be ' advisedly. As we came up the last few feet, a great view of nothingness burst upon us—nothing, that is, but a bank of mist, until our eyes swept down and saw the Glacier de Miage dimly beneath our feet. We waited twenty minutes on the summit, rewarded only by faint outlines, and had to descend again, thankful that at any rate we had had a clear, if incomplete, view of Mont Blanc from the Aiguille d'Estellette. We returned to the top of the col and descended into France. The huge crevasse right across the couloir below us forced us to cut over ice to the rocks on the left ; and in 2 hours we reached the Glacier de Trélatête—arriving at the Pavillon de Trélatête about 7 o'clock in the evening. Although our hopes of a summit view were denied, the expedition had been a long and interesting one which does not appear to receive its due of attention.

Mont Blanc by the 'Sentinel' route from the Brenva Glacier.

The Brenva face of Mont Blanc had really been the chief magnet which drew Herbert and myself across the Col du Géant.

We had examined this face from the Torino Hut, from Mont Fréty, and (as in the previous year) from the Val Veni ; and we had traced possible new routes on it. But the weather had been against us. It was my good fortune to meet F. S. Smythe after Herbert had been obliged to go home, and to make that first ascent of Mont Blanc *direct* from the Brenva Glacier, already described in the JOURNAL. I mention it here only to state that before making the ' Sentinel ' route, we had examined the possibility of ascending by the true right edge of the Great Couloir. For our actual climb, however, we selected the line of the opposite edge of the Couloir ; but we decided to attempt this other route next season.

Aiguille Verte by the 'Moine' Arête.

With this aim in view Smythe and I went out in July 1928. Our first long expedition was the ascent of the Aiguille Verte by the ' Moine ' arête from the Charpoua Hut, on which we intended to bivouac in order to test our equipment. A first attempt ended before it had properly begun, and at 3.30 on the morning of July 20, we again left the Charpoua Hut and ascended the ' Cardinal ' couloir. The traverse along the W. side, first of the Cardinal and then of the succeeding part of the ' Moine ' arête, led us on to the arête itself a little above the couloir on Kennedy's route. Thence the climbing was continuously interesting, but our chief difficulty was encountered during a traverse of the ' pointed gendarme ' on its Charpoua side. Rock shelves soon led us to the top of a steep ice chimney, which we had to descend. Thence the traverse of an ice slope ended in a short jump across on to rock. Round this rock we went only to find another very delicate traverse before us. The ascent of a few feet on to a steeply sloping rock ledge was a matter of difficulty ; and then a traverse on ice, ably led by Smythe, took us to a comparatively level place whence it was possible to regain the arête without difficulty. We did so to find that the clouds had descended upon it.

This unorthodox manner of circumventing the ' pointed gendarme ' had wasted much time, and it was not until 4 P.M. that we reached the summit ; but the clouds had now disappeared and we were given a splendid and clear view from this—perhaps the finest view-point of all. The Grandes Jorasses immediately to the S. rise splendidly in one upward sweep. Mont Blanc itself to the S.W. towers above its own buttresses. But we had little time to spare and soon descended,

making no mistake this time about the traverse of the ' pointed gendarme.' Soon the clouds again came on us, and we descended a little too much on the W. side of the ridge while still above the top of the couloir on Kennedy's route. Here, at 9.20 P.M., we found a convenient place to bivouac, and, having our sleeping bags with us, spent a not too cold night. Next morning we found our way down easily—being aided by the pieces of paper which we had placed during the ascent to serve as guides. After a leisurely descent we regained the Charpoua Hut at about 1.30 P.M.

The Old Brenva Bivouac.

Blakeney had joined us ; we had climbed the Trident de la Brenva to prospect the new route ; and on the evening of July 27 Blakeney, Smythe and I came to the old Brenva bivouac. All the morning we had ascended in the steps of the old pioneers, and at 2 P.M. had reached the lower bivouac under the Aiguille de la Brenva. There we watched the continual falls of stone from the Pétéret ridge and on several occasions saw stones falling across Güssfeldt's route up the Brenva face of the Aiguille Blanche.

Perhaps our most striking memory of the 1928 season will be the noisiness of the mountains. All that day the Brenva glacier had been a basin of sound. Great rock-falls and small, the noise scarcely ceased ; and I found myself wondering how long the Aiguille Blanche and the Pétéret ridge could last at this rate of disintegration. In that loud theatre it seemed that their life could be measured in months.

It was 5 P.M. when we reached the old bivouac, and the weather had changed for the worse during the last 3 hours. We found some old wood lying in the bivouac, rapidly collected it and stacked it in a dry place. The spirit-stove was lit, and during the meal which followed we heard the first thunder claps. We rapidly got into our sleeping bags in the shelter of the rock and, at 7 P.M., the storm burst on us.

It was magnificent and none of us will forget our experience of that night. The lightning repeatedly hit the Aiguille Noire, the Dames Anglaises, and the Aiguille Blanche—illuminating the ridge. The noise of great rock-falls mingled with the thunder ; and as night darkened the falling rocks on the Aiguille Blanche struck thousands of sparks as they fell. The face of the mountain was lit by little fairy-like stars, so that the world seemed real only because of the continuous noise. That,

however, itself swelled to the limits of unreality. As it were, we looked at fairyland from the depths of a Hades in which even stone-rolling Sisyphus (with all his experience) would have been broken-hearted. The storm waxed as I counted the lightning flashes—12 a minute, then ever increasing steadily until they were coming 21, 22, or 23 times in each minute. For long they averaged round about 22, until they finally rose as high as 25. We saw the lightning strike the Brenva Glacier in front of us. More than once it struck our own rocks. A little rain fell, but soon it hailed—stones as big as small marbles. Fortunately we were safe and dry in the bivouac, and later we lit a fire of the old wood—how long had it lain there, and who left it? About 2 A.M. the storm diminished, but an hour later it shook with a final burst of rage, and then died gradually away.

The climb had, of course, to be postponed; yet our return to Courmayeur was not a dejected one. The climb could wait. In exchange for its postponement we had been given the experience of a safe and dry bivouac in the heart of one of the greatest thunderstorms of the Alps. But Blakeney unfortunately had to return home, and Smythe and I made the Torino Hut our headquarters with the intention of staying there until the conditions justified an attack on the new route. It seemed to us on the evening of August 5 that the time was favourable for our attempt.

First Ascent of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur direct from the Brenva Glacier.

The great Brenva face of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur and Mont Blanc had not been climbed between the line of Güssfeldt's ascent of the Aiguille Blanche de Pétéret and the line of the Brenva route until Smythe and I had the good fortune to discover the 'Sentinel' route in 1927. From the Col de Pétéret round to the Col de la Brenva the length of the crest must be but little short of 3 kilometres. The face below it forms a great amphitheatre which tumbles down to the W. bay of the upper Brenva Glacier. It is an intricate face, broken by great ribs. On the S. there is the colossal buttress of rock running up to Point 4244 m. on the Pétéret arête. From the inmost recess of the W. bay of the Brenva Glacier two lines of rock run up; one, more to the S., leads up between hanging ice walls and is apparently difficult of access at its base; one, more to the N., prominent and well defined, forms

the right bank of the Great Couloir which descends from under the summit of Mont Blanc itself. Immediately to the N.E. of this couloir lie the twisting ridge and intricate outcrops of rock up which the ' Sentinel ' route leads ; again to the N.E. of this is another ridge near the base of which stands the ' Red Sentinel,' and the top of which disappears in the ice slopes below the sérac wall to the S.W. of the Brenva route. Finally, the arête of the Brenva route itself conveniently forms the N.E. boundary of the face.

Every mountain climber who has looked on this face from the E. must have ascended in thought by one or other of these routes ; and the idea of making the attempt must often have been entertained, as it is said to have been by Preuss, and by Grunewald and Bickhoff. G. W. Young and George Mallory examined a route here ; and of all these possible routes undoubtedly the most striking is that leading up the long and steep ridge immediately to the S. of the Great Couloir. As seen in face from the N.E., this ridge is fascinating but forbidding. As seen more in profile from the S.E., from the Val Veni (as Herbert and I saw it), or from Mont Chétif, it is distorted by perspective and slopes back a little too alluringly. From either direction it is prominent and obvious ; and after we had climbed the ' Sentinel ' route and while we were discussing the possibilities of this great ridge, Smythe told me that Blakeney had pointed it out to him on a photograph—a good instance of mountaineering vision.

But when Smythe and I set out last year to see if a new route could be made on the Brenva face of Mont Blanc, our ideas of that face were ill defined, and it was not until we had examined the upper part of the face itself from the Torino Hut that we could form any clear plans. The route which then first fixed our attention was this same ridge lying to the S. of the Great Couloir. The ridge terminates above in a huge buttress of rock crowned by the ice wall below the final slopes. As far as we could see in the forenoon light, it was a matter of doubt whether this ice wall could be surmounted, supposing it were possible to reach the top of the buttress. We turned to examine the other two routes. Smythe's idea was to attack by the ridge on the Col de la Brenva side of the branch couloir, but as this would have necessitated an exposed (and probably unjustifiable) traverse under the great ice wall, we soon abandoned that plan and compromised on the twisting ridge lying to the N. of the Great Couloir and between it and the branch couloir. When the afternoon sun struck sideways

across the other ridge to the S. of the Great Couloir, it threw the terminal sérac wall into high relief—and what we then *thought* we saw still further deterred us from an attempt on that route.

But when we rested for lunch at the top of the 'twisting rib' on the 'Sentinel' route we could examine the upper part of this other great ridge. We *then* saw that the sérac wall could almost certainly be surmounted at a tongue of ice which pushes down from the upper slopes on to the top of its final buttress. I sat there and, in imagination, climbed that final buttress. The way led horizontally across a very steep slope of ice on the side it presents to the Great Couloir; and this traverse was followed by an intricate ascent on the rocks of the buttress up to its tip. Again I traced the route with Smythe, but we were both agreed as to the exposure and steepness of that slope of ice. Nevertheless we then and there resolved that the route must be attempted; and, in the event, our way up the final buttress followed closely on the imaginary footsteps of 1927.

But although the final buttress was probably the most serious problem of the climb, we yet knew that it was not the only one. In particular, it seemed to us that there might be a question whether we could get on to the foot of the ridge at all.

When we set out from the Torino Hut at 8.15 on the morning of August 6 with the 'Red Sentinel' as our objective we were uncertain if the foot of the Great Couloir could be crossed. We carried heavy packs—perhaps 30 lbs. each—for we had added sleeping sacks to our equipment; and our route to the 'Red Sentinel' was almost the same as that of 1927. We traversed the S. face of the Tour Ronde as before.

The day was a glorious one, but as we crossed the central bay of the Brenva Glacier we saw that a fierce wind was working its will upon the summit of Mont Blanc. When we arrived on the crest of Col Moore, it was obvious that much of our further route to the 'Red Sentinel' would this year be over rock. But the second couloir was in much the same condition as before. We came to its deep avalanche run and at once realized that it presented a difficulty much more formidable than in the previous year. Its depth was at least 12 ft., and its near side was overhanging—this year completely undercut. The groove had however to be crossed. I lowered Smythe on the rope, round my deeply implanted ice axe, to the bed of the groove. So deep was it that he had again to climb up a little way on the rope before he could grasp his ice

axe which I stretched down to him at the full length of my arm, he cut across the couloir, surmounted its other and comparatively easy side, and then ascended the snow slope on that side of the groove until he was almost the rope's length above me. I took my courage into my hands and dropped into the groove. As I bumped, slid a little down its ice, and then lay for a moment slightly shaken and held only by the rope, I had an awful feeling of being deserted by the world. But it took little time to scratch the not too hard ice sufficiently to hold crampons and then to cut a step or two up to the steps at which Smythe had crossed. Then the far wall of the groove was surmounted and no further difficulty lay between us and the ' Red Sentinel.'

We reached the ' Red Sentinel ' at 6.50 P.M., and found a little place to the right of our old tilted slab which could be made into a more comfortable bivouac. Smythe lit the spirit-stove and I levelled the bivouac site. Soon we had simultaneously a level sleeping place ready and a good meal. We got into our sleeping sacks and enjoyed the meal and the glorious view. The sun set, and we saw the great shadow of Mont Blanc in the sky over Aosta crowned with a single black ray. Then everything became cold and grey. A keen wind blew on us from the S.E., but disturbed us little in the warmth of our sleeping sacks. Last year the intense cold of even a windless night had prevented us from sleeping at all. This year the warmth of Smythe's excellent eiderdown sleeping sacks enabled us to sleep—although fitfully—in spite of a cold wind. From time to time we were awakened by the coldness of the stones and snow upon which we lay, but soon turned round and got to sleep again. We were, however, both awake when the moon and Venus rose in the East—a beautiful unreality.

Next morning, after a brief breakfast, we selected a small store of food to be left at the ' Sentinel,' put on our crampons, and set out at 4.55. After traversing the ice couloir on the far side of the ' Sentinel ' we climbed round the base of the next ridge to the foot of the Great Couloir. Here it is perhaps 100 to 150 ft. in width and its angle eases a little. Smythe then took the lead across it ; it presented little difficulty—for we could almost run across on our crampons. A high wind was blowing ice crystals off the summits, and these hissed in a continuous stream down the Great Couloir. Sometines the stream swelled in volume, sometimes it diminished ; and as Smythe cut a couple of steps at the far edge of the couloir I stood in it—a queer experience, for the stream offered little resistance, and yet prevented you from seeing where you were

Photo. T. Graham Brown.

BRENVA face of MONT BLANC de COURMAYEUR with part of PÉTÉRET arête.

Photo. T. Graham Brown.

Avalanche falling from upper slopes of BRENVA face.

going—it was like wading through foam. But the couloir was crossed in certainly less than 10 minutes—perhaps scarcely 5—and we had gained the foot of the great ridge with little difficulty.

This we ascended until forced again to the edge of the Great Couloir by a perpendicular step. We avoided it by ascending the edge of the couloir close to the rocks, and soon again regained the arête. As we now ascended there was a great fall of ice from the hanging glacier below the Pétéret arête. The fragments broke and cascaded down the steep Brenva face in a wonderful white torrent. At 7.30 we reached a short ice arête which was very narrow ; but the snow on its left or S. side was in good condition. More rock led us at 8.45 to the foot of another and a longer ice arête just below which we found a rather precarious sitting place, where we rested and had a good breakfast. It was a silent meal, for the views made speech impossible. On our left hand to the N. was the Brenva face of Mont Blanc with its great sérac wall and the line of the ' Sentinel ' route leading up towards it. To our right we looked at the Pétéret arête across the great perpendicular ice faces, and across the broken ribs of this colossal mountain side ; but no words and no photograph can give an adequate description. The morning was calm and warm ; as we sat in silence a rather ominous cigar-shaped cloud formed far in the East. A butterfly fluttered round us.

Above us lay three ice arêtes of which the nearest presented little difficulty ; the two upper ones were formidable. We set out again at 9.50 A.M., not knowing that we were to have no further halt until after we had surmounted the final sérac wall more than 8½ hours later. The next ice arête went easily, and we were immediately faced with the two more formidable arêtes separated from each other by an outcrop of rock.

Of these two ice arêtes, the upper is the longer ; but the two are very similar. Each commences at a point formed by two converging snow edges. From this point the arête runs along slightly ascending for about half of its length. Then it ascends ever more steeply towards its terminal apex—the final angle being perhaps 45°. The arête is excessively narrow in its more level parts. Here some trick of wind and weather forms a narrow blade of ice along the crest. Its sharp edge acts as a convenient hand-rail. So narrow and clear is this ice that the strong southern sun shone dimly through it. In each case we found the snow on the S. slope of the arête to be in bad

condition. We walked along the arête itself, and then on the right-hand side of the narrow blade of ice. Soon Smythe, who was leading, went on to the right-hand slope itself and cut up to the apex of the arête. The butterfly had followed us until the commencement of the step-cutting on the lower of these two arêtes—when the wind first caught us. The small cloud was dissolving ; the views were grand beyond description.

Twenty minutes' rock-climbing took us to the foot of the last arête, which was surmounted in the same manner. Below its apex we wasted some time in a vain attempt to find lodgment on an outcrop of rock upon the right-hand slope. Then Smythe cut directly up to the apex of the ridge along the edge of this outcrop.

The final buttress is in two parts. It is like a pyramid set upon a low pedestal, the surface of which is not horizontal, but slopes sharply down to the N.—that is towards the Great Couloir. The apex of the highest ice arête ends at the foot of a 15-ft. chimney which led us up without difficulty over the wall of rock and on to the surface of the ' pedestal ' at 1.40 P.M.

Here we resolved to try to ascend by the route planned in the previous year—that is, to traverse on our right across the steep ice slope above the Great Couloir—the slope which forms (as it were) the surface of the pedestal. I drove my axe deep into the snow while Smythe walked across the slope. Above us on our left was the overhanging N. face of the buttress. In front of us, a tongue of rock ran down from this at a right angle. There is a chimney in the recess thus formed. Soon the axe had to be used. The slope turned to ice, hard, brittle, and green—almost transparent, for its surface was covered by *verglas*. It became excessively steep and hand holds had to be cut. Smythe asked me what I thought of the chimney, and I replied truthfully and frankly—' it looks beastly.' It appeared, however, that we were forced to try this way, and I must say that the alternative—a traverse round the descending tongue of rock—looked even beastlier than the chimney. Smythe cut up to the corner, where I joined him. There was a gap of a few inches between the top of the ice and the rock wall on our left, and we jammed the ice axes and stood on the narrow top edge of a slope of hard ice which must have been at least 60°, perhaps 65°, in steepness. Smythe attempted the chimney without success, and then I tried it and similarly failed. Yet it looked as if this was the only way. Neither of us wished to retreat, and it was doubtful whether the S. side of the buttress could offer an easier way or if there was now sufficient time to

get round and ascend by it. I must say that I shuddered at a suggestion of descending into the Great Couloir, crossing it and attempting the summit by way of the upper part of the 'Sentinel' route. It was this alternative, I think, which prompted me to offer Smythe my back in the recess. You may perhaps wonder why the offer was such a tardy one—but we were wearing crampons and could not take them off. Smythe accepted the offer; tried the chimney again, and again failed to overcome it. He came down on to my back with an unfortunate effect, for my side pocket was ripped open and I lost my pipe—a sad discovery only made later on at the Vallot Hut. Smythe then gallantly offered me similar aid. Again lodgment at the top of the chimney was found to be impossible. Above it was a slab covered with *verglas* and affording no trustworthy hold. I descended and, am thankful to say, with less destructive effects. There is advantage (sometimes) in a small and light build! Again the horrible alternatives presented themselves to us and drove me to suggest an attempt to get round the descending tongue of rock and traverse still farther to the right. At first the descent was down our old steps, but then led near the edge of the rock down the steep ice. Soon it was possible to get along under the rock; and as I rounded the corner I saw to my amazement that, on the other side of the rocks and some way above, the ice slope merged into a broad couloir set at an easier angle and filled with good snow. In a little while the snow was reached with not much rope in hand, a sound belay found, and Smythe rejoined me. We ascended the couloir until stopped at the foot of a wild rocky gully up which our path seemed to lie. Direct entrance was impossible, but there was a short and difficult 15-ft. chimney on our right, from the top of which a traverse might be made into the gully. The finish over the left wall of the chimney was a difficult one; however, it went. I hauled up the rucksacks and the party came together again. Smythe then led across into the gully which we ascended for perhaps about 50 ft., to a place where there appeared to be three possible routes. The direct ascent of the gully failed. I found that an exit to the left led up merely to a difficult rock face. Smythe tried the way to the right which had always looked the easiest but seemed to lead too much towards the sérac wall. As we went on, however, we found that the route was still entirely unexposed. Another slope of good snow led up to the foot of another gully, narrow but filled with snow; and we now knew that we were reaching the top of the buttress. In places ice necessitated

step-cutting, but soon an exit by the rock on our left led us to the very top of the buttress.

As we stood here, the huge sérac wall ran on our right in the direction of Mont Blanc. Across the Great Couloir was the sérac wall above the 'Sentinel' route and nearly level with us. The 'Sentinel' route lay spread out like a map, while over on our left we looked down along the great Pétéret ridge on to the top of the Aiguille Blanche. To the rocks upon which we stood a tongue of ice, perhaps 20 ft. high, ran down from the final slope on to the top of the buttress. This tongue was irregular and broken up by a ledge of ice. We could see that our difficulties were over. In a few minutes we walked up the sérac wall and at 6.10 P.M. were on the final slopes below the summit of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur. We had perhaps lost more than 2 hours in our various attempts to find the proper route, while the climbing day was now far spent.

All day long a strong wind had blown across the summits. We had first met it—fierce and cold gusts accompanied by stinging ice crystals—on the ice arêtes. The wind was now bitter as we made up the slopes towards the first great horizontal crevasse which runs across far below the summit ridge. Here we arrived at 6.25 P.M., descended into the crevasse, and took shelter from the wind—our first deliberate halt since we had left the breakfast place at 9.50 A.M. Our plan had been to make this new ascent a route to the summit of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur, and, if we were to succeed in this, time was short. So we gave ourselves only 15 minutes' rest before setting out again.

The final slopes on this side of the mountain present no great difficulty, but they are steep, and the crusted snow made their ascent laborious. The fierce wind struck at us as we zig-zagged up and we were both blown about at different times, here and on the crest. Once, as I looked back, I saw far below us the summit of Mont Maudit, bright pink in the sunset light—a vivid contrast with the green-grey colours of the now darkened Brenva face of Mont Blanc. It was strange to look out of shadow *down* on to a peak lit by sunset glow. We arrived on the summit ridge at 7.30, turned to our left and in 15 minutes—at 7.45 P.M.—were on the summit of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur.

As we reached the summit the sun was near the point of setting, but was now masked behind a bank of cloud. Everything about us was grey and sombre save for a deep red line in the West. The loneliness was almost terrible, but as we

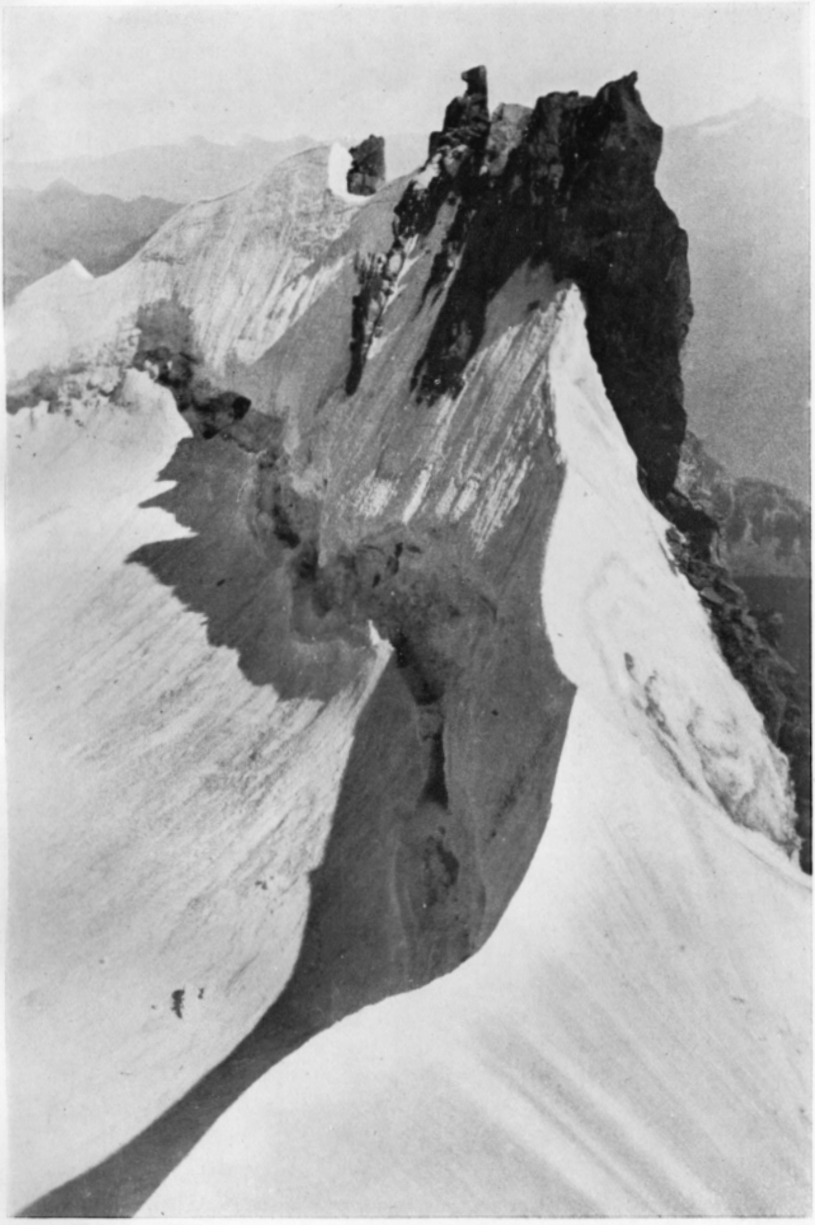

Photo. T. Graham Brown.

COL and PIC "MOORE" from first rocks *en route* for BRENVA ridge.

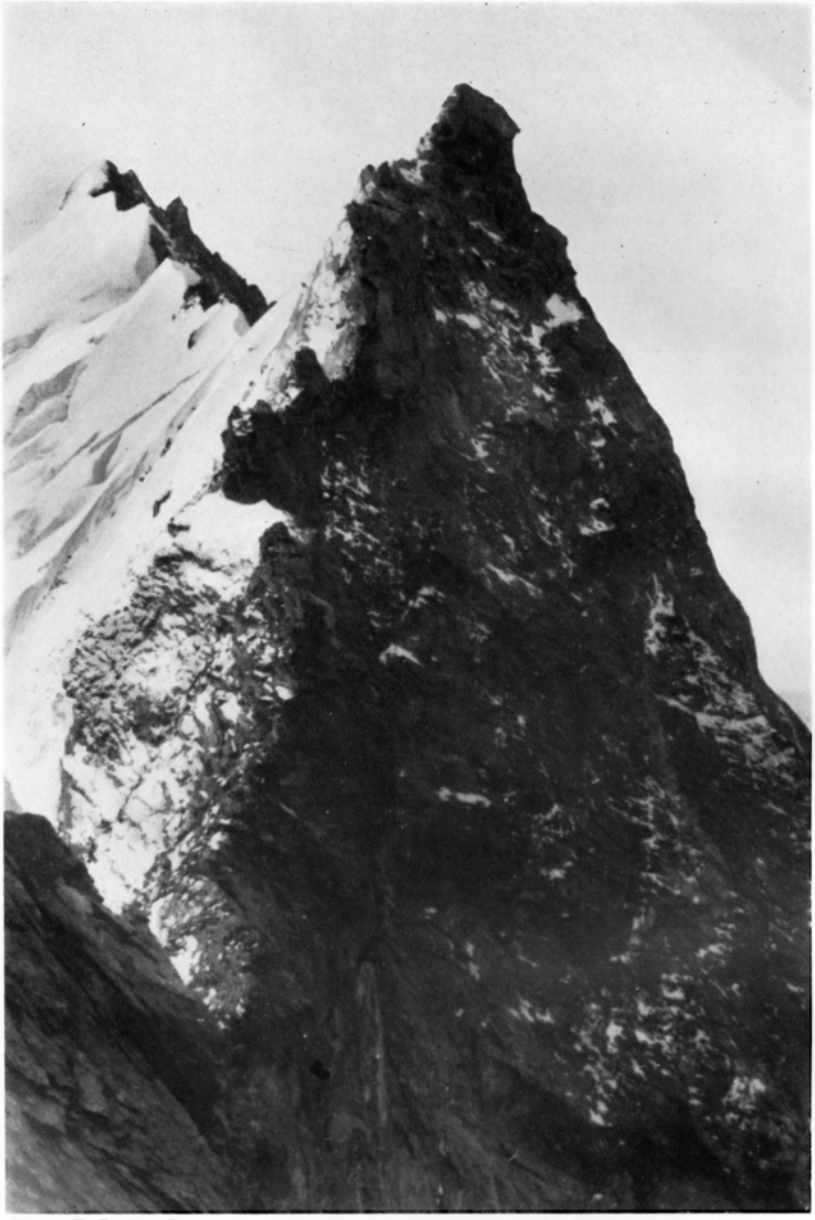

Photo. T. Graham Brown.

WEISSHORN, N. arête: the great Gendarme.

came on to the actual summit a miracle happened—we were suddenly joined by distant friends. For, as we faced East, there was a bright flash from the Torino Hut, and we knew that friends had seen us and were signalling their good wishes. It was not until later that we heard that Herr Alfred Zürcher and Joseph Knubel had come up that day to the Torino Hut, and that Knubel had flashed his lantern to us at the moment they had seen us reach the summit.

The wind was still blowing, but not so fiercely as before. We turned with scarcely a pause towards Mont Blanc and walked along the summit ridge. Once I glanced to the East: the sun at the moment of its setting was shining beneath the great bank of western cloud, and the cone-shadow of Mont Blanc now stood out high above the horizon over Mont Emilius. We went on, and when I again looked a few seconds later the cone had disappeared. On the summit of Mont Blanc the wind had fallen somewhat in strength, and now—thank goodness!—blew steadily. We reached the Vallot Hut at exactly 9 P.M., and descended next morning by the Grands Mulets and Pierre Pointue. Thence we walked across to the Montenvers. Happy and contented we lingered on the way.

The First Combined Traverse of the Weisshorn by the N. and S.W. Ridges.

The third of the classic points of view is the Grandes Jorasses, but I shall not describe a delightful and uneventful ascent taken with Alexander Graven whilst Alfred Zürcher and I were waiting for the weather to give an opportunity for some longer climbs. The summit view is a fine one, and full of interest—the N.E. spreads like a map, the Rochefort arête leads the eye W. to Mont Blanc. But the Aiguille Verte is a rather ugly hump in the N.; and the view of the Brenva face—magnificent from any point—is at any rate equalled by that from the Dent du Géant. I think that from this side the greater view is got from the valley and not from the mountain. As we descended to the Val Ferret the sun set behind the exact summit of Mont Blanc, and its rays illuminated a great cloud of snow dust which a *tourmente* was stirring there. Mont Blanc, although in no saintly mood, had assumed a halo; for there was a belt of darkness between the glowing cloud and the summit beneath it—the shadow of the mountain projected on the flying snow. Yet the finest view is not from here, but from higher up the valley a little above Le Pont. It must

be seen in the evening when the Brenva face is in shadow and great sunbeams strike through the gap of the Dames Anglaises. All the ridges fit into their proper places, and the eye is carried irresistibly to the Pétéret arête. This is seen in nearly its right proportions, and the picture is a unique one—this wonderful rock ridge leading up inevitably to its proper and dominating conclusion. It does not seem to belong to the Italian sun but to a northern Jotunheim. As we stood looking at it together, I think Signor Polvara hit the right expression —' it is fantastic.'

Our further intentions with regard to the S. face of Mont Blanc were frustrated by the weather; we decided to go to Zermatt and to traverse the Weisshorn on our way.

On the evening of August 23 Herr Alfred Zürcher and I, with Joseph Knubel and Alexander Graven, arrived at the new Topali Hut—a hut as beautiful in form and arrangement as in situation. When Mr. Versluys, with Heinrich Pollinger and J. M. Julen, came in a little later we knew that we were not to be alone on the *Nordgrat*. Next morning we all set out at 1.45 and went forward until 4.10 when we paused to rope up in three parties. Joseph Knubel here left a candle-end lighted on the rock, saying ' Für die armen Seelen.' Long afterwards we saw it burning there as we looked back.

The ascent of the Bieshorn was followed by the wonderful traverse of the *Nordgrat*. It went on and on. Sometimes one rope led, sometimes another. At many places we all forgathered for a short halt and a little food. The climbing held our interest continuously, and eventually the summit was reached at 1.25 P.M. The clearness of the magnificent morning had gone and a rather cold wind blew from the W.

At 2 the Dutch party set out down the E. arête, and in some doubt we rediscussed our plans. If we descended by the *Schalligrat* there was some chance of our failing to get off the mountain that day. It is true that the weather looked settled for the time being, but it was doubtful whether rain or snow might not fall during the night—and in the event this actually happened. In two minds about our original plan we finally decided to put the question to the toss. Graven produced a 5-franc piece; Knubel spun it; Zürcher called ' heads.' The coin fell edge up in the snow and it seemed as *if even Fate could not make up her mind.* We tossed again and this time the coin gave the order for the *Schalligrat*. We made our preparations with all speed, as haste was necessary.

We left the summit at 2.15 P.M. and climbed down the rocks with great speed on two ropes—Zürcher and Knubel, Graven

and I. Below the Great Gendarme on the *Schalligrat* we descended on to the S. face and again regained the ridge by a traverse. After following the ridge down to a point about one-third of the way from the summit to the Schallijoch, we again took to the S. face of the mountain. A direct descent and a *rappel* were succeeded by a descending traverse to the left towards a small but fairly defined ridge. On gaining this we held it with a few deviations and then descended straight down the S. face of the Weisshorn a little to the W. of the direct line below the summit. Descending as rapidly as we could, we reached the last rocks at 5.5, where Zürcher and I rested for 20 minutes whilst Knubel and Graven examined the way off. At 5.25 P.M. we left the rocks and traversed W., only to find that the great bergschrund went more easily just under our ridge.

Retracing our steps we descended to the bergschrund and crossed it at 5.45—3½ hours after leaving the summit. From this point the way to the Weisshorn Hut presented little difficulty, and there we arrived at 8.21 P.M.

It rained during the night and next morning we awoke to find the Vispthal filled by a sea of cloud. There were great cloud masses in the East over the Dom and Täschhorn, and the sun struck down through them. We then knew, I think, that this was to be the end of the season for us ; for from the top of the Weisshorn we had looked West and there seen a great mass of clouds round the summit of Mont Blanc. The mountain, tying on its winter night-cap, would soon draw up the white counterpane of winter snows.

Six Years and the Four-Thousanders.[1]

By EUSTACE THOMAS.

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 5, 1929.)

THE tale which follows may have some interest for older men, in that it tells of the redemption of a wasted youth. For in spite of many holidays spent in Switzerland and among the mountains, the atmosphere created by the friendship of true mountaineers had been lacking, and it was not until 1923 that a first serious Alpine season was embarked upon. In the six years from 1923 to 1928, a very successful effort has been made

[1] See ' Proceedings of the Alpine Club,' p. 259.