

the mountains, with the silence of the snowfields around us and the waterfalls faintly calling from the valleys beneath, in the solemn presence of Nature.

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FIRST ASCENT OF THE 'PUNTA JOLANDA' OF THE  
DAMES ANGLAISES (3,604 m.).

By H.R.H. THE DUKE OF THE ABRUZZI.

THE ridge running from the Aiguille Blanche to the Aiguille Noire de Pétéret forms two needle points in its most sunken part. The second point is subdivided at the top into four pinnacles, three of which are separated by not very deep gaps, and situated on a line with the ridge, whereas the fourth, which is separated from the rest by a deeper gap, lies on the side overlooking the Brenva Glacier. The part of the mountain including all these peaks is called 'Dames Anglaises,' its highest summit being the second pinnacle, starting from the Aiguille Noire.

The ascent, considered to be impossible and full of danger by the famous guide, Emile Rey, was attempted in August 1899 by Messrs. Adolf Hess and Oscar Leitz, members of the Italian Alpine Club, accompanied by the guide Lorenzo Croux. They encamped, the first time, on the rock shooting out abruptly near the Brenva Glacier, at the foot of the Dames, and returning on the side sloping down from them to the said glacier. They did not succeed in attaining the top, and stopped within 40 m. below. Their ascent was made on the side overlooking the Brenva Glacier as far as the pass between the Aiguille Noire and the Dames; then in the last portion they turned round to the side overlooking the Fresnay Glacier.

Happening to be this year at the Rifugio Torino, on the Col du Géant, with the said guide, Messrs. Hess and Leitz's attempt was spoken of, and Croux, replying to my queries, declared that there was no danger of stone avalanches, and that it would be safe to bivouac, before ascending, on the same spot where Messrs. Hess and Leitz had slept on their return. The uncertain weather and the new snow on the high mountains prevented our undertaking other ascents, and I, feeling much attracted towards these pointed summits, and reassured by Croux's reply, determined to attack them.

On August 6 last I set out with four guides and five porters. The night was very clear, without wind. Twenty nailed boots sounded on the stones of Courmayeur, and we

went up the Veni Valley to the foot of the Brenva Glacier in order to ascend it on its right side.

We left the dark valley far below, while on the peak the moon waned slowly, heralding the growing light of dawn.

First Mont Blanc, then one by one other summits, received light from the rising sun, the rays of which, happily, did not keep us company during our toilsome march on the moraine. At half-past 7 we halted to take a light breakfast at a height of 2,350 m. above sea-level. The weather began slowly to break up. The wind blew from the N.W. (from the top of Mont Blanc down towards the plain); the sky, clear a moment before, became covered with clouds.

We put on the rope, and went down in double file on to the Brenva Glacier, which we found in sufficiently good condition to permit us to cross it rapidly and then approach, at 10 o'clock, the spur which comes down direct from the Dames Anglaises to the glacier. In order to reach this spur we had to cross a gully continually swept by stones which, owing to the ice thawing, were loosened from a snow-flat lying at the foot of the Dames Anglaises and the Aiguille Blanche. The track to be crossed was only 50 m. in width, but the declivity being rather steep, it was necessary to cut steps, and thus our rather numerous party was exposed to the falling stones for a considerable time. The guides took turns at cutting the steps, much attention being paid to the falling stones, some of which could be seen coming down, and consequently avoided, whilst others were heard only. We crossed this rather unpleasant spot in half an hour, and halting by the rock-side we waited until our porters had come the same way.

We then went over easy rocks to the place where Messrs. Hess and Leitz first encamped, 2,650 metres above sea-level, reaching that spot at 10.30. We walked over a small snow-bed to the foot of the spur descending from the Dames. We then began climbing the rocks obliquely towards the middle of the mountain side; at 1.30 we arrived at the second bivouac of the aforesaid gentlemen. The rocks were not difficult for anyone unburdened; it was, however, a rather hard task for the porters, who in two places had to be aided by extra ropes. Then, as our party was numerous and the rocks rather friable, we had to be very careful to avoid hurting one another by dislodging stones.

The place where we had decided to spend the night was a comfortable and safe one. It was situated at a height of 2,900 metres above sea-level, near a sort of wide couloir

where water was to be found. We loosened the stones and built with them a small wall, thus obtaining with little labour a place where we could lie down, all five, side by side. The sun warmed us a little longer, then it disappeared behind the high summit of the Aiguille Noire. We sent back our porters to Courmayeur, and immediately set about preparing our dinner, which, thanks to our 'Primus' cooking-stove, was quickly ready. At 4 o'clock we lay down in our sacks to avoid the cold and made preparations for sleeping. I slid into a double camel-hair bag stuffed with feathers, but, though I felt quite warm, could not sleep. Near me were the brave guides of Alaska and the Pole. From that spot my thoughts, undisturbed by human activity, flew away to Saint Elias and Teplitz Bay, to the joy felt in setting my foot on the top of the Alaska peak, to the still deeper joy of seeing a part of those men returning from the Polar packs. I was filled indeed with admiration and gratitude for their readiness to follow me and face hardships and dangers in order to unfurl our flag on high.

At 9 o'clock we lit a signal fire, and when it went out another light responded from the depth of the valley. At Courmayeur they had seen our signal, and returned our salute. We again lay down to sleep after a short interruption, and did not awaken until the violent downfall of 'séracs,' deeply booming in the valley, aroused us. Each time that we peeped out the aspect of the place was changed. Now the moon lit the large Brenva Glacier, and the rocky flank of the Aiguille Noire looked as if it would fall upon us; then, a thick mist surrounding us, we saw nothing more and seemed to be suspended in space. The wind continued to blow from the N.W., leaving us in much uncertainty as to the morrow's weather.

At 5 o'clock in the morning our small encampment, the seat of peace for so many hours, was broken up. We rose, gathered together our sacks, put on our boots, took some soup, and at 6 o'clock were ready to start. Croux took the lead, followed by Savoie and Petigax; then came I and Fenoillet, all connected together by the same rope. We commenced climbing the rocky side, crossing the couloir on our left, and going up the ridge also at the left of the same. We followed the ridge as far as the snow-bed below the Dames Anglaises, on the right of the pass between them and the Aiguille Noire. The rocks were easily accessible and offered good holds. Arriving here we had to decide whether it was better to follow Messrs. Hess and Leitz's route by going to

the Fresnay Glacier side, or, instead, to attempt the ascent from the side of the Brenva Glacier. In the former case, it was known that up to a certain point it could be done, but afterwards the ascent would have been very doubtful. On the other hand, no attempt had ever been made on the Brenva side. A gully about 100 metres in length, which we could clearly see from the snow-bed, though difficult, did not seem impossible, and led to the gap between the highest pinnacle and that next the Aiguille Noire. It was about 8.30; we should have plenty of time to try other routes should the gully prove impassable.

The first third portion of the gully was comparatively easy; afterwards we found masses of rocks, which left a narrow passage between them and the mountain side. We could not go through this passage owing to the ice coating the rocks. It was then necessary to surmount these masses by passing out of them. A vertical rock-wall about 20 m. high stood before us, and to begin with it only offered one cleft as a means of climbing up. To reach the cleft we had to creep under a rocky mass, mounting one on another's shoulders. Croux led the ascent, after having attentively examined the obstacle. An iron spike driven into the cleft offered him a foothold when he had left his companion's shoulders. By slow, toilsome, and stubborn efforts he managed to reach a place of safety. We were hidden under the rocks to avoid the falling stones, and could not see him as he accomplished that difficult climb; our anxiety was relieved when we heard his call from above. Savoie followed next; then the sacks were taken up and my turn came. At the beginning the holds are so few that the leading guide must be a very able climber; in fact, the climbing may be compared to that in Mummery's chimney on the Grépon.

From the top of this pass the higher pinnacle could have been turned in order to reach the gap (between it and the pinnacle situated to the N.W.). The ascent of this pinnacle seemed easy enough. We set down the sacks, taking only the ropes and iron spikes, and continued to mount, keeping constantly within the couloir. Another difficulty we met with in a sort of narrow gangway leaning inwards, that could only be passed by the three guides mounting one on another's shoulders. Croux could only reach a hold by placing his feet on Savoie's head. This difficulty overcome, the gap was mastered.

Two persons only could remain. To the W. we saw the Miage Glacier and the Innominata group. Being no longer

protected by the mountain side, we now began to feel the N.W. wind still blowing. It was 11.30. We had already surpassed the height reached by Messrs. Hess and Leitz's party, and we were within a few metres of the coveted summit.

From the gap to the top the rocks offered no hold, and were very steep. A stone jammed into a split in the rock allowed us to fix a rope, and with this aid Croux could mount up to a point 10 m. above the gap. Overtaken by Savoie, Croux attempted in vain to advance further. The last point of the pinnacle was not only smooth, but also overhanging. By means of stakes thrust into a cleft he succeeded in approaching 5 m. or 6 m. nearer the summit. There he stood about 2 hrs., grasping a stake with one of his hands and trying to throw a rope over the summit. The stones, if sent alone, went over it, but, when tied to a thin cord, the means necessary for afterwards sending a thicker rope could not be thrown over the summit, owing to the weight of the cord and the strong wind. Before starting from Courmayeur Dr. Claude Wilson had kindly given me a small copper ball, to be used for sending over the cord; unfortunately, at the second attempt the ball parted from the cord and fell to the Brenva Glacier. I had also a few rockets, by the aid of which the sending of the cord had been tried the previous evening at Courmayeur. We had to fasten to the rocket both the cord and some other weight, to cause the end of the cord to come down (after passing over the summit) within our reach. But our attempt, which had proved successful the preceding evening at the Courmayeur Hotel by simply using the cord, failed here. The weight of the stone prevented the darting of the rocket, which, hitting against the rock, came down, and exploded just in front of Croux and Petigax. By repeating the attempt a serious accident might have happened, as the position of the guides was hardly safe, so I preferred to give it up. The rock overhung the point reached by Croux, and as the wind blew unfavourably, even if the rocket had shot off right, it could but have gone up vertically, and the wind would have borne the cord far away. All hopes of continuing the ascent being given up, we set up a stone-man on the spot reached by Croux, and prepared to attempt the conquest of the pinnacle to the south-west, which is the second in height of the whole group.

The rocky side descending from the latter to the gap was perpendicular, with no holds. However, Croux from the place reached on the higher pinnacle succeeded in throwing a rope

which helped him to pass the first part of the side. The rocks being then more accessible, he could easily gain the summit, which was also reached a few minutes after (about half-past two) by Savoie and myself.

We stood at the same height reached by Croux on the other peak, that is, at a glance, 5 or 6 mètres below its summit. From this side it was impossible to attain it without the aid of a rope. The lateral distance was about 10 mètres, and from the summit where we stood we could have more successfully attempted to throw a rope over the higher pinnacle than from the spot reached by Croux, and thus our ascent would have been facilitated over its overhanging portion. On further examination, however, our hopes disappeared, owing to the uncertain direction that the rockets would have taken and to the narrowness of the higher pinnacle. We had thus to finally give up the loftiest peak and to satisfy ourselves, unwillingly, with having attained the second summit of the group, which I baptized 'Jolanda Peak.'

Owing to the continuance of the cool wind from the north-west and to the threatening appearance of the weather I had soon to descend from the conquered summit, after leaving there a handkerchief in memory of our ascent.

From the gap we continued to descend rapidly to the spot where we had left our sacks. Here we partook of a light lunch, of which we felt very much in need, as we had fasted since 5 A.M. Much time was lost owing to the fact that the difficulties of the route compelled us to move one at a time. We here left a rope, and the rain and sleet driving us hard, we came down rapidly, arriving at about half-past seven at the encampment we had left in the morning.

In the last portion of the descent we slightly varied our route by keeping no longer to the large couloir, but on the right side of the ridge. Thus we gained no little time and found easier rocks. We spent a cheerful evening, in spite of the rather unfavourable weather and of the fact that the day's rain had moistened our sacks.

Next morning at six o'clock we started for Courmayeur. In crossing the couloir, before descending to the Brenva Glacier, the falling stones caused us a little emotion, by compelling us to take shelter on one side. The glacier once attained, we met the porters coming to take our baggage back to Courmayeur, which we reached at noon.

The ascent of 'Jolanda Peak' is not perilous provided the couloir immediately above the Brenva Glacier be avoided, for there stones might at any time hit climbers. The peak itself

is very amusing, and offers a few hours of ticklish gymnastics to those who are fond of scaling steep rock. The rock is broken, but the holds are good. It is, however, necessary that at least one of the guides should be a good climber, and that, to attempt attaining the higher pinnacle, the party should be composed of not less than four persons, two of whom would have to grasp from one side of the pinnacle the rope to be thrown from the other side. Were the wind propitious, perhaps a rope could be thrown by hand from the place reached by Croux; in our case only about two or three score centimètres prevented the stones sent by hand from passing over. In the event of a renewal of the attempt I would recommend the use of a seal gun. With this weapon a sufficient weight might be sent from the pinnacle that we ascended over the higher one, and the rope be thus brought within reach. Could this be done I believe success would be assured, in the event of the guides' agility and acrobatic resources again failing.

#### EARLY SUMMER IN THE GRISONS.

By FREDERICK GARDINER.

THE mountaineering season of 1901, taking it as a whole, was, in point of weather, one of the most unsettled and variable of recent years, for, excepting about ten days in July and a similar period towards the end of August, there was really no consecutive fine weather. As I spent June, July, and August in active mountaineering I had, in consequence, a long uphill battle with the elements almost throughout. My wife, the guides Rudolf and Peter Almer, and myself arrived at Thusis on June 6, and next day we drove up to Splügen, from which point I resumed my progress eastwards, which had been interrupted in 1892 by the sad news of the total destruction of Christian Almer's (Sohn) home at Grindelwald in the great fire, and which necessitated his immediate return, thereby breaking up Mr. Coolidge's plans and my own for that season. As is my frequent experience in early June, I found the higher Alpine villages ablaze with flowers, and a hearty welcome from every one we came in contact with, who were delighted to see such early swallows of the all too short mountaineering season. My custom before starting for the mountains each year is to carefully consider my programme for the season's work, allotting certain time and dates to the places, peaks, and