There is an enormous mass of ice to be melted, yet sooner or later the old grass will reappear and spread over the thin coating of bare soil, and though for some time after this the pasture will be poor, yet with a little labour, and the lapse of a few more years, the alp will once more serve as a summer grazing-ground for the Valais cattle, and the memory of the catastrophe be only a legend deepening the hold of the 'Mountain Gloom' on the inheritors of the 'Mountain Glory.'

## The Aiguille de Tronchey.

By the EDITOR.

(Read before the Alpine Club, May 4, 1897.)

WHEN the mysteries of battels were explained to a Freshman at Oxford, in my day, I remember that one piece of information usually vouchsafed was that fagots included cream. Let me hasten to inform my readers that the title 'The Aiguille de Tronchey' includes all the climbs that the weather allowed me to accomplish in 1896. 'All,' you will say to me; 'I know not what ye call all.' 'Is it ten, or twelve, or twenty?' Alas! no; 'tis three!

My first impulse, on sitting down to write this paper, was to make a sort of anthology of abuse, a catalogue, in fact, of expletives, suitable for firing off at intervals, and copy one or two chosen morsels in the middle of each page, with the certainty that they would come in naturally and meet—if sufficiently strong—with the approval of all mountaineers whose fortune led them to the Alps in 1896. But I gave it up, through sheer inability to find words adequate to express my feelings on the subject. Never before have I noticed such poverty in our native tongue; but I feel that in this failure I shall have the sympathy of you all.

We were attended by a bad omen at the very outset, for the bigger of our two horses lay down just as we were starting, smashed the shaft, and generally delighted himself; but when, after an hour's interval, as the driver was burrowing for wine in a wayside inn, he meditated a second edition my patience reached its limits. Just as he was tucking himself in with a languorous enjoyment I bestowed the stick upon him with such effect as to drive out of him the passion for acting as though he were a buffalo at large. Then the wind rose, the rain asserted its right to bully us, and we were

*Tempest Anderson, Photo.* *Swan Electric Engraving Co.*

AIGUILLE DE TRONCHEY FROM THE SLOPES OF MONT DE LA SAXE.

thoroughly drenched. Falls of rock lay thick on the road, our lamp was literally blown to pieces, and, after quite an eventful journey, which the ladies of the party supported with admirable patience, we accomplished the passage of the St. Bernard; and, after a due amount of drying at Aosta, where we were joined by my guides (François and Sylvain Pession, of Val Tournanche), ventured to Cogne. One little incident I should like to mention, as it is characteristic of travel in Italy as I have generally found it; the douaniers of St. Rhémy treated us with the most courteous consideration.

About 4 o'clock on the morning of August 10, when half-dressed, I was solemnly invited by François to walk as far as the balcony and inspect the weather. I did so, and said, rather to my own surprise as the words escaped me, 'Very good. Let us start.' Was then the prospect cheering? Nothing of the sort. Did I expect a fine day? Nothing of the kind. My determination was due partly to the fact that I thought I was expected to say, 'Let us go to bed again,' and partly to the recollection that on the previous morning the appearance of the weather was exactly the same, and yet in the afternoon I had persuaded myself that we might possibly have succeeded.

But why relate how we made a third-rate pass, albeit of over 10,000 ft. The flowers would have been glorious if it had been fine, and as the mountains were wholly new both to the guides and to myself, if only the sun had smiled on us we should have had a delightful day. Though I have never felt inclined to say, with Shelley, 'Pansies let my flowers be,' yet to-day, with the encumbering moisture of the snow upon them, they pleaded so pathetically for favour, that I joined the ever-increasing band of their admirers. As for the forget-me-nots, no blue that ever shone in heaven or earth—or even in the poet's dream—could surpass their loveliness. After leaving the Chalets of Arpisson, the view from which is famous, we struggled over our pass—the Col de Pila—in a paltry snowstorm, and descended on the Grauson side in wan waves of mist at a great pace. It may be quite true, as a philosopher reminded me not long ago, that—

> Patience and Perséverance
> Made a bishop of his reverence,

but all they did for us was to send us home peakless. And yet one sight I saw that noon was worth the discomfort of a dozen snowstorms. As the summits were wreathed in cloud, and the upper part of the Glacier de Grandcrou swathed

in grey mist, the torrent of the Valnontey suddenly appeared, as it were out of heaven, and fell from height to height in a most amazing fashion. The atmospheric effects, by some strange process, greatly exaggerated the steepness of the Valnontey. It was as though an extra stanza had been added to the 'Witch of Atlas.'

Though I had not to complain of the transformation of my bedroom into a Necropolis, as some vivacious humorists had hinted might happen to me, yet, as the old gentleman at the general store remarked, 'You cannot, Milor, remain at such a place as this in such weather.' So from Cogne we fled to Courmayeur, and on the way actually derived some benefit from the new snow. The Nomenon shot up through the mist with an audacity that delighted us; the majestic Grivole flung back at intervals her clinging raiment, and revealed to us the argent splendours of her northern ridge and E. face; and as for the Péteret, as ever and again a torn cloud streamed from his rugged head, he looked as though, with a little favour from the handicapper, he might compete with the Matterhorn. At Courmayeur, amid the Capuan allurements of the Royal, we gradually recovered our spirits.

On the afternoon of August 13, François and Sylvain Pession and I left Courmayeur with the intention of sleeping at the Triolet hut and attempting the ascent of the peak which lies between the Col du Piolet and the Col de Talèfre, and rejoices in the words 'No Information' in M. Kurtz's excellent 'Climbers' Guide.' If it be the fate of the sheep so often described as patient of wrong to play 'the aggrieved,' yet he can occasionally, when alarmed, play the aggressor with much effect. I remember to have heard a story of a boy, possibly of Numidian descent, though I cannot affirm it, who was asked to write a character of Jugurtha. He said: 'If left in peace Jugurtha is a lamb, but if roused he is a lion. The fault, therefore, is with those who rouse him.' So doubtless with the sheep whose business it is to get a living on the slopes below the Triolet glacier. The fault lay with us. We roused them, and in consequence they rushed ahead of us, sent down stones which caused us considerable danger, and compelled us to climb up by a route much more difficult than the ordinary one. They were obviously 'misonéistes,' and hated anything in the shape of a traveller.

I should imagine that in a summer like that of 1895 most of the slopes above the Triolet glacier would be raked by falling stones, but in 1896 the snow was piled so deeply in most

places that all such missiles were imprisoned. The glacier at first was fairly good, but as we ascended the snow grew gradually worse, though no crevasses worth speaking of troubled us. What did trouble me was that I could see no place where we could glissade with ease, or even with difficulty, on our return journey. As we drew near the actual foot of our peak the leader's work became more exacting, for here the snow was very soft, so Sylvain took François's place. With effort we made good our footing on the steep slope above the glacier, and when it was possible worked up the rocks. The snow was deep, and we often sunk in well above our knees—not to say armpits—when passing from snow to rock or from rock to snow.

Here and there we met with steep narrow ridges of snow, and Pession, who had resumed the lead, was very careful to make certain of going up the exact centre of them, as it would have taken very little to start an avalanche—in fact, we saw several small ones, and I heard Pession mutter his dissatisfaction. But notwithstanding that the work was unpleasant nothing untoward took place, and we eventually reached the summit ridge. There are four little points to the peak, the one nearest the Col du Piolet being the lowest, and we were in some doubt as to which was the highest. The men pronounced for the second point counting from the Col de Talèfre (the third from the Col du Piolet). I was only too glad to get a decision, and offered no criticism. It is possible that others may do so.

We did not build a cairn, but at Pession's suggestion I left a sixpence in a crack of the topmost rock. The way had been long, though the wind had not been cold; nay, the air had been warm, but on the top the gusts were keen. Yet I was content to remain there for the sake of the glorious view.

A world of mountains revealed themselves to us. Their number was endless, their splendour ineffable, and their names well known—or at any rate should be so—to all climbers. And as—as I think has been observed before—it is difficult to add a charm to an oft-told tale, you will expect from me a decent reticence on this point. The guides were much interested, as this was their first visit to this part of the chain.

In the descent, which was laborious, we kept during the latter portion more towards the Col du Piolet than in the ascent, a plunge into snow up to one's armpits being no uncommon interlude. An occasional ejaculation of Pession's reminded me of the birthday-book series of exhor-

tations which I used to listen to with delight of old:—'Place well your feet.' 'Drive in your heels.' 'Derange not the step.' 'Stand quite upright.' 'Good, very good.' I should say that his choice of route impressed me much. No one without a thorough knowledge of snow work would have ventured to leave the rocks where we did and take to such steep snow; for the snow next the rocks was rotten, and it was not till we had taken some steps that it inspired any confidence.

On arriving at the Bergschrund Sylvain sat down and shot across. I did the same, and went into the snow so deeply that my struggles almost dragged Pession over the chasm prematurely. Then we felt that all was well, after a little time rejoined our morning's route, and strolled into the hut, I being easily last, somewhere about 6 o'clock. I may here mention that we found so many butterflies on the mountain that I thought of calling it the Pointe des Papillons, but the comparative insignificance of the peak turned the scale in favour of the less pretentious name.

I was aroused about 11 o'clock to find Pession suffering from snow-blindness, and though he made light of it I am afraid he suffered a good deal. It was only after the application of raw veal on the morrow that he recovered. In the morning the valley was full of clouds, and we returned to Courmayeur. On the way we passed many Martagon lilies, and the finest *Gentiana purpurea* I ever saw.

On our way up the Val Ferret I had been much attracted—'envasselled,' if I may be allowed a seventeenth-century word—by a beautiful peak in the ridge which runs from the Grandes Jorasses to the Aiguille de l'Evêque, and the guides had carefully examined it at my request. It is not marked on M. Kurtz's new map, but appears anonymously in the 'Climbers' Guide' with a height of 11,483 ft.* Its obvious name from the glacier on its west and the chalet below was the Aiguille de Tronchey. The more I thought of it, the more I desired to climb it.

But though the peak delighted me and the guides were keen to tackle it, I did but snatch a fearful joy till we were actually on our way up it. 'Not Lancelot nor another' was to be favoured. It was after all to be ours.

The only question was the weather. On August 18 that was propitious, so we started for the new peak under the most gracious influences, for the ladies of my party accompanied

* Taken from Mieulet's map.

us for some distance. We had tea among the pine-trees by the torrent, and the sun shone and the air was soft and the water murmured pleasantly, as though such things as snow-storms had retired from business altogether.

The ladies were so far Russophile as to accept my proffered slices of lemon, and fanned by the tea's gentle stimulus we discussed such obviously natural topics as the Col du Géant, which the ladies had visited on the previous day, as well as climbing in general, and 'furens quid femina possit' in particular. The true translation of these words I only discovered some time afterwards, when I learnt that a lady had had her bicycle carried by two porters over the Col du Géant. To what will not the accursed love of 'records' drive us?

At last Pession, perhaps a-weary of so frivolous a discussion, suggested that it was still some distance to our resting-place for the night, so we said good-bye and moved on lazily to La Vachey. The herdsman was a kindly host and well pleased to entertain us. He pointed out to us a small flock of sheep on the wild slopes of the Mont Gruetta. They are driven there for a sojourn of two or three months, during which time they must, as the Yorkshire phrase runs, 'fend for themselves.' But when he learnt our errand from the guides he offered one more illustration of the lines, if I may adapt Mr. Coventry Patmore—

> How strange a thing a climber seems
> To animals that do not climb.

He took no interest in the sparkling spire—it is not, so far as I remember, visible from La Vachey—that was to be the goal of our enterprise. But he knew the signs of the weather, as men who have been much alone with Nature so often do. He warned us that an evil time would shortly be upon us. Nor was he deceived. The guides reposed on hay. I had the comfort of a clean though rough bed in the same barn, and slept well, the sound of the goat-tinkled bell notwithstanding.

A start was made at 2.40 A.M. with two folding lanterns. We went astray a little in the flat marshy ground on the right bank of the torrent, scrambled through the forest and up the loose stones of a steep slope, occasionally a torrent bed, above it. At 4.48 we halted to wait for the light. At 5.57 we reached the edge of the snow, and went on, after a meal, at 6.32. We kept to the east of the Glacier de Tronchey, the ice of which we never touched at all; crossed a stream whose volume we were to find much increased on our descent;

got up the steep rocks on the right of it, and at 7.30 put on the rope. We went on at 7.43, crossed the little stream several times—as far as my recollection serves—reached a sheltered place at 9.3, and after a slight refection continued the ascent at 9.47.

I much regret that I am not able to describe our climb stride by stride, handhold by handhold. The fact is that I am never sufficiently ready with my pocket-book. There is always something more attractive to make one forget the taking of notes. Now a well-marked rock that involves the problem When shall we get to it? now a glimpse of the torrent flashing among the pine-trees far below; now the rosy phantom of a cloud; now tiny but richly coloured blossoms,

Like bright eyes of familiar friends,

glowing softly in their crevice homes. But I forget; this is only in the Graians. It is not that I did not enjoy it; for though one's most thrilling memories are probably—in my case certainly—associated with steep ice-slopes, yet for continuous enjoyment what can beat a new route up steep rocks? The rocks *were* steep, the incidents of our ascent fairly varied, the leading of the guides admirable, and my satisfaction infinite, and yet I cannot describe the climb in detail. One detail, however, I still recall—a frequent outcry on my part for halts. I was reduced to ask 'Where are now the chamois?' (we had seen two—a perfect godsend), or to call attention to the view (oh, ancient but oft-recurring subterfuge!), or even to be so superfluous as to demand the time of the day.

By-and-by we got to very steep but very soft snow. Pession's legs are long, and his reach is amazing. Whether he heard me groan louder than usual as I struggled to get my leg out of the depths of one step into the abyss of the next so far above, I do not know, but he suddenly looked down and inquired quite effusively, 'Are the steps to your mind?' 'Well,' said I, 'they are a long way apart.' 'That's to prevent their being crunched out,' he answered; and then he regarded me with something of the school captain's glance when he superintends the little boys' football and says to a novice, who would fain show the importance his opinion carries at home, 'Shut up jawing, and get into the scrimmage.'

At last, after passing some rocks, we reached the beautiful snow ridge which curves round northwards to the summit. Pession advanced carefully, mindful of the dangers of a latent

cornice, peered over and saw all was well, while I held the rope tight. Sylvain and I followed, and at 12.4 we reached the top. A good shove from Pession placed my hands on the highest rock. I descended—on his head, by the way—and we sat down to enjoy our triumph. Now, too, we were in a position to appreciate the truth of an anonymous poet's words :—

If you would know the mountain-peak,
  How steep, how grim, how tower-like,
The green vale at its foot you seek,
  With meads and forests bower-like :
It follows that to know the vale,
  How soft it smiles, how sweetly,
The lordly mountain you must scale,
  And sweep the vale completely.

We had left the provisions below, and had brought so little wine to free our souls from human trammels that I was enticed into moralising—a crime which a hard climb after the excitement of success is over has occasionally a tendency to encourage. Can it be a form of self-satisfaction? Very likely. But do we not all at such times experience a strange, perhaps an exaggerated, sensation of sympathy for the peasants whose dwellings we see so far below us, when, as sometimes happens, our summit gives us not only the strong mountains and the eternal snows, but the village with its storm-battered roofs, softened by the twinkling sunshine, or the weather-worn hamlet with its fringe of pines? What is it which causes the stress of feeling that moves us so strongly? Not, I think, our joy in their tiny cornfields or protecting forests, or the matchless green of their little meadows, that not in vain desire the water-brooks, but that thrill of feeling born of sympathy for those who have toiled much and suffered much—that appreciation of the pathos of a life of struggle which Vergil would have given us in a 'lonely word.'

After all, the Aiguille de Tronchey is but a secondary peak, though I believe it to be considerably higher than the estimate given in the 'Climbers' Guide.' The guides are, I may add, of the same opinion. Did I then repent the toil spent in climbing it? Emphatically no ; for it was new ; and the new peak, however inferior in mountain glory, after all supplies the doubt of eventual success, the possibility of adventure which no climb by a well-known route can provide. Not that I would be thought to depreciate the old peak. Nay! every fresh ascent adds to one's affection for it, but the satis-

faction derived is altogether different in character from that one enjoys on a new peak. We love not Juliet less when we read of Desdemona, but,

> As one lamp lights another, nor grows less,

so we increase the number of peaks we know without lessening our affection for the peaks we have known.

I was once asked by a curious and fairly well-informed Italian miner whether a certain well-known English public man was married. 'Yes,' I replied, 'he has just wedded a lady who is very handsome and very rich.' 'Ah!' he rejoined, 'you cannot expect more than that from any woman.' Well, what can you expect more from a virgin peak than that she shall be very beautiful and very rich—in views; and of course I need not say difficult to conquer, as no doubt the bride above referred to proved herself to be.

We had glorious views, but a certain awe was upon us, for who can gaze at close quarters on the precipices of the Grandes Jorasses unabashed? Nor was it the sheer cliffs only which amazed us. Down them fell avalanches, many in number, hissing and hurrying—like Etarre's hand, small but cruel. I do not know that I have ever seen in the Alps a sight that impressed me more. Those terrible walls,

> In craggy nakedness sublime,
> What hand or heart shall dare to climb?

I will not venture to say, whatever I may think, that they are absolutely impossible; but assuredly he who attacks them must make up his mind to say with Mezentius—

> Nullum in caede nefas; nec sic ad proelia veni.

We departed at 12.50, after leaving our names in a bottle; and, going as hard as we could, reached the sheltered place, where we had a meal at 2.11. I went my hardest, for the men were afraid that the snow might give under us, or the stones, like discontented guests, leave early. Certainly speed was the safest policy, though no stones as a fact molested us. If the stones were making the special effort so fashionable nowadays, at any rate in advertisements, the descent would be distinctly exciting.

The little torrent which we crossed several times served as a sort of refrain to our climb. In the morning he had been fast bound in ice, but had now freed himself and poured over the sheer rock face in quite an imposing little cascade. But though the spray played freely on my shoulders, I waited as patiently as Xanthippe's Socrates till Pession had descended

to, shall I say, 'mid on,' and then escaped to the 'long field,' where Sylvain, who was doubtless revelling in the remark of his fellow-countryman 'Suave mari magno,' was laughingly awaiting me.

At 4.50 we left the moraine for the grass, and, quitting it at 5.12, did not reach the Val Ferret road till 6.37, for we made up for our hurry above by taking it easy. Moreover the bilberries were plentiful, and dead ripe. The guides went to La Vachey for our baggage, and I started across the marsh, where I found *Menyanthes trifoliata* in abundance. I sat down contentedly on a fence by the torrent and listened, on the confines of sleep, to its brawling. 'Be thankful for a very good climb' was about the English of it.

Then the guides came up, and all went well till we reached the church of Courmayeur. Here rain began; but what cared we? As I entered the Royal I heard the cheerful buzz of after-dinner conversation, but escaped to my room unespied, and, regarmented, supped in luxury. There was a ball that night. They of the Royal had invited them of the Angel, and they (the Angels, I mean) did not go home till morning. But sleep was not therefore murdered, for Morpheus, the only god, so far as my observation goes, that writers in this journal habitually mention, perhaps because they have so much need of him—Morpheus was too strong for Terpsichore's flute, violin, bassoon. I slept in peace.

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## Some Rock Climbs in Norway in 1896.

By H. C. BOWEN.

THE summer of 1896 was a remarkable one in many ways; not the least noteworthy feature was the contrast between the weather in Norway and the Alps. While in the latter, from all accounts, the three climbing months were one long, dreary succession of cloudy skies, and almost uninterrupted snow and rain, in Norway we were basking in sunshine, at any rate during August and the first half of September, with but one serious break of six days, just at the end of the former month.

C. W. Patchell and I reached Turtegrö, that charming little mountain inn, some 4 hrs. above Skjolden, at the head of the Sogne Fjord, on August 3. Johannes Vigdal had joined us *en route* at his native village, Solvorn, so that our party was complete. We had two preliminary expeditions, one up the middle Rüenstind by the E. face, which we fondly