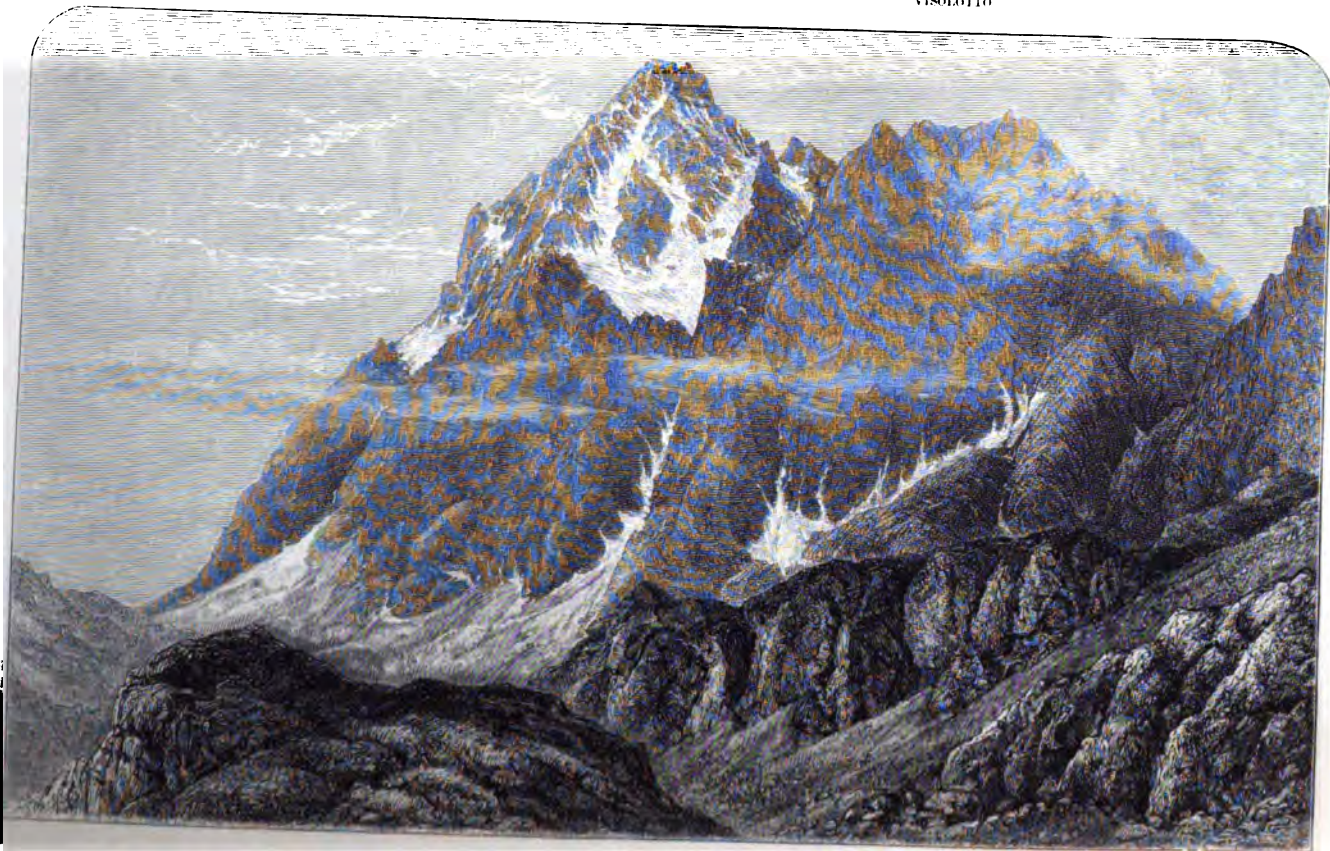


CASO DEL  
VISO MOZZO

MONTE VISO

VISOLOTTO



MONTE VISO  
FROM THE SOUTH EAST.

## EXPLORATIONS AMONGST THE COTTIAN ALPS.

2. *Monte Viso.*

(Read in part before the Alpine Club, March 1, 1881.)

By the EDITOR.

'Of Saluces the contre,  
And of Mount Vesulus in special,  
Wher as the Poo out of a welle smal  
Taket hys firste springyng & hys sours.'— *Chaucer.*

THERE can be hardly a mountaineer who has never heard of the peak the name of which stands at the head of this paper. No one who has been at Turin can fail to have been struck by it apparently closing the vista of many streets; and writers on the Waldensian valleys exercise their peculiar faculty of exaggeration in no point more than in their word pictures of something they take to be the Viso, but which as a rule is only a minor summit. When it is desired to extol the panorama from any of the great Swiss peaks, the view is generally said to be limited by the Ortler Spitze and by the Viso. In nearly every case it may be fairly questioned whether both of these summits are actually within the range of vision; but of the two it is more likely that the Viso is really gazed at by our enthusiast, for it towers up in solitary majesty far above all neighbouring ranges, whereas the Ortler, when not (as is generally the case) hidden behind the Bernina, is to some extent lost in the group of which it is the culminating point. Yet it is rarely that a feeling of curiosity leads any of us to try to approach nearer to the grand peak which bounds the horizon. This neglect may be accounted for on many grounds, some of which I have discussed in my former paper on the Cottians, but it is specially odd in the case of the Viso. Perhaps no other of the great peaks is so well seen from the plains of Piedmont, and it is doubtless to this that it owes its unique position as the one great Alpine summit (as distinguished from a range) of which we have express mention in classical writers. Lord Macaulay's famous schoolboy would doubtless at once quote those fine lines of Virgil:—

'Ac velut ille canum morsu de montibus altis  
Actus aper, multos Vesulus quem pinifer annos  
Defendit.'\*

The epithet 'pinifer' is scarcely applicable to the Viso at the present day; yet amid the vast sea of stones and rocks by which it is surrounded on all sides we find the Piano Melezet,

\* 'Æneid,' x. 707.

on the way to the Col de la Traversette, a name which evidently refers to a time when this plain was covered with larches. Mr. R. H. Budden is making a patriotic attempt to restore the meaning of Virgil's epithet by his plantation of young pine trees on the Piano del Re, very near the foot of the great peak itself. The boar, too, I fear, has gone the way of the pines, though rare chamois are still found. Two other writers are led to mention the Viso through their investigations into the sources of the great Piedmontese river. Pomponius Mela\* tells us, 'Padus ab imis radicibus Vesuli montis exortus parvis se primum e fontibus colligit;' and Pliny† expands this account—'Padus e gremio Vesuli montis celsissimum in cacumen Alpium elati finibus Ligurum Vagiennorum visendo fonte profluens.' The curious fact, that though the Viso and its neighbourhood were first explored by Englishmen, yet to the present day only a mere handful of English travellers have been anywhere near it, is to be explained by reasons which I have spoken of elsewhere, and which I will not weary my readers by repeating.

The peak long passed for inaccessible, and, indeed, the face which is turned towards the plains is not adapted to stir up the zeal of any but the most desperate climbers. Many ages elapsed before this proud citadel of nature was conquered; for need it be said that when certain writers strive to show that Hannibal crossed the Viso, they mean the pass of the Traversette and not the great peak itself? Its ascent was one of the most brilliant feats in the Alpine career of Mr. W. Mathews, a gentleman whose extensive explorations in the south-western Alps ought to have secured more imitators in our Club. In company with Mr. F. W. Jacomb, and guided by Jean Baptiste and Michel Croz, he succeeded in scaling this dreaded summit on August 30, 1861, the route taken being suggested by Mr. John Ball, and lying up the southern face.‡ The expedition was repeated the next year by Mr. F. F. Tuckett, who was only content with passing a night on the summit in a snowstorm. His paper in the very first number of this Journal is, I believe, also the last as yet published in these pages on the subject of the Viso. The climb soon became popular with the members of the Italian Alpine Club, but the English visitors were few and far between.§ All these ascents

\* 'De Situ Orbis,' ii 4 (4). † 'Hist. Nat.,' iii. 16 (20).

‡ 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' Second Series, vol. ii.

§ Besides the ascents already mentioned, and those described below, the following English ascents are the only ones of which I have been

had been made by the same route up the south face. A new way was first\* struck out by MM. P. Guillemain and Salvador de Quatrefages on August 12, 1879, after many plucky and adventurous attempts extending over three seasons.† This lay up the north-west face of the Viso—that looking towards France. It was reserved to the writer to force, on July 28, 1881, a third route, up the steep north-east face—that overhanging the sources of the Po. The three main faces of the mountain have thus been scaled, and I propose in this paper to describe the various routes hitherto taken, as I believe I am the only traveller who has made the ascent by each of them.

The range of the Viso is composed of a ridge running roughly north-west and south-east (taking a bend to the west at the Visolotto), and rising in several pinnacles. Of these the following are the chief, reckoning from south to north, the names and heights being taken from the new survey not yet published ‡:—

1. Punta Michelis, 3,132 mètres (= Cima Costa Rossa of the old map).
2. Punta Sella, a point on the south-east ridge of the Viso.
3. Monte Viso, 3,843 mètres.
4. (A little peak, called on the old map Le Sedie Cadreghe.)
5. Visolotto—two points, 3,346 mètres and 3,353 mètres in height.
6. Punta Gastaldi (probably identical with the Visoulet of the French map), usually called Viso di Vallante, at or close to which point the Viso range abuts on the main ridge of the Alps which separates France from Piedmont.

The Viso ridge is prolonged from No. 6 to the north through various minor peaks, the Colle del Colour (= couloir) del Porco,

able to find any traces:—Rev. Beauchamp Walker (1864), the late Rev. W. H. Hawker (1869), Miss Straton and Miss Lloyd (c. 1871), Messrs. Pilkington and Gardiner without guides (1878), Mr. C. C. Tucker (1878), Miss Walker and Mr. H. Walker (June 1879).

\* A Mr. Blake, of Boston, U.S.A., in 1851, and a Mr. Marshall, an Englishman, in 1862, are said by local reports to have attempted this side, but without success.

† 'Annuaire du C. A. F.,' 1877-8, and specially the 1879 volume, pp. 9-22.

‡ I am indebted to Signor G. B. Rimini, Secretary of the Florentine Section of the Italian Alpine Club, for a lithographed copy of the Viso sheet of the new and immensely improved survey (made in 1880), and to Signor Cesare Isaia for a copy of the same beautifully printed in colours. I take this opportunity of publicly thanking both gentlemen for their great courtesy.

the Col and Trou de la Traversette, to the twin peaks of the Granero and the Meidassa. West of No. 6 is the Col de Vallante, beyond which the range soon turns to the south and runs towards the peaks of the Chambeyron group.

The Viso itself is thus not on the frontier, but is not far from it, and is seen far down the valley of the Guil, which runs north-west from the Col de Vallante. On its south-west flank is the valley of the Varaita, the villages in which often fluctuated between France and Savoy; the latter power finally securing them in 1713, by the Treaty of Utrecht, in exchange for the valley of Barcelonnette. On its north and north-west flank is the valley of the Po, the source of which, as well as that of the Lenta, is in the vast stone-covered downs which stretch along the base of the great peak.

The ridges north and south of the peak are crossed by several passes. South we have the Passo di San Chiaffredo, between which and the Passo delle Sagnette to the north rises the Punta Michelis. North are two gaps between the Viso and the Visolotto, named by M. Guillemin Col du Viso and Col du Siège Carré, but not likely ever to be crossed. Between the Visolotto and the Punta Gastaldi is the Col du Visolotto. These all lead from the Val Varaita (or its tributary the Val di Vallante) to the valley of the Po.

To turn to the peak itself. This is formed by the junction of a ridge coming from the south-west \* (on which is the Viso

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\* It is across this ridge that lies the Col des Lacs, the pass for the discovery of which so many wishes were expressed in the early days of Alpine exploration, as a means of shortening the very laborious tour of the Viso in one day. M. Guillemin, who made the first passage on Sept. 12, 1876, gives the following description of his route. Descending some distance from the Col de Vallante into the valley of the same name, he skirted the base of the very steep rock wall (forming the west slope of the ridge in question, called in the old Piedmontese map Rocche di Viso o Forciolline), till at 12.40, just opposite and about the same height as the chalet of Bardote, he came to a deep cleft in the ridge. But not knowing anything of the opposite side, he continued to skirt the base of the wall till the rocks became less steep. He then mounted straight up, passing a withered group of pine trees, and reached, at 2.30, apparently without any trouble, the crest of the ridge—a large plateau of débris, in the midst of which were several small lakes. At 3.20 the slopes began to fall away towards the Vallone delle Forciolline, the height being taken at 2,940 mètres. A short descent led to the large lake in the valley. M. Guillemin is of opinion that the deep cleft mentioned above corresponds to the gap of the great snow gully near the head of the V. delle Forciolline, and would thus be the true Passo delle Forciolline. But this, I believe, has not yet been crossed. (See 'Annuaire du C. A. F.,' 1876, 276-7, 280).

di Vallante of the new Italian survey, 3,672 mètres, which may possibly be identical with the Triangle, a grand summit seen magnificently to the right of the Viso in all views from the north-west, but is not to be confounded with the Petit Viso of Mr. Mathews, which is an inferior point of the same ridge more to the south-west) with the ridge already described as stretching from the Punta Michelis to the Punta Gastaldi. It therefore has three main faces.

*a.* There is the southern face, above the Forciolline valley, which leads down towards the Val di Vallante (a tributary of the Val Varaita), and is reached from the Po valley by the Passo delle Sagnette. This is the face by which the peak is usually ascended, and may be called the Forciolline face, or the Castel Delfino face from the hamlet in the Val Varaita sometimes taken as a starting point.

*β.* There is the north-west face, sometimes inaccurately called the French face; since, as has been shown, the Viso lies entirely in Piedmont, though towering above the frontier pass of the Col de Vallante. By this M. Guillemin's party made their ascent, and it may be called the Vallante face.

*γ.* Finally, there is the north-east face above the Po valley, which may be called the Crissolo face, from the highest hamlet in the valley. It was by the northern portion of this (which overhangs the Piano del Re, on which rises the Po) that I effected a new route last summer, while the southern portion is the slope seen from Turin, and generally from a distance. It is difficult to describe the division of this slope. It is, however, quite clear in reality, and may be said to be roughly marked by the minor ridge east of the Viso, which, after sinking to an easy pass,\* rises in the belvedere of the Viso Mozzo or Visomout (3,018 mètres=10,434 ft.). The excursion called at Crissolo the 'Giro dei Laghi' lies over this pass, there being numerous lakes on both sides.

Referring for further details to the sketch map in Mr. Mathews' paper, to the Italian and French maps, and to the table at the end of this paper, I now proceed to the narrative of my personal adventures.

The Viso had long been a familiar object to me from the neighbouring peaks of Dauphiné, and the attraction of a new route still further stimulated my desire to make the ascent, which was included in my plan for 1879. But it seemed only

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\* Martelli and Vaccarone's 'Guida alle Alpi Occidentali del Piemonte' (p. 151) names it Passo del Viso. To prevent confusion it might be termed Passo del Viso Mozzo.

fair to let my friends MM. Guillemin and Salvador de Quatre-fages complete what they had so valiantly been struggling to carry out, and we therefore agreed that they should leave a note for me at Abriès (near the northern foot of the mountain), to inform me whether they had finally succeeded or not. As I had arranged to take the Viso at the end of my campaign, my friends had thus ample time before them.

After my explorations in the Chambeyron group, I bent my steps towards the south, and spent many happy days in roaming among the higher ranges of the Maritime Alps. The further south we went the fainter did the Viso appear on the horizon, till on the Col de Tenda it was a mere dream—recalling vividly to mind Tennyson's lovely description of Monte Rosa as seen from the Duomo at Milan—to which it seemed almost profane to attach a name. We then worked northwards along the eastern side of the main chain, across a succession of passes and through valleys one lovelier than the other, till on the last day of August we had a view from the Colle della Bicocca of the southern face of the Viso from top to bottom, being separated from it only by the deep cleft of the Val Varaita. On this side it is a splendid wall of rock, either end of the summit ridge rising into a peak. I have seen few more magnificent sights in my life, and I felt that to gain so marvellous a vision was worth enduring all the heat from which we had lately been suffering. We slept that night at Castel Delfino, and, after being detained there a couple of days owing to my severe indisposition, due to that very heat, crossed over into France by the Col d'Agnel and by the Col Vieux, reaching Abriès on the evening of September 3. It was doubtless very selfish and very weakminded, but I confess that when I learnt from M. Guillemin's note, which I found here, that his party had made the new route three weeks before, my feeling was not one of altogether unmixed pleasure. One bit of information was rather startling—that my friends thought the ascent was harder than that of the Meije. Now to me the Meije represents the *ne plus ultra* of difficulty, nor can I believe that even the Dru comes up to it in this respect. Hence to attempt an ascent said to be harder than the Meije at a time when I was feeling far from well seemed then, and seems to me even now, somewhat rash. But I could not make up my mind to give up this excursion, which was to form the crowning point of a journey of hitherto unbroken success; and it was for this reason that I found myself on the morning of September 4, 1879, in company with my two faithful companions the Almers and a native porter, being jolted in a springless hay-cart along the char road, which leads to the upper part of the valley of the Guil, the

mountain stream on which *Abriès* is situated. Three hours of this on a fine morning, the sultriness of which was rather suspicious, were quite enough for any one, even though the grand north-western face of the *Viso* was full in view. Another hour took us to the conveniently situated hut fitted up by the French Alpine Club, and known as the *Refuge des Lyonnais*, from the fact that the first Frenchmen who ever ascended the *Viso* were some climbers from *Lyons* (1875). Resting here awhile, we then proceeded to the head of the valley, and leaving to the left the path to the *Col de la Traversette*, climbed for 1 hour 40 minutes up the stony slopes to the *Col de Vallante*, descending a few steps on the Italian side of which, we resolved to camp under an overhanging rock just above the lake. As the day wore on fleecy clouds had appeared near the *Viso*, and in the afternoon it was almost enveloped in them; so that we had scant opportunities of making out our route, though *M. Guillemin* had kindly left us full instructions.

No good engraving of this face of the *Viso* has yet been published; that in '*Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers*'\* gives only the most prominent features of the view, and that in the '*Annuaire du C. A. F.*,' 1878, p. 53, is badly engraved from an excellent photograph. Let me here try to render into words the impression made on me by the view from our bivouac.

Imagine a grand rock-wall rising nearly sheer above one's head for a height of about 3,500 ft. This is divided into two parts by a great ledge or platform (marked by a strip of *névé*, and slanting downwards from left to right), from which, to the left, a *couloir* leads down to a three-cornered bit of glacier and towards the depression between the *Viso* and *Visolotto*—our morrow's route. To the right this platform terminates in a magnificent hanging glacier, which discharges its refuse into the *Vallante* valley by a gully which quite realises one's ideal *couloir*. Above this platform rises to the left the very much foreshortened highest ridge of the *Viso*, while to the right above the glacier the *Triangle* asserts itself in a far more majestic manner, and seems to claim supremacy. But this view is better seen from some point more distant from the base than our bivouac, which was too close to the great peak to allow us to appreciate it fully. On all sides we were surrounded by dark and ruinous ridges and slopes of stones: the lower spur of the *Visolotto* looked specially forbidding, and altogether the prospect was wild and Alpine in the extreme, especially when seen amid wreaths of floating mist.

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\* *Second Series*, vol. ii.

The route we had hitherto taken serves to make one realize the fact that the Viso is some way from the French frontier, though well seen from France over the depression of the Col de Vallante. It was something attempting the Gabelhorn from Evolena, the upper Val d'Hérens representing the Guil valley, the Col du Grand Cornier corresponding to the Col de Vallante, and the Mountet hut to our bivouac, though the descent from the former col to the Mountet hut is far longer in point of distance and time than that from the Col de Vallante to our sleeping-place. Hence an ascent of the Viso by this route involves a considerable détour, and is best suited for those who do not propose to descend into the Italian valleys.

As the night advanced the mists gradually disappeared, and the wonderful sight of the steep crags of the Viso, bathed in the clear light of the moon, joined to anticipations of another Meije and my indisposition, allowed me but little sleep. Besides, we suffered a good deal from cold, perhaps owing to our recent tropical experience, and to the fact that during the previous two months we had not once had occasion to sleep in the open, and had thus become unused to this delightful incident of mountain rambles. Next morning (September 5) we started at 4 A.M., having lost the habit of early starting whilst among the Maritimes, where it is not essential. The party consisted of myself, of Christian Almer, and of his son Christian, the latter, then but twenty years of age, a most promising young guide. Our Abriès porter was to take back the blankets, *marmite*, &c., to the Refuge des Lyonnais. Our first object was to gain the depression between the Viso and Visolotto, whence we knew that it was not difficult to get on to the great north-western slope of the former. The way lay over loose rocks, round the projecting spur of the Visolotto, to the snow slope coming down from the col, no trace being found of the great chasm which so alarmed early explorers.\* We reached the snow in forty minutes, and in another forty minutes the col, elated by our unexpectedly rapid progress. There are two gaps in this ridge separated by the shattered pinnacles of the Sedie Cadreghe, or Square Chairs (3,080 mètres = 10,105 feet), scaled by M. Guillemin in 1878,† who has named both these gaps; that to the left of the Siége Carré being called Col du Siége Carré (3,040 mètres), and the other the Col du Viso (3,055 mètres). That gentleman thinks it would be possible to descend from them to the head waters of

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\* 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' Second Series, vol. ii. pp. 140, 172.

† 'Annuaire du C. A. F.,' v. 45.

the Po; this, however, has not yet been, nor, in my opinion at least, is ever likely to be accomplished. On the col we found a card written by Mons. Guillemin, telling us to go due south; so after peering over into the Po valley (then filled with light vapours) and admiring a fine hanging glacier close by (with which we made closer acquaintance in 1881), we clambered up a gully, the rocks in which were very rotten, to a stone man built by our predecessors on what they have called the Roche des Chamois. This marks the point at which it is necessary to turn over on to the north-western face proper of the mountain, the rocks directly below being very steep, and, if not impracticable, at any rate likely to take more time to climb than our somewhat circuitous route. Turning now to the right and keeping nearly at a level over easy rocks, we reached in half an hour from the col a small bed of snow (which Mons. Guillemin calls the V-shaped glacier), cut along its upper rim, crossed the great couloir just beyond, mounted it for a few steps, and came to what turned out to be the great difficulty of the expedition, viz. ice-covered rocks on its further side. These were somewhat troublesome, but there was plenty of hand hold beneath the ice, and the slope was not particularly steep. Climbing up these rocks, and leaving the couloir to the left, we soon found another cairn built by our predecessors, and a little beyond halted 35 minutes for breakfast. It was now clear that there was very little snow on the rocks, owing to the advanced season, and that we would thus escape from certain difficulties, although we were aware that the great obstacles which had so frequently stopped our predecessors were still higher up. In ten minutes more we came to the strip of névé which is so conspicuous in all views, running across the mountain from the splendid Glacier du Triangle on the right, and of which the outlet is the great couloir mentioned above. We had been only an hour from the V-shaped glacier! From this point the summit is hidden by a number of pinnacles of rock, which rise at no very great distance above this strip of névé. One of these, resembling in shape an inverted bell, we had been specially told to aim for, and we had no trouble in at once identifying it. We cut straight up or across this névé, the snow being hard; our only adventure was the breaking of the strap of the cognac flask, which, with its contents, rapidly made its way to the Val di Vallante. On gaining the upper rocks we bore to the left to the crest of the arête, then back to the right under the bell-shaped rock to a snow couloir. The sight of this made my heart beat fast, for I knew that the top must now be close at hand. We mounted

a few steps, partly on rocks and partly on snow, soon saw traces of our predecessors, and in a few seconds more had gained the delicate snow ridge at the upper end of the couloir, when we found ourselves on the highest ridge of the mountain, between the two summits. In two or three minutes more we were all clustered round the great cairn on the left-hand or eastern summit.\* We had been an hour and twenty minutes from the lower edge of the strip of névé. As it was just 9 A.M., and we had started from our bivouac at 4, we had been just *five hours*, including 15 minutes on the Col du Viso and 35 minutes' halt for breakfast. Of the 4.10 actual walking, 1.20 had been up to the Col du Viso, and 2.50 thence to the top. I had been obliged to go slowly, owing to my indisposition and the bad night I had passed; otherwise we might have saved at least half an hour. Our predecessors, already tolerably acquainted with the mountain (on no part of which had any one of us ever been before), had taken 12.10 from their camp, not far from ours. This included many halts for photographing purposes; but when Mons. Guillemin reckons † the distance at 6.20 actual walking, I can only explain the discrepancy by supposing that the state of the mountain was far better when we were on it than on his ascent three weeks earlier. We found no difficulty, save the ice-covered rocks, and the rocks generally are firm and good. The ascent by this route is far more interesting than by the usual route. But, alas! during the latter part of our climb the envious mists had been gathering, and on the top we had to content ourselves with cloud effects, save one glimpse into the Po valley. This was a great disappoint-

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\* The height of the Viso is now determined within very narrow limits. In 1861 Mr. Mathews found the mean of his barometrical observations, when compared with the readings at the same moment at Geneva, Turin, and the Great St. Bernard, to be 12,668 feet, or 3,861 mètres. ('Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' *l.c.* p. 175.) Mr. Tuckett obtained, in 1862, a mean height of 12,632 feet=3,870 mètres ('A. J.' i. 31). The French map (Larche sheet) gives the height at 3,845 mètres=12,615 feet, and the Piedmontese at 3,840 mètres=12,599 feet. The new Italian survey has the figures 3,843 mètres=12,609 feet, which very nearly corresponds to the height deduced by Mr. Mathews by comparison with the Great St. Bernard (12,612 feet). All these heights refer to the eastern peak. The western peak, according to the observations of Signor Simonetti (the engineer officer charged with the new survey) in the travellers' book at the Piano del Re inn, is 3,841 mètres.

† See 'Annuaire du Club Alpin Français,' vi. 22.

ment, though one which is common enough on this peak. We found on top at least 100 cards of Italian climbers, but of English names only those of Messrs. Pilkington and Gardiner, who, ascending from the south, had had no more of a view than ourselves. There are two plaster images of the Madonna in wooden cases on the eastern summit, these cases serving also as receptacles for the cards of visitors. Having joined our names to those of our French predecessors by the new route, and having visited the three stone men on the western summit, 10 minutes distant, we turned to descend, there being no hope of a break in the clouds. We resolved to descend by the usual route, in order to explore the mountain thoroughly. The way is easy and fatiguing, lying over rotten rocks and down small gullies, the first bit down the highest rocks being the steepest. The multitude of cairns built by previous parties is so great as to be hopelessly confusing. The proper line is to bear slightly towards the left, specially at the base of the slope. In just over an hour and a half from the top we reached the great snow slope at the head of the Vallone delle Forciolline. We might have crossed to the left by the Passo delle Sagnette to the valley of the Po. We had hoped to cross Mons. Guillemain's Col des Lacs on the right, and so regain the Val di Vallante not far from the col, but the clouds now came down in rain, and, like all who have been in this detestable valley in bad weather, we entirely lost the faint track. Imagine a chaos of great boulders, with intervals of smaller ones, and every now and then a lake; imagine clambering about over these in a desperate sort of way, and finally seeing the stream which we had been taking as our guide disappear over a precipice which seemed in the mist and rain to be of unfathomable depth! The map only serving to perplex us, we were forced by our disinclination to follow the stream any longer to bear more and more to the right. The rocks gave way to stony slopes, and these to very steep grass slopes. I was absolutely hopeless of ever reaching a hut, when Almer hit upon a very badly-marked path, which ultimately brought us, after nearly three and a half hours' walking from the great snow slope, to some huts—called Chardonney on the old Italian map—at the junction of the Val delle Forciolline with the Val di Vallante, about two hours above Castel Delfino. The owner of one of these kindly took us in and entertained us as well as he could, and we were glad enough to have a roof over our heads, as it was raining hard. Thus, despite the bad weather, we had taken but nine and a quarter hours' walking to cross the Viso from our camp to this hut, and under more favourable

circumstances it ought not to take more than eight. I should advise future travellers to cross the Sagnette to Crissolo, and to regain France by the Traversette, thus avoiding that odious Forciolline valley, which I am far from being alone in regarding with the utmost horror. The weather was still sulky next morning, but we started in hopes of escaping with dry skins. This idea was, however, utterly knocked on the head, the rain soon coming down softly but continuously. We reached the Col de Vallante in two hours from the hut, and the Refuge des Lyonnais in an hour more. Here we found Mons. James Nérot, a member of the English and French clubs, who hoped to repeat the ascent of the Viso by the same route. He received us with open arms, having become alarmed at our prolonged absence, for we had hoped to return to the Refuge the previous evening. I confess with shame that I yielded to the seduction of 'afternoon tea,' which was heightened by the pleasure of hearing many items of Alpine news, for during the preceding six weeks we had been in regions whither such gossip had never yet penetrated. It was only by making an heroic effort that we tore ourselves away and walked down the well-known road to Abriès, where our success was received with unexpected enthusiasm by the old sisters (of the inn Chez Richard), who had been very kind to me when feeling very unwell, and had done all they could to prevent me from going in search of adventures on the Viso, the mishaps of Mons. Guillemin's party having become almost legendary at Abriès. Not a glimpse on the way did we catch of our vanquished foe, who availed himself of the powers of the air to such an extent that Mons. Nérot had to retire, after a siege of several days, without even attempting the ascent. I can strongly recommend this expedition to any mountaineer finding himself in this region. The climb is far more varied than by the old route, and the view, when unclouded, must be unique, including the Mediterranean. A descent the same way is perfectly feasible, our only reason for not effecting it being my wish to see the other side of the mountain.

We left Abriès next morning, and I came straight back to England, after a long and most successful campaign. But though we had reached the summit by a route only once previously and never since traversed, I was still unsatisfied, and resolved to take an early opportunity of thoroughly exploring the peak and the surrounding ranges. This desire did not find fulfilment in 1880, as Gardiner and myself had managed to discover so many summits in the central Dauphiné Alps, which were as yet unknown to one or both of us, that we were kept

fully occupied during a six weeks' journey, and, in fact, were almost surfeited with peaks and passes. When drawing out my plan for 1881, the Viso was made one of its chief features, especially as a wild idea had seized me that possibly it might not be impracticable to ascend the Viso direct by the north-eastern face above the sources of the Po, and in the words which concluded my paper on the Viso from the north-west, read before the Club in March 1881, I threw out a hint to this effect, adding that I proposed to try it myself. I resolved at any rate to have a look at this side, none of our party having ever seen that face, except from a very great distance.

One day at the beginning of last July, as I was resting at St. Christophe after some expedition, Gaspard, the well-known guide, appeared, and presented me with a letter and a visiting card (both addressed to me) which he had just brought over from La Grave. The card was that of Mr. F. F. Tuckett, and the few lines on it served as an additional proof, if any were required after the many kindnesses, dating as far back as 1869, which I have received at his hands, of the generous unselfishness of that distinguished explorer and climber of the Alps. This card (left by Mr. Tuckett on his way home from Corsica, *viâ* the Vaudois valleys) bore the date of June 28, and the following words: 'I think you will bag the Viso from Crissolo, especially if you get to the plateau of the little glacier from the French side, as there is a couloir thence nearly to the top.' It is scarcely necessary to say that my previous vague intention to have a look at this face was transformed by this hint from so experienced a climber into a resolve to make an attempt to force the new route.

We stayed on a few days in Dauphiné, effecting on July 11 the second ascent of the Écrins from the Col des Avalanches, and finding the ice-covered rocks in so dangerous a condition that we preferred to descend by the usual route, and spent a good part of the night in scrambling down the moraines of the Bonnapierre glacier—a fact which will appeal vividly to those who have the doubtful privilege of being personally acquainted with that abandoned spot. To those who as yet know it not my earnest advice is that they should be most careful *not* to visit it in the twilight or after dark. The climb took us just over 22 hrs. from a bivouac about 2½ hrs. above La Bérarde back to La Bérarde by the Col des Ecrins, the ascent from the Col des Avalanches to the summit of the Ecrins costing no less than 7½ hrs.' walking. Monsieur Duhamel's ascent was made when the rocks were quite free from ice. The two points which consoled me for this very exhausting expedition were the mar-

vellous view we had from the top, and the fact that we were the first to 'traverse' the Ecrins, combining the two sides in a single expedition. Little by little we worked our way to the lonely but beautiful valley of Escreins (which will be described in another instalment of these papers); thence to Maljasset, in the Ubaye valley, where we rated the landlord for having given the information which led in 1879 to our being arrested as Prussian spies at St. Paul, the next village in the valley. He expressed himself very penitent, but explained that he could not for the world make out what else we might be. The intense heat of the latter days of July, and the remembrance of my sad fate in 1879, induced me to take many more rest days than would as a rule be necessary; so that it was not till the evening of July 23 that we once more gained the hamlet of Castel Delfino, in the Val Varaita, and put up again at Lorenzo Richard's rather noisy inn. A quiet Sunday spent on a little wooded island in the rushing stream of the Varaita was very acceptable, and gave us full opportunity of recalling the interesting historical associations of this village, dominated by its ruined fourteenth-century castle, and in its name preserving a recollection of the time when it belonged to the Dauphiné, from which it is separated by a strong natural barrier.

On Monday, July 25, we set out for the pass of San Chiaffredo. A duller and more fatiguing walk than it is on this side can scarcely be imagined. Following the track past the picturesque Ponte Castello up the Val di Vallante as far as the huts (1½ hr. from Castel Delfino), at the entrance of the glen named V. delle Giargiatte on the new Italian map (gaining a view of the huts where we had slept in 1879, about 20 mins. higher up the main valley), we left the path, where there is a bridge to the left bank, and turned up towards the Giargiatte valley. The old map is here very faulty. The name Giargiatte really applies to the valley called Rio di Roccarossa; the Rio di Giaffon, to the north, is simply non-existent. In fact, but one tangled ridge separates the Forciolline and Giargiatte valleys. Mounting by a steep wooded slope, and bearing to the left, we came in 1.10 to the edge of a huge 'clapier' or slope of loose boulders, which we had long seen from below. Toiling over this for some time, and then keeping to the right straight up the valley, we came to some stony pastures tenanted by cows. Traces of a path began to appear, and as we drew nearer and nearer the ridge at the head of the valley we became more and more cheerful at the prospect of our labours coming to an end. But, alas! this apparent ridge turned out to be only a great spur of the 'divide' over

which we wished to pass; the path led more and more to the left, till at length, when the topography was becoming thoroughly puzzling, we passed through a small rocky defile and emerged on the plain at the head of the valley, on which glittered the three lakes we had been so eagerly looking for (1.50 from the clavier). Signori Martelli and Vaccarone, in their valuable 'Guida alle Alpi Occidentali del Piemonte' (p. 125), say that there is another easier path more to the north by which this lake plateau can be reached. Certainly nothing could be more tiring and monotonous than the way we had followed. Passing by the side of these lakes, we came in 20 mins. to the true col\*—the track leading straight up to the proper point rather to the right. The view from the col, which is desolate in the extreme, includes the Pelvo di Elva, the Brec de Chambeyron, and the Rubren. We hastened down the other side to the plain in which rises the Lenta, passed some small lakes, and struck boldly to the left, reaching in 40 mins. a cairn and ruined hut, on the edge of a steep descent to a plain below, in which lakes again formed a prominent feature, as they do in every part of the environs of the Viso. Here a magnificent view suddenly presented itself—the eastern face of the Viso, a sight in itself enough to repay us for our fatiguing journey. From scarcely any point is it more majestic. We studied it not merely with admiration, but with some anxiety, as it did not seem to promise well for our attempt; but I recollected that the exact slope we hoped to attack was on the northern part of this great eastern face, and tried to comfort myself by reflecting that all was not lost as yet. After a very long halt we descended to the lakes, passed (in an hour from the hut) the Italian Alpine Club hut at the Alpetto alp, wandered over the great downs near the Rocca Nera in a light mist, and finally, by a path which seemed as if it could never descend far enough, crossed the infant Po and entered the piazza of Crissolo, the chief hamlet in the upper valley of the Po (2.20, including some time lost, from Alpetto). Here an agreeable surprise awaited us. I was aware that the inn at Crissolo was frequented by Italian tourists, and was therefore presumably better than most of those we

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\* In all probability this is the pass (called Col di Costa Rossa by Mr. Mathews) crossed by Principal Forbes in 1839, and by Messrs. Jenkinson and Whateley in 1854, which is described as being farther from the Viso than the Sagnette ('Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' Second Series, ii. 171-2). Joanne ('Alpes Françaises,' pp. 958-9) gives a detailed description of it.

had lately come across, but I was not prepared, on entering the Gran Albergo del Gallo, at the lower end of the village, for the very decent little room into which I was shown, or for the intelligence that a *table d'hôte* was in progress, an even greater and more unusual luxury when one has been dependent for several weeks on village *auberges*. I was very much pleased altogether with this little inn, and hope that it may in future be more patronised by English travellers than it has been. The landlord (Signor Giovanni Pilatone) is a brother of 'mine host' at the Sanctuary, and is most obliging and civil. The mists which had led us astray on the way down gathered more heavily during the night, and next day was but a succession of violent thunderstorms, accompanied by rain in almost tropical torrents. Indeed, sitting on the balcony of the Gallo and watching the gutters overflow and rush down the village street, it seemed as if fine weather had finally and for ever abandoned us after the long spell of drought which had done so much mischief here as in other parts of the world. I amused myself with studying the strangers' book, noting the various adjectives expressing terror, dread, and alarm which were applied to the ascent of the Viso by the usual route. A few Turin and Saluzzo newspapers shed a vivid light on politics in England (which had lately been taking a rather serious turn), heightened by the extreme brevity and conciseness of the telegrams.

Next morning the weather had righted itself, and I was able to make an examination of the village and its neighbourhood. The Po valley is here very narrow, and the stream is but a roaring mountain torrent, astride which is the little hamlet of Crissolo. The piazza and most of the houses are on the left bank. A little townhall, which aims at being very imposing, and a very poor little chapel, both on the piazza, seem to comprise all the public buildings of the place. The main street starts from the piazza and is the path down the valley; it is chiefly made up of small inns for the pilgrims to be mentioned directly. Two inns facing each other bear the sign of the Gallo; they stand to each other in the relation of parent and child, the chief house being that on the right with a café on the ground floor, the other being used as a *dépendance*. Crissolo is very prettily situated, the woods coming quite down to the right bank of the Po; and the white church tower of Borgo in the distance is a conspicuous object. But if Crissolo had not something more to depend on than stray tourists I fear it would go badly with it. It is really supported by the crowd of pilgrims who throng to the shrine of

San Chiaffredo, a quarter of an hour's walk up the hill-side. Of course it was one's bounden duty to make this short pilgrimage and examine the big church filled with ex-votos, the gaudy frescoes of the saint on the walls outside and his shrine of rather poor architecture within, and the hospital for the pilgrims, part of which is now an inn known as the 'Albergo Estivo.' But more attractive than all is the grand peak of the Viso, seen from here towering above the forests, which seem to stretch up to its base, and keeping guard at once over the sources of the great Piedmontese river and the great local saint. But I must leave all details to Mr. Freshfield, and reserve the special sights I witnessed in this place for a later period in my story. Another sight which we also dutifully visited that morning is the curious limestone cavern of the Rio Martino, 20 minutes' walk or so from the village, on the slopes above the right bank of the Po. I do not propose to incur the terrible fate towards which Mr. Freshfield seeks to allure me, and shall therefore simply say that it is possible to penetrate into it for a distance of 600 mètres, or nearly 2,000 feet, that it abounds in stalactites and stalagmites of various quaint and beautiful forms, and is closed by a lake, into which thunders a cascade, the roaring of which is very striking so far in the bowels of the earth. A plentiful supply of Bengal lights (to be procured at the Crissolo inn) should be taken, as they greatly increase the impressiveness of the scene, and waterproofs are an advisable precaution. The local magnesium wire is not to be relied upon. The stream is lost underground a short distance from the entrance. Access to this cavern has been much facilitated by the Turin section of the Italian Alpine Club, which has caused steps to be hewn in the slippery rocks, bridges and chains to be placed, and has thus made its exploration an indispensable incident of a stay at Crissolo. Another grotto—known as the Grotte des Anglais—is more difficult of access; it is described at length in the travellers' book by an Englishman, a Fellow of the Geological Society. Crissolo lies at a height of 4,447 feet above the sea.

The morning passed away pleasantly, and in the afternoon we set off for the inn on the Piano del Re, the landlord and a very active and amusing waiter not concealing their entire disbelief in our proposed new route up the Viso. The day was very hot, we were heavily laden, and there was plenty of time; so we halted whenever we liked. After some time a turn in the valley conceals Crissolo, and the Viso Mozzo becomes the chief object. The neighbourhood becomes more and more desolate; trees gradually disappear, and when we came to the Piano Melezet existed only in name. The Viso soon

absorbed all our attention, especially as we now began for the first time to see the face by which we proposed to make our attempt. Many a halt was called to scan it with the glass; but the more we looked at it the less we liked it, and I think my readers will agree with me when they turn to the engraving accompanying this paper.\* I was rather in favour of trying to gain a large patch of snow seen to the left some way up the peak, the rocks below which had, however, a most forbidding appearance. Almer inclined to the great gully below the little glacier between the Viso and the Visolotto, and he was, as usual, right. Just before reaching the Piano del Re there are some zigzags in the path to surmount a steep step in the valley down which rushes the baby Po, in what is known as the 'Prima Cascata del Po.'

After a pleasant lounge of 2½ hours we reached the Piano, which, it may be explained, is not called 'del Re' from Victor Emmanuel, the name being of much earlier origin, and possibly referring to Francis I., who constructed a path on the French side of the Col de la Traversette. In the midst of this small plain is a hillock, on which is the little 'Albergo Alpino,' kept by the brothers Genre. It is at a height of 2,041 mètres = 6,697 feet, and is principally supported by Italian tourists, who come up here to visit the sources of the Po, which are five minutes off. I at once proceeded to pay my respects to the great river in his birthplace, while the guides mounted a neighbouring ridge to study the Viso. The actual source is a fine spring welling up between two great boulders, and issuing from underneath a huge mass of débris which covers all the surrounding hills. The water is deliciously cool and clear, and a sojourner by the banks of the great river of Southern England may be excused for thinking with regret of the limpid stream of the Po, especially when visited at the close of a hot summer's day. At this height, however, the air became chilled early, and I regained the little inn, where the lame Signor Genre set before us a plain but very acceptable supper. It is to be noted, as an oddity, that neither from Crissolo nor the Piano del Re inn is the Viso visible, though a few minutes' walk reveals it in either case. Almer reported that he thought my route not worth trying, and it was resolved that the great gully must be forced. We of course identified at once the

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\* It is taken from a fine photograph by Signor Giuseppe Berardo, of Savigliano, whose collection of excellent photographs is for sale at the Piano del Re and Crissolo. They all represent scenes in the neighbourhood, and may be had in various sizes.

glacier and couloir above it mentioned by Mr. Tuckett; the glacier is that which, as I said before, we saw close at hand in 1879 when ascending the Viso from the north-west; it was, therefore, evident that so far the way was plain if we reached it by our old route. But against this plan there were two conclusive objections. To make this circuit would involve the loss of a day at least, and by taking this route we should not, in the full sense, be ascending the Viso direct from the sources of the Po, as was our intention. Hence it was thought of only to be rejected.

We set off at 3.30 on the morning of July 28—the usual party of three. For some time the way was clear, and we followed the track behind the Albergo up to the Lago di Fiorenza, and then up rocks and stone slopes, this being the path taken on the excursion called ‘Giro dei Laghi,’ which consists in passing from the Lago di Fiorenza to the Lago Grande di Viso by the ridge between the Viso and the Viso Mozzo. In  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hr. we halted to examine our route and to refresh, and at 6.20 (2.05 walking from the inn) were on the great snow slope at the base of the gully, close to the rocks on its (proper) right side. The day’s work was about to begin, and we halted 10 minutes to rope. It was quite obvious that this gully was the natural channel for anything falling from the projecting glacier above, which is of very great thickness; but close observation showed that there were no traces on the snow of any fresh falls, and we hoped to be out of range by the time the sun had got any power. Our route all day is easily traced on the annexed engraving. Cutting steps in the snow, which was still hard, keeping close to the rocks of the right side, and watching for any stones which might become dislodged from above, we gained without difficulty the point at which the great gully bifurcates, the left fork running up to the Col du Viso, and the right to the Col du Siège Carré, if one may be allowed to apply the name of ‘col’ to gaps which are never likely to be forced. Keeping up the former and cutting steps rapidly as one or two stones came rattling down, we took as soon as we were able to the rocks to our left hand, and were soon out of all possible danger from the glacier. These rocks were good, and we mounted rapidly towards a great rocky pinnacle which supports the glacier to the left. The most doubtful point in the whole expedition was now on the point of solution. Could we gain the glacier by circumventing this pinnacle? Such was the problem as propounded by Almer. The higher we got the more exciting it became; the rocks did *not* become more difficult; our hopes rose. In a little gully, with apparently

one more corner only to turn in order to see what would be our fate, Almer insisted on halting (8.30-8.55) to refresh in preparation for some terrible 'mauvais pas.' I acquiesced with some indignation, as we were now so nearly on a level with the glacier that it seemed scarcely worth while to stop before the point in question was decided; but I reflected that long experience had taught me that it was as a rule better to act on Almer's recommendations without inquiring into their precise grounds. We started again, got on to the great rock face, and caught a glimpse of a little gully between two rocky points; up this we went, and round another corner, when a shout from our leader announced that we had won the day. At 9.25 we stepped triumphantly on to the glacier—2½ hours' walking from the base of the great gully. The Col du Viso had been crossed as far as it is possible to cross it, unless some future adventurer insists on cutting up the thick end of the glacier—a task I do not envy him or his guides. A quarter of an hour to the right across the glacier would have taken us to the base of the gully, by which in 1879 we had gained the great north-west face. But to-day our intentions were different. Mounting the glacier for a few steps, we then turned once more on to the rocks of the north-eastern face. These became steeper and more rotten as we advanced, and we were gradually driven to the left, seeing at one moment the great snow patch which I had had in view, but which could hardly have been reached from our present standpoint. Our object now was to reach that point in the great upper couloir at which it is cut in two by a sharp snow ridge or shoulder, and this was attained at 12.25, after a good deal of trouble owing to the rotten and steep rocks, especially in order to traverse one particularly obnoxious pinnacle, the last bit being climbed by the rocks close to the (proper) right of the couloir. Here we halted for 25 minutes. Almer now declared that we were sure to reach the top, but that there would be unexpected difficulties, as the recent rain had caused a coating of ice on the rocks; and we had to swallow this mixture of bitter and sweet as best we could. At 12.50 we set off again, keeping close, as before, to the rocks near the (proper) right of the couloir, but being sometimes forced to cut steps in the couloir itself, which was then composed of hard ice, so hard that it would have taken a very very long time to hew a staircase straight up it. We worked our way slowly and painfully upwards. At one point we were just level with the pole on the Visolotto, and as we advanced it became clearer and clearer that it was not on the highest point of that peak—a fact previously

suspected, the certainty of which now raised new ideas in my mind. The work was very hard for the guides: it consisted in cutting steps in hard ice, or clearing away the glaze from the rocks so as to get some hold in the rotten stone beneath. We had attained a very great height, when the couloir became steeper than ever, and it was clear that we must now abandon it, and take to the rocks on our left. Almer chose the most promising gully he could find, but the iced rocks were extremely troublesome, and it was impossible to get any firm grip with hands or feet. At one or two points the difficulties were so great that I seriously contemplated the possibility of having to retreat. But our dauntless leader would none of it, and kept on in a truly marvellous way; his years seem rather to have increased his readiness and desire for work—witness our desperate experience on the Ecrins and the Viso. But all things come to an end, and so did our gully, though not until a glance downwards between my legs had shown me that it was far longer than we had anticipated. Striking still more to the left, we at last got off the glazed rocks, the slope became less steep, and at 3.05 we climbed up the last stony slope straight to the great cairn on the eastern peak. We had been 2.15 from our last halting-place, 7.30 from the base of the peak, 9.50 (all walking) from the inn. But we had gained our object, and had achieved a fine new route up the Viso, *every step of which* lay over untrodden ground, for several previous attempts had been made in direction of the great patch of snow which had attracted my attention, and which has never, I believe, been attained.

How delightful it was to rest and bask in the sun on the summit! Late as it was, the view of the Piedmontese plains was remarkably clear, though Turin was not distinguishable. Monte Rosa, the Dauphiné, the Tarentaise, and all the neighbouring peaks were fairly well seen, but there were clouds about, which marred the view, especially towards the Maritimes, which I particularly wished to see from this point. The shadow of the great peak creeping over the plains was especially striking. It was with difficulty, so warm and pleasant was it, that we could realise that we were at so great a height, and it was only stern necessity which forced us to commence the descent at 4.05, after leaving our cards in the boxes wherein repose the Madonnas, though we could find no trace of all the cards which had been there in 1879. It is almost superfluous to say that we did *not* propose to descend by the new route; we followed the ordinary route down the south face, the rocks seeming more rotten and

wearisome than usual. In 2.05, having gone very slowly, we reached the great snow slope in the Forciolline valley, and at 6.55 were on the Passo delle Sagnette, when a halt of 15 mins. was made to admire the view on all sides. From this point, the south face of the Viso is so foreshortened as to fall far short of the magnificent aspect it assumes when viewed from the Colle della Bicocca. Starting again at 7.10, we reached the base of the *débris* couloir in 20 minutes, and then began a race against time across the Passo del Viso Mozzo. So fast did we go that at 8.45 we were at the base of the great couloir, whence we had started 14½ hrs. previously. But by this time night had come on; the track, where there was any, was of the faintest; I did not care to break my legs by balancing myself on huge unstable boulders; and we were all pretty well dead beat. After sundry wanderings, which seemed to take us rather up hill than down, I announced my intention of passing the remainder of the night under the lee of a great rock which gave some shelter: my companions resisted but faintly, and I gained my point. At times it was cold, of course, but we managed to get a certain amount of sleep, and comforted ourselves by thinking that we were much better off than on that terrible ledge on the Meije, which still haunts us all like a bad dream.

At daylight next morning we got under way; the track of course at once revealed itself, and in an hour we were under the roof of the Albergo Alpino, where they had not been very uneasy about us, as they thought that we had gone down to the Alpetto hut, which we would certainly have done if our ambition had not led us to attempt the Viso in one day up and down. The rest of that day and the whole of the next were spent in delightful idleness. Genre was very much elated at our success, though I fear the small number of people likely to follow in our steps is not likely to do him much good. Many letters (including one to Mr. Tuckett) were despatched to announce our success; and time flew quickly by. It was a luxury only to breathe the clear air upon these heights, and a very keen pleasure to gaze at our conquered foe.

But the climber shares with the wicked man the reproach of never being able to rest; and at 4.25 on July 31 we again left the Albergo Alpino, with the intention of lowering the pride of the Visolotto. Following the same route as on the 28th for a good bit, and then bearing to the right over grass and rock slopes, we gained at 6.25 the extreme right-hand corner of the snow-band which runs along the base of the peak, and halted half an hour for breakfast. At 7.10 the rope was put on, and

at 7.55, having clambered over easy rocks and *débris* till near a conspicuous yellowish pinnacle not far from the south-east ridge, then bearing to the right, we stood at the foot of the great wall which rises steeply towards the highest crest. Straight up this we went with but one halt, the rocks, though fairly steep, being quite free from ice, firm and good. It was nothing more than a pleasant and exhilarating climb. At 9.05 we topped the central pinnacle of the last ridge (1.50 from the snow band, 4.05 from the Albergo Alpino). The peaks to north and south\* were clearly higher, but which was the highest? After some consideration we decided for the northern peak, which we gained at 9.20 by a scramble along the ridge. No trace of man—so far good. We were clearly the first to stand on this point; and it was distinctly higher than the southern point on which rose the pole we had seen from the Viso. After  $\frac{1}{4}$  hr. stay to admire the view, the look down the Guil valley being particularly worth remembering, and having built a huge pyramid wherein our cards were deposited, we returned in 10 minutes to the central peak, which was also ear-marked in honour of our victory. Then we proceeded along the ridge to the southern peak. This was rather shattered, but we got on pretty well till just above the last gap in the arête. The descent to that point from where we were standing was apparently quite sheer, and to this day I don't know how we got down. However, we all did get down; and then an easy climb led (in 25 mins. from the central peak) to the pole on the southern peak. Close to it were found two cairns, in one of which was a packet containing some tobacco, a bit of string, and a fragment of cloth wrapped in several folds of paper. The two cairns were built by Signor F. Montaldo, who made the first and only previous ascent of this peak on September 4, 1875, but who expressly states that the N.W. end of the ridge seemed to be inaccessible.† But a note in the 'Bollettino'‡ mentions an ascent by two Paesana hunters, to whom the miscellaneous objects in the packet may have belonged. I wish to state most distinctly that, save on this point, no traces of man were found anywhere on the Visolotto. Genre had given us an Italian flag; which was soon attached to the pole and floated merrily in the breeze. The view was very nearly the same as from the other peak, the two northern routes up the Viso being seen in the most perfect way imaginable. I may add that the

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\* Strictly speaking those to N.E. and S.W.

† 'Bollettino del C. A. I.,' 1876, p. 186.

‡ 1881, p. 461.

new Italian map completely bears out our view as to the relative height of the northern and southern peaks (the central one being much lower), assigning to the former a height of 3,353 mètres (= 11,001 feet), and to the latter one of 3,346 mètres (= 10,978 feet), a decision which it is needless to say is most gratifying to me in all respects. It was only 10.45 when we reached the pole, though, according to Genre's account of the experience of our predecessors (who had been much annoyed by ice on the rocks) we ought to have been much later. Leaving at 11.30, we descended again to the gap just north of the peak, and then proceeded to carry out an idea which I had suggested to the guides—a descent by the west side. A great gully fell away from the gap where we were, and down it we went; the way became easier and easier, though we were gradually forced over into another gully descending directly from the northern peak. But the nearer we got to the snow below, the more evident did it become that there was a great 'Ueberhang' between us and it; and sure enough there turned out to be one about 100 feet high. Our rope was not long enough to allow us to lower ourselves by it, as there was no visible halting-place *en route*. We tried all manner of ways to the left, where the wall was lower; but it was only after one most sensational traverse round a smooth bit of rock where there was absolutely nothing to which to hold on, that we got on to easier rocks, reaching the snow not very far from the Col du Siége Carré at 1.45, having traversed the Visolotto in the most direct and approved style. Casting one more glance at our route of 1879, we ran down the snow, and skirting round the base of the Visolotto, close to the rocks, mounted the little valley which lies between it and the peak called Punta Gastaldi on the new Italian map (probably the same as that usually termed Viso di Vallante), and to the col between these two peaks, which we gained at 2.35. Here a glorious view burst on us of the Chambeyron and Escreins groups to the south, while on the other side we had the Po valley. In a cairn were found the cards of MM. Guillemin and Salvador de Quatrefages, who had mounted to the col from the Vallante side on August 26, 1878,\* and had christened it Col du Visolotto; also a card of Lieut. G. Paganini, who is engaged on the new survey of the district, and who, apparently with a number of soldiers, had come up from the Po side. As far as I have been able to find out, ours was the first complete passage. Leaving at 2.50, we profited by the

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\* 'Annuaire du C. A. F.,' v. 48.

soldiers' steps in the hard snow of the couloir, and at 3.55 were on the grass again. Moving 10 mins. further down, we then indulged in a well-earned rest of an hour, re-entering the Albergo Alpino at 5.40, 13¼ hrs. after having quitted it.

We were eagerly welcomed, as our flag had been seen; but they had not thought it worth while to look out for us till midday, when, of course, we were far on the other side, and the recital of our wanderings caused great surprise and interest.

We lounged away the next morning very pleasantly in the bright sunshine. A large Italian party, including several ladies, came up to do the 'Sorgenti del Po,' and had the unusual excitement of trying to make out our flag with telescopes, field-glasses, and their own eyes, so that we found ourselves becoming heroes on a small scale.

I may add that when there is no ice on the rocks, and when the great upper couloir is snow and not ice, the difficulties of the north-eastern route up the Viso will be greatly diminished, and even more so if the glacier is reached from the Vallante side. The ascent of the Visolotto is to be strongly recommended to all in search of a rock climb of no very great difficulty, especially if they propose to ascend the Viso by either of the northern routes, for the study of which this is by far the best point.

Unluckily we had now exhausted the chief interest, from a mountaineer's point of view, of the Piano del Re, and it was with sincere sorrow that we quitted the little hostelry, which had been our head-quarters for nearly a week. The accommodation is very fair, though perhaps a little rough for those not used to out-of-the-way places, and the food very decent; the prices, too, were reasonable, and the hosts do all in their power to make a stay in their house agreeable. I trust this narrative may induce some climbers to pay a visit to the spot. As the Albergo is a station of the Turin section of the Italian Alpine Club, there are many Alpine books and periodicals and any number of photographs by Signor Berardo and other artists. The ground around the inn has been planted with young pine trees at the expense of Mr. Budden, whose patriotic endeavours deserve success.

It was already afternoon on August 1 when we tore ourselves away, and mounted the path to the Col de la Traversette. We reached the entrance to the famous tunnel\*

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\* Mr. Freshfield supplies me with an early notice of the tunnel (p. 18 of a pamphlet on the Sanctuary of San Chiaffredo, 'San Gioffredo ed il suo Santuario sui monti di Crissolo in Val di Po—Cenni

(marked by splashes of red paint) in 2.35 very leisurely going, took one last look at the Viso (which is very striking from this point), traced out once more the two northern routes, sighted our flag on the Visolotto, and then, passing through the tunnel, re-entered France after an absence of nine days, the pleasant recollection of which will long linger in my memory.

After many wanderings (mostly alone) in the Tarentaise, the Dauphiné, and the Trièves, I joined by appointment, early in September, two Oxford friends, the Rev. T. R. Terry and Mr. J. S. Mann. We rambled together through parts of Dauphiné and the Waldensian valleys, and ultimately found ourselves at midday on September 17 last at Paesana, the town near which the Po flows out into the Piedmontese plain. We had driven over from Torre di Luserna in the morning by a most picturesque road *viâ* Barge, and the same afternoon walked up in three hours to Crissolo. September is San Chiaffredo's month, and every Sunday in September is a grand festa at the Sanctuary. Hence we were accompanied during our walk by many pilgrims carrying baskets of provisions on their way to the holy place. The winding path was dotted all over with picturesque and gaily-clad groups, which gave an air of animation to the scene, though savouring just a little of the stage. The prettiest bit on the way is the glimpse of the white tower of the church of Oncino high up on the left. We were warmly welcomed at the Gallo by Pilatone and the energetic waiter. Two of us strolled up to the Sanctuary that evening, and found two booths established on the terrace opposite the church for the sale of San Chiaffredo medals and *articles de piété*. Next morning, Sunday, we all attended the high mass, the sight in the nave of the church being extremely

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Storici,' Saluzzo, 1865). It is mentioned in 1495 by Padre G. L. Vivaldo, of Mondovi, as having been made by Louis II. of Saluzzo; 'A qua (subterranea via) brevi intervallo distant tergemini lacus illi, quorum aquæ perfluunt ad amœnam planitiem illam quadrilateram, cujus ab ora orientali in æquor floridum a montanis appellatum decidunt, cataractam admirabilem altitudine, argenteo splendore fragoreque constituentes nec ulla unquam anni tempestate deficientes.' There seems here to be some confusion between the Lago di Prato Fiorito to the south, and the three lakes (one of which the Lago di Fiorenza) to the north of the Viso Mozzo. Simler ('De Alpibus,' p. 234) quotes from Paulus Jovius ('Historia Sui Temporis') a mention of the tunnel: 'Illic perpetuo specu perfossi montis in Salassos penetrari Jovius scribit,' a passage also interesting as possibly throwing light on some disputed points in classical geography, by suggesting a confusion between the Salassi and the inhabitants of Salutis or Saluzzo.

picturesque, the gay colours of the women's kerchiefs and dresses blending far better than could have been expected with the rather gaudy decorations of the church. In the afternoon Mann and I, with two local guides (Giovanni and Giuseppe Perotti) and a porter, crossed the Passo delle Sagnette, and slept at the new hut of the Turin section of the Italian Alpine Club above the Fontana di Sacripante, half an hour from the pass and  $5\frac{1}{2}$  easy walking from Crissolo. It had only just been finished, and we seem to have been the first party which slept there. It is perfectly watertight and fairly comfortable, but there were no blankets save those which we had taken the precaution of bringing up with us. The hut is placed on a rocky mound in the valley, and is approached by a circuitous path. The way might be much shortened by cutting a few steps in the rocky face immediately below it. The weather promised well, but next day, September 19, was doubtful. We achieved the ascent indeed, taking 4.40 to the top (including halts), which was not bad time, considering that there was an enormous quantity of snow on the rocks, and that my friend was not much accustomed to the ascent of high mountains; but of the view the less said the better, as it was snowing on the summit, and we did not make a long stay there. The Sacripante hut will undoubtedly become the principal starting-point for the Viso; it is easily accessible from both Crissolo and Castel Delfino, but as the accommodation at the former village is infinitely better, Crissolo will always remain the head-quarters for all Viso explorers. On our return to Crissolo we found that Terry had gone out to meet us, and when he turned up it appeared that, while we had been rounding the base of a hillock, he had been climbing along the ridge to the summit, whence he in vain tried to espy us. However, no harm was done, and he seemed to have spent a very agreeable time by himself, despite entire inability to converse with any one save in various dialects of the Teutonic tongue. Another day I took my friends to see the Rio Martino cavern, which we all enjoyed very much. It seemed to me more striking than ever. We slept on the night of the 22nd at the Albergo Alpino on the Piano del Re, and found it very cold, as the autumn had come in early. Next day we passed through the Traversette tunnel into France, finding some difficulty in effecting a passage, owing to a coating of ice on the floor, and the utter impossibility of lighting a torch of any kind, because of the very strong draught.

Such up to this time have been my explorations around

Monte Viso. To absolute novelty they can lay but small claim, but my description of the attractive expeditions to be made in the district may possibly tempt some members of the Club to approach the great peak, which they have seen on the horizon. On all sides it is immediately surrounded by desolate wastes of stones, rivalling the dreariest parts of Dauphiné; but the views from the various summits have a distinct character of their own, and present old friends under an unusual aspect. I am not sanguine enough to hope to draw many people away from the great hunting grounds of Chamonix, Zermatt, and the Oberland; but should any one feel disposed to think of a trip in these regions, I shall be most happy to supply privately any further information in my power. Personally, I do not feel as if I had even now more than a partial knowledge of this magnificent mountain mass, and next summer will see me in its midst again, in the hope that by constant wooing of the great peak an unclouded view (including the great inland sea) may be vouchsafed to one of its most ardent and persevering admirers and worshippers.

*The Ranges between the Viso and the Meidassa.*

	Old Italian Map	New Italian Map	French Map	Bossoli's Panorama from Sanctuary of S. Chiaffredo
1	Le Sedie Cadreghe	—	—	La Mano (3,080 m.)
2	Visolotto	Visolotto (3,353 and 3,346 m.)	Petit Mont Viso (3,343 m.)	Visolotto (3,336 m.)
3	—	Punta Gastaldi (3,269 m.)	—	Pics Gastaldi (3,120 m.)
4	—	—	Visoulet (3,030 m.)	—
5	—	(2,970, 2,925, 2,930 m.)	(2,942 m.)	—
6	Col de Coulaon o Colour del Poroo	Col del Colour del Poroo (3,020 m.)	—	Col del Porco (3,010 m.)
7	—	(2,921 m.)	—	—
8	Roccie Fourioun	Rocce Fourioun (3,103 m.)	—	R. Fourioun (3,090 m.)
9	—	(3,113 m.)	(3,112 m.)	Monte di Marte (3,100 m.)
10	—	(3,070 m.)	—	—
11	Col della Traversetta	Colle Traversette (2,950 m.)	Galerie souterraine and la Traversette (transposed by a strange error)	Col de la Traversette (2,995 m.)
12	Buco del Viso	Buco di Viso	—	Tunnel du Viso (2,950 m.)

	Old Italian Map	New Italian Map	French Map	Bossoli's Panorama from Sanctuary of S. Chiaffredo
13	—	—	(3,051 m.) (point where ridge turns abruptly to W.)	—
14	Monte Granero (3,105 m.) (Meidassa di Viso)	M. Granero (3,170 m.)	—	Médasse (3,122 m.) (so called at Crissolo)
15	—	M. Meidassa (3,105 m.)	—	—

Note that neither 14 nor 15 are on the frontier, but are E. of the point 3,051, and overhang the Val Pellice to the N. Bourcet's old map marks the Monte Viso, the Col de Coulaon and the Col de Viso (= the Traversette). Consult on the whole subject the excellent remarks of M. Guillemin ('Annuaire du C. A. F.' iv. 583-4). The peaks 3 or 4 are usually called Viso di Vallante, and really form a single mass.

## THE SANCTUARY OF SAN CHIAFFREDO.

BY DOUGLAS W. FRESHFIELD.

[THE following pages were written in 1878 as the introduction to a paper which is now superseded by Mr. Coolidge's subsequent ascents. The part of it referring to the Vaudois valleys may be published some day among 'Notes on Old Tracks.']

In a recent paper in which I gave some hints as to the exploration of the Maritime Alps—an exploration which has since been successfully carried on by Mr. Coolidge—I spoke of the glorious appearance of Monte Viso seen from among the walled and towered towns which cluster on the plain of Piedmont at the foot of the Western Alps, and I promised at another time to turn towards the mountain. This promise I now fulfil.

A branch line from the Cuneo Railway leads up in some 2½ hours from Turin to Saluzzo. I shall not attempt to describe in words of my own the approach to that town. The landscape has been drawn long ago in lines which bring before us now, as well as they did in the 14th century, its great features—the white mountain, and the rich town-studded plain. I cannot resist quoting Chaucer :—

Ther is at the west ende of Itaille,  
Doun at the root of Vesulus the colde,  
A lusty playn, abundaunt of vitaille,  
Wher many a tour & toun thou maist byholde  
That foundid were in tyme of fadres old,  
And many anothir delitable sight,  
And Saluces is this noble country hight.

Saluzzo, however, is not properly a mountain town, and we may pass on at once to Paesana, where for those who are following the Po, the