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THE GRAND PARADIS, FROM COGNE.* By F. T. PRATT-BARLOW. Read before the Alpine Club on May 6, 1873.

THE Grand Paradis, the highest of the Italian Alps, succumbed, in 1860, to the attack of Messrs. Dundas and Cowell, as is well known to students of 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers;' and since then hardly a year has passed without its summit being trodden by one or two parties of mountaineers. These ascents had, however, so far as we knew, all been made from the Val Savaranche, on which side no decent quarters are to be had nearer than the Val d'Aosta.

We had been told, by those well up in Alpine matters, that on the side towards Cogne the mountain presented a face of precipices which might safely be pronounced inaccessible, and that its appearance had hitherto proved sufficient to deter anyone from attempting the assault.

Bent on exploration, if not on conquest, Still and I arrived at Cogne on August 15, 1872, accompanied by Jakob Anderegg and Laurent Lanier, of Courmayeur. Nothing can be prettier than the position of this village. Situated in the middle of a small plain of the brightest green, it looks up the Valnontey on as fine a semicircle of peaks and glaciers as can be found anywhere in the Alps; a view as refreshing as it is unexpected, after the somewhat dreary tramp up from the Val d'Aosta. To my mind one of the chief charms of the place consists in its being so far removed from the regular high roads of travel, that Mr. Cook's name is unknown and unvenerated. Such accommodation as the spot affords is entirely at the disposal of the few travellers who do visit it, and this accommodation proved far better than report had led us to expect.

* The map illustrating this paper is extracted from the new Alpine Club map of Switzerland, lately published.

At the Hôtel de la Grivola we were well taken care of, and the greatest interest was shown in every expedition—in the hope, as the landlady explained, of our seeing enough to induce some few Englishmen to come and spend their cash and energy in the neighbourhood. I should, however, distinctly recommend anyone who thinks of patronizing our hostess of the Grivola to write some days beforehand, and have the fatted calf slain; or he might find, as we did, that just as he was beginning to appreciate the district, starvation would drive him to seek more favoured climes. The bread comes from Aosta, and only once a week.

As we had arranged to start for the Grivola next morning, we devoted the half-hour before dinner to calling on that charming old gentleman, Le Chanoine Chamonin, a thorough mountaineer, and one who knows probably more of the surrounding district than anyone living. He received us most graciously, but rather disconcerted us by telling us that the Grand Paradis had already been ascended from Cogne by Mons. Frassy, of the Italian Alpine Club; but he added that the route he had chosen proved too difficult to enable him to return the same way, and that he had in consequence gone down into the Val Savaranche. It remained, then, for us (as he explained), for our reputation, and for the profit of his parishioners, to find out a route by which the summit could be reached, and a dinner in the 'chef lieu' enjoyed on the same evening.

The next morning we started at 2.20 for the Grivola, engaging a boy to guide us to the top of the Poucets, where we arrived at 7 A.M.

It was not my intention, when bringing my readers thus far, to describe the superb aspect of the Grivola as seen from this point, or to bore them with details of an ascent already sufficiently described. In case, however, that anyone among them should ever find himself in our position, and with guides who have never seen the mountain, he will be grateful for a word of warning counselling him to avoid the tempting arête which appears to offer a high road to the top, but which in our case was glazed with ice and presented every conceivable obstacle to progress, and was only overcome after five hours of excessive exertion; whereas the precipitous-looking face itself can be climbed easily in any direction, and by it the summit might be gained in less than half the time taken by us.

Again, as to sleeping quarters at the Poucet chalets. We could not help thinking, when we saw the mass of filth both inside and around those miserable hovels, that a man would only risk the discomforts which a night passed there must

inflict, through ignorance of the character of the expedition on which he was engaged. We certainly consider that there is nothing in its length to warrant an effort being made to gain some three hours in the morning.

Saturday was spent in basking in the sun, on a small eminence a short distance out of the village, and from which a good view of the glacier system of the Valnontey is obtained.

To the left hand of the spectator the sides of this valley are crowned by the Monei and other glaciers, and these again are backed by the bold forms of the Tour St. Pierre and the many-toothed Rossa Viva. Straight in front the majestic stream of the Grand Crou glacier pours far down into the valley. At its head is the very conspicuous notch between the Têtes du Grand Crou and de la Tribulation, which marks the col named after this glacier. Further to the right is the grandest feature in the whole scene, namely the stupendous icefalls of the Tribulation glacier, in which the surplus ice of an immense plateau is forced over a precipice of some 2,000 ft. on to the Grand Crou glacier below. These two falls are divided by a buttress of rock, from the base of which a gigantic moraine extends right up to the point of the zigzags of the king's shooting-road, leading up the valley from Cogné. Above this icefall, but evidently much in the background, appear the snowy Pic de la Lune or de Ceresole, and finally the peak of the Grand Paradis itself. A small hanging glacier, which clings to the precipitous face of this last mountain, gives it an appearance which we could only compare to an open hand, with a snowball sticking to the palm. To the right of the icefall the spectator can detect no more snow until his eye lights on the glorious distant mass of Mont Blanc, blocking up the end of the main Cogné Valley.

In the hotel we had found a pamphlet, published by M. Frassy, describing his various adventures in this district. In the first expedition, made in 1869, he mounted the slopes of the Valnontey on his right about half-an-hour after leaving the hotel, and passing the Herbetet châteaux, got on to the Dzasset glacier, which he found to be cut off from the Tribulation glacier by a drop of some 700 ft. Late in the day he found himself on the top of the Pic de Montandayné instead of the Grand Paradis. He was benighted on the Dayné glacier below, and spent a miserable night in wandering about its surface. He started again about a month later, and this time chose a route from the Herbetet châteaux, which landed him on the Plan de la Tribulation, after turning the precipice which had hindered him so much on the last occasion. This way

seems, from his account, to be very dangerous, as the traveller is constantly exposed to ice avalanches from above. He crossed the Plan de la Tribulation diagonally, and attacked an ice-wall in the south-west corner almost under the final peak of the Paradis, the summit of which he attained after five hours' incessant work. This time he had to spend the night on the top, the wind blowing a perfect hurricane, and next day he effected his retreat, half frozen and much battered, in the footsteps of a party of Englishmen who had ascended by the other side, *viâ* the Mont Corvé glacier, two or three days previously.

One cannot help being greatly struck by M. Frassy's pluck and immense perseverance. His only guide and companion on both these expeditions, Elysée Jeantet, was evidently, from his account, only a source of danger, and our subsequent experience of him showed that it required the united efforts and attention of four men to keep him out of mischief. We were informed, too, that he was the best guide of the district.

We had hardly finished the perusal of M. Frassy's history, when Jeantet himself, armed with an ice-axe, which from its dimensions and shape might have at one time done duty as a halberd in the Tower of London, came to offer his invaluable services; these were at first declined with thanks, as neither his appearance nor M. Frassy's praises recommended him much to our favour. Jakob, however, thought it would be wise to take him with us, in case the natives should afterwards deny the reality of our success. The sum he asked was, however, cut down by one-third.

The route we had decided on taking was by the buttress of rock, already spoken of, dividing the icefalls of the Tribulation glacier. Supposing this to prove practicable, we hoped to avoid the principal danger described by M. Frassy; and if this part of the journey were quickly accomplished, we had no doubt of there being ample time to return to Cogné the same evening, seeing that M. Frassy had, almost unaided, successfully encountered the difficulties of the final peak.

On the evening of Sunday, Aug. 18, we left the village, and strolled quietly up the Valnontey for about two hours and a half. The scenery throughout is excessively pretty, and the road as springy and smooth as a lawn. About three quarters of an hour from Cogné the last inhabited village is passed; ruins are plentiful higher up; but man has in these parts everywhere to give way to the bouquetin and chamois, by order of the king. His Majesty had our entire sympathy and best wishes, seeing that his hunting path took us, by easy zigzags, almost up to the point we had selected for commencing work on the morrow.

We had a glorious bivouac that night under a grand old fir, in one of the angles of the road. The night was perfectly warm and still, and the ice and snow all around shone with dazzling brilliancy under the light of a cloudless full moon.

At 12.30 we were all stirring, and had breakfasted and got under weigh by 1.45.

After mounting one or two of the zigzags we left the friendly road at a point where it almost touches the moraine brought down by the Grand Crou glacier. Travelling along this moraine proved both wearisome and, in the dark, dangerous; but it led us past the first icefall, and gradually merged itself into the buttress of rock we were aiming at.

Daybreak found us some way advanced up what proved to be a staircase of large boulders, offering no impediment whatever to rapid progress. We kept bearing constantly to the left, and it was only when nearing the top that any ice at all showed itself. Here a certain amount of step-cutting was necessary, across what evidently were shoots placed expressly for the convenience of séracs falling from above. In the descent Jakob took us down these places at full gallop; evidently thinking them the most dangerous spots on the mountain.

At 5.15 we reached a level platform of rock, surrounded on three sides by toppling séracs. To the left and right they plunged madly down, to all appearance almost perpendicularly, on to the Grand Crou glacier some 2,000 ft. below. In front, the rock on which we stood appeared to be endeavouring in vain to hold back the onward surge of the ice-sea, which seemed rushing on in a mighty wave, some 20 ft. high, to sweep us over into the gulf below. This obstacle to our further progress appeared to Jeantet quite insuperable, and he loudly insisted on the absolute necessity of retracing our steps, and trying another line of rock some way to the right, a slight détour of some three hours, which when completed offered, in our opinion, no better position than the present one. Jakob, as usual, did not pay the local celebrity the least attention; but quietly walked into one of the crevasses, and began hewing away somewhere in the bowels of the glacier.

We had now a few minutes' leisure in which to enjoy the beauties of the scene. The ice effects immediately around were, I think, almost the finest I ever remember, and looking back down the valley we had ascended, all the well-known summits round Zermatt, lovely in the extreme in the early morning sun, greeted us in unexpected nearness.

A shout from Jakob, who now appeared standing on the

very top of a sharp sérac, called back our attention. He waved his hand to tell us to follow, and disappeared on to the glacier. Following in his steps, we found ourselves in five minutes clear of all obstructions, and standing on the level of the Plan de la Tribulation. We immediately turned to the left up a shallow valley in the glacier, and bearing again to the right, wound through a few crevasses over the shoulder of an eminence which had intercepted all view of our intended route.

From the top of this we were able, for the first time, to take in the whole of the Tribulation glacier and its surrounding peaks. The glacier itself is almost a parallelogram, and appeared to us, from where we stood, to slope gently from the crest of the ridge, containing the Pics de la Lune and de la Tribulation, on the south, down to the foot of a line of precipices* on our right, which divided it entirely from the higher plateau of the Dzasset glacier to the north. Behind us the ice ended abruptly in the falls between which we had ascended, without any signs of our staircase being visible from where we stood. Before us was a magnificent wall of rock, broken into peaks of the most varied and beautiful forms, including on the extreme left the Grand Paradis, rising some 2,000 ft. above the glacier, the Pic de Montandayné, the Pic de l'Herbetet, the Grande Serre, and many others of less note.

The snow was in splendid order, and we raced across the intervening snowfield, and reached the wall at the base of our peak at 6.5 A.M.

Jeantet tried to induce us to follow the route taken by M. Frassy and to mount by some very repulsive-looking slippery rocks in the corner, which would doubtless have necessitated an immense amount of step-cutting.

His proposal was scouted unanimously, and the local guide did not venture on any further suggestion until he hinted at being paid for his valuable services in the evening.

Jakob, after carefully examining the face, seemed to fancy a much more direct road to the summit. Somewhat to the right of the final peak, a broad couloir ran down from the top of the ridge to our very feet, and had all the appearance of a huge fire-escape hanging from the roof of a house. He led us then across the bergschrund, if the small crack in the snow deserved such a name, on to a buttress of rock somewhat to the right of this again, and for 300 ft. or so we mounted over easy rocks, and then, feeling it had been well earned, halted half-an-hour for breakfast and a pipe.

* M. Frassy's Muraille de la Grande Serre.

Jakob now took us into the couloir, in which we found the snow in excellent condition; here we made wonderful progress, and were able to gauge our advance by the icicles hanging from a fine cornice overhead, which grew rapidly larger and larger to the view as we pushed our way upwards. At length the couloir became too steep to cling to, and we were compelled to take to the rocks on the left. Here the work became of an entirely different character, comprising rocks unstable and often glazed, short ice slopes at a very high angle, and a curiously awkward ledge, which had to be traversed at one point, so that on arrival at the cornice at 8.30 a very respectable total of difficulties had been overcome. We all agreed that the mountain was in a most exceptionally easy condition, and that it might often be in such a state as to render climbing over this upper portion impossible. We crept on all fours along the under side of the cornice, till it thinned out into a very sharp snow arête, and this led us to the top at 8.45 exactly.

We could see nothing of the tower of rock mentioned by Mr. Cowell in 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' as also by M. Frassy in his pamphlet, and which they considered to be the actual summit of the mountain. It has doubtless tumbled to pieces, as they predicted it would do. The highest point seemed to us to be the northern end of a very narrow snow arête, which is nearly level for some 20 yards.

The view has been too often described to need comment. Towards Italy we only got some wonderful cloud effects. Masses of white vapour were boiling up out of every valley, and stood piled up to heights apparently three times greater than our stand-point. We cut our way down to some rocks on the west side, and basked away a most enjoyable hour, with our souls divided between tobacco and the glories of the Pennine chain, the Dauphiné Alps, and endless snow-fields in the immediate neighbourhood.

The broad slope (by the rocks on the north side of which we had mounted) sweeps down, an unbroken stretch of smooth ice, from the very top of the mountain, on to the glacier basin at least 1,800 ft. below, and is very curious when examined from above. M. Frassy, in his pamphlet, gives the angle for its whole length as 67°. Its most remarkable feature, however, is the small hanging glacier, or huge block of ice, which seems to cling on to its face, and which is so prominent an object in every view of the Grand Paradis from the east and north. A large crevasse divides its upper edge completely from the mountain, and gives it the appearance of being in the act of falling on to the plateau below. Huge blocks are in

fact constantly splitting off, and are to be seen lying far out on the level glacier.

The descent would not call for special mention, notwithstanding that three hours of sunshine had done their worst to augment our former difficulties. We feel, however, that Jeantet's abilities deserve especial remark. He had all through the day absolutely declined to be attached to our ropes; this we considered of small moment when crossing the hard frozen névé in the early morning; but now his obstinate aversion threatened the most serious results to ourselves. He began by loitering behind and pelting us with pebbles of 1 cwt. or more, as whenever he moved he loosened a young avalanche. When a couloir had to be descended some little distance, and the rocks on the opposite side attained, he would remain clinging to the last point of safety until one of our party was safely anchored to a rock on the further side, and the others stretched out across the gully to catch him, and he would then come slithering down into our affectionate embrace. When yet about 500 ft. above the glacier, Jakob thought the snow in the big couloir in good condition for the purpose, so away we went straight down, half glissading, half floundering, until at 11.30 we crossed a place where a bergschrund ought to have been, but which we failed to discover, and were once more on the Plan de la Tribulation. Looking back, there sat Jeantet on the very spot from which we had begun our last strategic movement, and we had to wait some time before he could screw up his courage to join us.

The day was still so young that an ascent of the Pointe de la Tribulation was proposed, and would have been carried out, had it not been for Jeantet, who persistently refused to be roped, and we did not think ourselves justified in crossing such an extent of névé with an unroped man of the party. This secondary expedition was therefore reluctantly given up, and we dozed away the afternoon on the rocks we had ascended by moonlight. At 5 p.m. we strolled into Cogne, much to the astonishment of the natives, who would hardly believe that the expedition had been successfully accomplished, as the descent had never before been made on their side of the mountain. As we were not expected back, nothing had been prepared for our dinner, and all the resources of the village were hardly equal to the task of supplying us with a meal.

To anyone who thinks of repeating this expedition we would express our decided opinion that no advantage is obtained by bivouacking, as we did, some two hours up the Valnontey. The whole walk is one, which, in fine weather, could be easily ac-

Portion of the Alpine Club Map of Switzerland
to illustrate M^r Barlow's Paper.

182



Scale, 250,000 or One Quarter Inch
to One English Mile (nearly)

Routes of M. Frassay in Blue
Messrs. Still & Barlow . Red

complished in one day by starting early from Cogne. If, however, it were thought desirable to sleep out, we should recommend a push being made over the moraine of the Grand Crou glacier on to the rock buttress by which we ascended. By such an arrangement a very nasty bit of work is avoided (I mean the passage along a shockingly ill-conditioned moraine in the dark), and very good camping grounds would be easily found. At one spot we noticed a cave, which, with a little cleaning out, might easily be made to accommodate six people.

The moral which this paper is intended to convey is, that no mountaineer should visit Cogne expecting to find there guides and appliances fitted for arduous expeditions; but to a party properly supplied with guides from other districts, and after due warning had been sent to the hotel, so as to have the commissariat department properly attended to, we know of no part of the Alps better worth exploring, or where a mountaineer can feel more free and independent than in the Graians.

THE AMPEZZO, SEXTEN, AURONZO PASSES. By M. HOLZ-MANN.

ONE of the most interesting districts in the Dolomites is that which, roughly speaking, is bounded by the Ampezzo road on the west, the Piave, Padola, and Sexten valleys on the south, east, and north. Though the whole circumference measures only about 75 English miles, it encloses such a variety of striking scenery as even in a much larger area may probably not again be met with in all the Alps.

In England the attention of mountaineers has been directed to the district by Mr. Ball in § 61 of his 'Alpine Guide,' whilst parts of it have been described in Messrs. Gilbert and Churchill's earlier work on the Dolomite Mountains, as well as in Mr. Gilbert's later volume on Cadore. In Germany Dr. Grohmann has, in the publications of the Austrian and German Alpine Clubs, given detailed accounts of several of the principal peaks; and Dr. Kurtz has contributed to the third volume of Amthor's 'Alpen Freund' a systematic description of the greater part of the country, which has also been published in a separate form. Yet, even that elaborate paper, which in many instances seems to be based on the reports of others and not on personal experience, does not entirely clear up, and in