

If it be granted that the object of mountaineering is pleasure, the present chronicler at least has his answer ready. Three days later the same party was taken up the Little Dru. That has been called the finest rock-climb in the Alps. It was certainly the finest that we had ever done; it was entirely successful and—except for the inconvenience caused by Joseph Simond (on the plea of economising weight in the sack which we carried throughout!) taking no provisions for the actual peak but a little dry bread—thoroughly enjoyable. Yet neither of us has any doubt that we found more real pleasure in our twenty hours on that third-rate peak the Aiguille de Tacul.

THROUGH THE TARENDAISE AND BEYOND.

BY WM. ANDERTON BRIGG.

NAMES, as Mr. Shandy observed, have more importance than is usually credited, and I must confess, for my own part, that peaks, like ladies, lose nothing by having a pretty one. And so when, in 1899, I drove up the valley of the Arc from Modane to Bessans, and afterwards when looking westward from the summit of the Levanna, the names rather than the looks of the Tarentaise and Maurienne peaks—Dent Parrachée, Granta Parei, Tsanteleina, the Great Glaciers of the Vanoise, and the rest—wove a spell which only a nearer and early acquaintance could break.

And though my holiday in 1900 was spent in far off Tirol, where the tourist, like the outlaws in Arden Forest, finds ‘sermons on stones and good in everything,’ including mountain huts, I determined in 1901 to go back to my French loves, and accordingly sketched out a three weeks’ trip in the South-Western Alps striking into Savoy at Modane and emerging by peak and col at Chamonix. There was only one fixed point—Courmayeur (where all good climbers hope to go) and one ‘general idea’—not to sleep twice in the same bed.

After this it is perhaps unnecessary to add that we (I mean Frank Ellis, my brother, and myself) are humble but convinced disciples of our President’s ‘excentric gospel,’ and what follows may be taken as an unauthorised but parallel version of chapter iv. of his ‘Alps from End to End.’

We reached Chambéry on August 24, 1901, by the morning train from Paris, and not relishing the idea of a night in a chalet after one in the train, broke the journey there and spent a pleasant day in visiting the monastery of the Grande

Chartreuse. This can be done in ten hours by taking train to St. Bérón, steam tram to St. Laurent, and diligence forward, and is worth doing.

Next morning (August 25) we sent our heavy luggage over the Little St. Bernard to Courmayeur, and went by train ourselves to Modane, putting up at the Hôtel International, a sufficiently comfortable 'family and commercial' hostelry. Modane, though of some military importance by reason of the forts which guard the Mont Cenis Tunnel, is not likely to become tourist-ridden in the near future, and its wide and wind-swept street, really a part of the Mont Cenis road, and its third-rate shops offer few attractions. But the drive up to Lanslebourg, where the Mont Cenis road begins to climb over into Italy, is well worth taking, and the Esseillon forts, though now obsolete, fulfil all one's boyhood's ideas of what forts should look like.

By way of a training walk we decided to climb the Dent Parrachée, a peak whose fine outline and glistening cornice of snow, as seen from Lanslebourg, had stuck in my memory since my previous visit. So after lunch we drove up to Aussois, a small village on the north side of the valley above Modane, crossing the river by the iron bridge at Modane Ville (the old town) and passing on the way the fine waterfall of St. Benoît and the Esseillon forts, which latter seemed quite deserted, although the valley was full of Alpine troops with their neat uniforms of blue serge tunics and puttees. The good people of Aussois were standing about the village fountain in Sabbath idleness and seemed glad to have some one to look at. Our inquiries for the best guide were easily answered, as there is only one, Antoine Damevin by name, a burly, good-looking gentleman of forty, with a fine velveteen coat (in which I regret to say he afterwards burnt a large hole). He had just come in from one excursion, but was quite ready for another; so after making some tea at the village inn, kept by his father * (Ellis has strong views on the tea question), we set off for the Plan Sec chalets, which Damevin recommended as being 'nearer and more commodious' (as the Highways Act has it) than the Fournache chalets, recommended by the new 'Ball'.

We had a pleasant two hours' walk through woods and pastures, which lost none of their beauty by the prospect of a mule laden with our sacks in the foreground, and reached

* Damevin père has just built a new three-storeyed hotel (the 'Soleil') in the village, which was to be ready in 1902 and should render it unnecessary to sleep out for the Dent Parrachée.



Photo by F. N. Ellis.]

DENT PARRACHÉE FROM THE DÔME DE CHASSEFORÊT.

[Swan Electric Engraving Co.]

the chalets as the evening was drawing in for rain. The one room was pretty full of natives, but there was a good fire and a warm welcome, and after supper, of which the mainstay was pea soup made from one of those twopenny tins which no climber should be without,* we climbed painfully up a high plank partition wall and tumbled over at the top into the hay, where we spent a warm and odorous night in the company of cowherds, grasshoppers, moths, and other 'lepidoptera,' the women and children sharing the beds in the room down below.

We waited next morning (August 26) for the weather to mend and did not get away until 7 o'clock, and, as we reached the summit before noon, the climb is evidently not of a prolonged or arduous character. The route leads by a wild glen and a couloir of snow and scree to a rough rock staircase and culminates in a broad snow ridge, without one really difficult step all the way. The weather, however, got steadily worse, and for the last two hours it blew hard and snowed harder, and, as the poet has it—

Viewing the mist we missed the view.

Our only consolation was a good glissade down the snow and scree in the couloir, and, as it rained heavily most of the way down from Aussois to Modane (about six miles), we have no very sunny memories of the Dent Parrachée.†

Next day (August 27) was, like most 'off days,' gloriously fine, though the mist still hung about the higher summits, and we rested on the hard seats of the diligence between Modane and Termignon, to which we drove ostensibly for a view of our peak, but in fact for a birthday lunch at the comfortable Hôtel Lion d'Or.

We left Modane without regret next morning (August 28)

* To be had at the Military Equipments, &c., Co., Waterloo Place, W., and probably elsewhere.

† Aussois to the Plan Sec chalets, 2 hrs.; mule path all the way. From chalets ascend slope behind house, following the brook to the 'Wasserleitung,' which follow till it is carried round a rock face; strike up glen to right anywhere passing between rock on left and new fallen rocks on right and make for couloir to left of the peak (which stands at the head of the glen): 1½ hr. up easy snow slopes and scree to the Col de l'Arpont (which leads to the Arpont glacier); 1½ hr. along the broad broken ridge of rocks to right, and final snow slope to summit (1 hr. 10 min.). I may add that these and any subsequent times I may give are record times—for slowness.

at 3 A.M., intending to cross the watershed between the Arc and the Isère by the Col des Chavières to Pralognan in the Tarentaise, a name in strictness confined to the valleys drained by the Isère, including that of the Doron, in which Pralognan stands. After crossing the N. side of the Arc we toiled up the steep glen above Modane to the Chalets de Polset, noting on the way the junction of the carboniferous with the newer secondary rock strata, which here lie (to quote the geologists) as 'unconformably' as rival politicians, and the little fort of La Sappey, rising above the pine woods, with its guns trained on the Tunnel's mouth. The weather was rapidly 'worsening,' and though we smiled at an old man who Excelsior-wise advised us not to try the pass, we had to take shelter very soon in a chalet where the 'patron' was sharing his breakfast with a most dilapidated dog. He brings his sheep there in summer all the way from Arles, in Provence (about 240 miles), for the sake of the pasturage, and his bedroom was full of great copper sheep bells with bone and leather clappers, which they bring from home and hang on to broad wooden collars fashioned with a penknife during their summer stay. I persuaded his shepherd lad, whom we met higher up, to part with his best pair for a sovereign, but only with difficulty, as he clearly felt that without them the home-going would be shorn of its most attractive feature. He declined altogether to sell them singly, as they are 'tuned' in pairs. Their sonorous clanking as we walked along afforded Antoine much innocent amusement during the rest of the day.

The rain ceased after a while and we pounded steadily up the glen, which grew ever wilder and more barren, with the mountain tops in a 'smother' of mist in front and gloomy cliffs and foaming torrents on our left hand; until with many halts we reached the Col at noon. Looking back to the S. the Grand Planâtre (a peak named by the guide but not mentioned in 'Ball'), the Crête des Sarrasins, Mont Thabor, and other high-sounding peaks were comparatively clear, but the Pointe de l'Echelle, on our immediate right, a huge, ungainly mass of rock, was hoary with scudding snow showers, and the Aiguilles de Pélet and de Polset, fine little snow peaks which we had thought of climbing (in spite of their unattractive names), hardly deigned to show themselves at all. There was nothing, therefore, to keep us from our dinner at Pralognan, and plunging down soft shale and slushy snow we hurried down the Doron valley in ever-increasing rain, seeing little of the peaks on either side, one of which, though devoid of snow



Photo by F. N. Ellis.]

GRANDE CASSE FROM NEAR PRALOGNAN.

[Swan Electric Engraving Co.]

or glacier, bears in proud humility the name of the Petit Mont Blanc.

We sheltered once with some shepherds in a rude hut, with ventilation enough to satisfy the most ardent believer in open-air cures, and watched them milk the tethered kine and pour the foaming liquid into a huge copper caldron hanging over a wood fire; and lower down we gazed with awe at a whole cellarful of Gruyères cheeses, which seemed, like Dr. Johnson's tubs and vats, to contain the potentiality of growing ill beyond the dreams of medicine. We seemed, in fact, both then and all through the Tarentaise to be wading through cows.

It was half-past five before we had crossed the last sodden meadows and stood a dripping band at the hospitable door of the 'Hôtel de la Grande Casse et du Petit Mont-Blanc,' to give it its full title, in the little village of Pralognan.* It is worth mentioning, perhaps, that we found bicycling capes a most useful part of our kit, as they are very light and keep one's body at any rate practically dry.

Pralognan is not unlike Cogné in situation, as they both stand in fertile meadows at the junction of two mountain streams, and the view looking up the Doron tributary, with the snow peak of the Polset at its head, strongly resembles that up the Valnontey from Cogné. There is nothing, however, in common between the other tributary (the Glière) and the corresponding valley at Cogné, as the former descends abruptly into the valley from an imposing background of rocky promontories and snow-capped peaks. The hotel is frequented chiefly by French people who come up from the baths of Brides-les-Bains, lower down the valley, to 'cool off.' The excellent accommodation afforded by our hotel, with its airy bedrooms, hot and cold water taps and marble basins even in the third storey, a good *chef*, and in fact everything handsome about it, ought to attract English tourists, even if the pleasant sub-Alpine scenery failed to do so, and there is good, sound climbing for the more active.

Next morning (August 29) being an off-day was, of course, gloriously fine, and Ellis took his camera for a walk in the meadows, with excellent results, whilst we bargained with a second guide, Napoléon Favret by name (a tall, gentlemanly fellow in a blue serge suit, whom I took for some time for a

* There are two other hotels, the Hôtel du Dôme de Chasseforêt, just finished, and the old Hôtel de la Vanoise, in the village.

French professor on his holidays), to help Antoine with the sacks and with his local knowledge.

As the recent snow had put rock peaks like the Grande Casse, out of the question, we decided to climb the Dôme de Chasseforêt for the view, and to sleep out for it at the Club hut on the Col de la Vanoise route, as the more direct way by the Club hut above the Nants chalets meant taking up blankets and a key; besides we wanted to see as much as possible of the 'Great Glaciers of the Vanoise.'

Accordingly after a sumptuous lunch (worthy of Courmayeur and even of Ceresole) we left our comfortable quarters with regret at 3 o'clock, and crossing the stream marched steadily up the mule track through the village and the pleasant pine woods beyond, and along a grassy valley to the chalets called La Glière on the French map, the path at one part running between stone walls, just like an occupation road in the Yorkshire dales. The new 'Ball' says that the rare *Dracocephalum Ruyschianum* (doubtless a 'most fearful wild fowl'!) has been found in this valley, and this perhaps explains why the timorous shepherds have made for their sleeping quarters enormous rabbit hutches with sliding doors perched on wooden props two or three feet above the ground. The end of the valley in front of us was filled by the Grande Casse, the Pointe Inaccessible, and the Pointe de la Glière, and the mule track to the Col ran right up to them; but our path, not well marked, turned off up a steep hill-side to the right and brought us in three hours' actual walking to the hut just as the sun was setting (6.20 P.M.), and the mist was hurrying up behind us as though to make up for lost time.

The hut is of one room and of the usual plank-bed character, and is 'bewirthschaftet' to the extent of having a man in charge, but I need not enlarge on its defects, as the new Félix Faure mountain inn on the Col itself, half a mile away, is, I believe, now open.

When we left at 2 o'clock next morning (August 30) a harvest moon was shining full on the rock wall of the Grande Casse and picking out the gullies and couloirs of new snow with a network of frosted silver. We walked at our ease across the flat bed of an empty lake covered with flat stones and appropriately called the Lac des Assiettes, and up gentle grass slopes dotted with limestone boulders and patches of new snow, which looked exactly alike till you hit your toes against them, and stepped without any difficulty on to the glacier as dawn was breaking (3.25 A.M.). We roped, of course, for the look of the thing, but the going was of the easiest,

though the new snow was a bit powdery. There are worse things in the world than a morning stroll in the High Alps in absolute security and perfect weather, with nothing to think about but the coming first breakfast and nothing to do but watch the unpaintable changes of atmospheric colouring as the pale moonlight melts insensibly into the warmer day. Shakespeare has described it, and I tried to do so in my pocket book by the light of the moon, but I shall not attempt it here.

The sun rose at 5 A.M., and the air in front of us was soon quivering with heat, as though it were already noon, but the breeze that followed kept us cool.

As we breakfasted we watched a herd of eleven chamois as they crossed the snow behind us to our left and trotted daintily up the rock slopes of Mont Pelvoz, which buttresses the glacier on that side—a pretty picture which I fear the murderous Wetterli Rifle with its magazine of cartridges will render scarcer every year.

Resuming our march we passed between two rock promontories, and crossing a snow valley circled round the right rim of a large snow basin and arrived at the summit (if you can call half an acre of 'macadam' a summit) at 8.50 A.M. We spent a very pleasant two hours on the 'bielly' side of the slope, eating and sleeping and admiring the landscape, while Ellis, good man, photographed. The sky was perfectly clear save for a little mist over the Italian valleys, and our exalted position (11,802 feet) gave us splendid views in every direction. In the far distance, going from west to east, were the Grande Chartreuse mountains, the range of Mont Blanc, the Pennines as far as Monte Rosa, and the Grand Paradis group, and in the middle distance the Grande Casse and the Grande Motte, the Tsanteleina, and the Levanna group, whilst to the south lay the lower ranges of the Mont Cenis and neighbouring mountains, including the Roche Melon with the gigantic image of the Virgin on its summit clearly visible with the help of a Goertz binocular; the Monte Viso, towering above the blue ridges of Italian Alps, which faded line beyond line to the horizon, and to the south-west the Dauphiné mountains, with sides of quite startling steepness. Our friend the Dent Parachée rose out of the glacier basin at our feet.

No better spot could be chosen for studying this corner of the Alps, and we were lucky in having one of our few fine days for it, though we could not escape that mental pain which some one has said the climber should feel in looking at mountains whose names he does not know.

We left at 11.30 and descended the eastern face by easy snow slopes, furrowed and channelled by the last storm into exquisite lines of endless variety, to the flat moraine at the foot of the Pelvoz glacier, and followed the stream to where it falls steeply into the valley of the Leisse, which runs down to Termignon, in the Arc valley.

The scattered chalets of Entre deux Eaux lay below us, and we hoped to find sleeping quarters at one of them on the hill-side opposite. But while we sat and chatted with a wiry old chamois hunter, who had, I fancy, been stalking our pretty friends of the morning, happily without success, we saw to our horror four black-robed figures, whom the glass declared to be cassocked priests, make for and enter the chalet in question, and our hopes fell. But we could not stay there all night, so we bumped down the rock staircase which does duty for a path into the valley in that happy state of uncertainty about the night's quarters which gives such zest to a present-day tour at Easter in English Lakeland. Sending the guides on ahead to spy out the land, we walked leisurely up the stream, which here runs black with mud, admiring the precipices of the Grande Casse which tower up at the head of the valley and making friends with the cows grazing in the green pastures around us, in that happy state of indifference which accompanies perfect health and perfect weather. Nor was our faith misplaced, for at the last and highest chalet we found unexpectedly good quarters under the roof of Madame Richard *veuve*, of that place and Termignon, as the Peerages say. She gave us of her best, which included ham and eggs and omelettes, and wooden beds with clean sheets in the barn; and I should be ungrateful if I did not recommend the Auberge de Tartarin, as some passing wit has christened it, to future travellers.

Val d'Isère, our next point, can be reached either by the Vallon des Rocheures or the Vallon de la Leisse. The former is more direct, but we were drawn to the latter by its description in 'Ball' as one of the wildest in the Alps, and also by the alluring picture drawn by Sir Martin Conway of the Lac de Tignes, which is passed on the way.

So, after polite farewells and strict injunctions from Madame to send her a copy of the photograph which Ellis had taken of the household, we left the chalet at 7.15 A.M., and, continuing up the valley, passed in a few minutes a stone bridge on our left, whence the mule track mounts up to the Col de la Vanoise, and ourselves turned to the right into a desolate stone-strewn valley running parallel to the great

ridge which connects the Grande Casse with the snow-capped dome of the Grande Motte.

The valley is certainly very desolate, and there are no chalets and no cows, but the dreariest places look inviting with a blue sky overhead and a decent path underfoot, and we had a delightful stroll, taking long rests to gather edelweiss and *génépi* (the latter a small white flower sought after by the guides as a sovereign remedy for coughs and colds), and to watch the wilder forms of animal and bird life—a soaring buzzard, a poising hawk, a scattering covey of ptarmigan, a startled marmot, which served to emphasise the quiet of this



THE GRANDE MOTTE, FROM THE VALLON DE LA LEISSE.

most retired corner of France. Some fragments of 'spattered shrapnel' left by a battery of mountain artillery on its manœuvres supplied the only sign of man's presence.

We crossed several ridges of broken rock and two dried-up lake beds, in one of which we found six bored-looking cows which had been sent up here to 'fend' for themselves all the summer, and which seemed, like Mark Twain's chamois, to be existing on stones, and eventually came to the top of the pass soon after noon. The Grande Motte on this side displays a gentle slope of snow-covered glacier, obviously the easy way up, but we resisted the temptation and set our faces to the

N., where the Mont Pourri, with a curious hanging glacier on its face, and the Grande Sassièrè, a dull-looking mountain, showed up for the first time.

We paid off our second guide and descended into the valley, keeping well away to the right over grassy uplands, and so avoided the big rocks on the left over which the stream makes a fine waterfall.

A steep but easy path brought us down to the highest chalets at 2.25, and we stopped to make tea with a spirit lamp, nearly setting fire to the place in the attempt. The sun was hot, with a burning sting about it, and this and a small cloud on the summit of Mont Blanc led me to prophesy bad weather. Antoine was sceptical, but by that time the next day, when walking home in the rain, he found me a true prophet. For the present the weather held, and we trudged leisurely down to the Lac de Tignes, a charming mountain 'tarn,' though its waters are rather cold for bathing, and climbed up the slopes on the right, where we had a striking view of the Mont Blanc range, the Dent du Géant coming first into view and starting up like a lighthouse on the horizon. We crossed a rolling alp where herds of feeding cows were filling the air with the music of their bells, and plunged down through the thin pine woods into the valley of the Isère, crossing the river by a bridge ten minutes only below the village of Val d'Isère, where we arrived at 6.45 p.m.

We were shown the nearest way by a native, who flattered us by taking us for Parisians! We could only suppose that he had never heard any French like ours before, and French of Paris being to him unknown he supposed we were speaking it. That we could speak any other language probably did not occur to him.

The name Val d'Isère seems inappropriate to a village, just as 'Valley of the Thames' would be to Richmond, say, or Kingston, and the name 'Laval,' used in the older books, would be more fitting.

It is a small hamlet, with a church, the highest in the valley and a good little mountain inn, sometimes called the Hôtel Moris, after its proprietor; but on its signboard—an ambitious effort—the Hôtel des Sources de l'Isère. The rooms are small but sufficient, the passages and staircases, still smaller and barely sufficient; but the cooking is good and the welcome hearty. The presence of a dozen tourists, all French, and the record of the visit of an automobile (the first seen here) on the Tuesday previous afforded sufficient evidence of our return to civilisation.

M. Moris, the landlord, claims descent from the clan MacMorris, exiled from Ireland in King William's time, and that night, after, I suppose, toasting the 'King over the water,' he gave us the benefit of his views on current politics in general and the South African war in particular, in language of surprising energy and comprehensiveness, his opinion of Mr. Chamberlain, so far as we could gather, being distinctly unfavourable to that statesman. To say that he was a Home Ruler would be putting it mildly.

But he was very flattering to English climbers, and especially to Mr. Coolidge, and showed with pride some books that gentleman had sent him. And if my friend Brant is still looking for a certain *gilet* which he lost when in these parts he knows where to find it.

The daughter of the house spends her intervals of leisure, which must be almost as protracted in the long winter months as those of the gentleman tramp whose only employment was the sale of smoked glasses for the observation of solar eclipses, in making lace for sale by way of increasing her dowry. We bought some at a price which worked out at a penny an hour, including materials.

Inns and other feeding places abroad may be divided into three classes, according to the number of knives and forks provided. Some, and these include the best, provide a separate pair for each dish, others one only for the whole meal, and others again none at all. Our hotel belonged to the middle class. Nor were we unduly bothered by the attentions of a waiter. There is no fixed tariff for guides in this district, and we sent Antoine home with a fee which would not have been too little if we had climbed a peak every day. Neither he nor any of the guides we met carried guides' books.

We rested all the next day (Sunday), and the more willingly because of heavy rain, and when we left on Monday morning (September 2) at 1.45 A.M. the weather was so unpromising that we abandoned a direct attack on the Tsanteleina and decided to reach Fornet, in the Val Grisanche, by a somewhat intricate arrangement of cols and glaciers at the head of that valley and the Val de Rhêmes.

We had got a new guide, Victor Mangard, from another village, also called Fornet, two miles above Val d'Isère, a tall, likely-looking man, who knew all about chamois-hunting—and bouquetin also for that matter. The Italian frontier is close at hand, and the latter animal sometimes strays from its strictly preserved haunts in the neighbouring Graians with fatal results. He brought his son with him as porter.

We followed the *char* road to its ending at Fornet, and afterwards the mule track which leads to the Col de la Galise as far as a big white rock, and then struck up the steep grass slopes to the left where a damp and dishevelled dawn found us gathering equally damp and dishevelled edelweiss. A stone-strewn hollow with horrid black rocks on the left led us to a sheltered glen with convenient boulders and running water just as the sun, struggling through a golden mist, was lighting up the tops of the snow peaks across the valley and glinting on the brown wings of a peregrine falcon in hot pursuit of a flock of little birds. All nature seemed to speak of 'breakfast' and we took the hint.

Our further proceedings would be best described in a foot note if I had the necessary local knowledge. When almost every peak, glacier, and col has two if not three names, and some are only known to the guide by a fourth, topographical details are apt to resemble a 'spelling-bee.'

The mountain-tops were hidden in mist, and though it was clearer towards the N. and E., where we caught glimpses of the Grand Paradis range and sometimes of the distant Pennines, we never saw more of the Tsanteleina and the Pointe de la Traversière than the rocks and glaciers at their feet. We threaded our way along the watershed past the head of the Val de Rhêmes over glaciers more or less crevassed and banks of loose screes, guiding ourselves by map and compass and by the echoes, and eventually emerged on the upper snows of the Gliairetta Glacier, at the head of the Val Grisanche, where clouds hung low over the almost level watershed of snow and rock and hid from view the Grand Sassièrè, opposite. There was something very weird about this great stretch of snow, where

'All the air a solemn stillness holds,'

which fastened itself on the memory.

It was a long and wearisome 'getting downstairs' over screes and rock slopes and shale, and the valley itself was wild and inhospitable. The chalets we passed and their inmates seemed rude and poverty-stricken by comparison with French valleys, and at one place the torrent was running under a fall of dirty winter snow, which did duty for a bridge.

We wanted the guides to hurry on in front, but with the fear of *gendarmes* before their eyes they preferred to have some one of more respectable appearance to go with them, so we all went down together and arrived at Fornet at 3.15.

As we approached the cluster of houses which surround the

dummy spire of the village church we tried in vain to make out any sign of accommodation for the public, and it was only after passing every building which seemed at all likely that we found ourselves in the back yard of a more than usually tumble-down chalet, and met an elderly dame who, in answer to our inquiries for the 'hotel,' pointed to the crazy gallery above, and said with a chuckle, 'If you want the *cantine* it is there!'

There seemed to be no door on that side, so working round to the other and carefully picking our way past sundry mules laden with sacks full of the agricultural necessary we call 'muck' in Yorkshire, we blundered through a hay loft up to a comparatively new doorway which gave upon a small wooden cabin furnished with tables and chairs and two beds, the last curtained off by the thinnest of curtains, and with two small bedrooms beyond. On the walls were pinned a number of maps taken from the large edition of 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' which strange fate has brought here. The rest of the big rambling building was given up to hay chambers and to the landlord's private apartments, including the kitchen, a dark and smoky den, where a fire on the floor and a small tripod and big pot formed the sole 'batterie de cuisine.'

The landlord himself, Pierre Emanuel Bois, a gnarled old veteran, soon introduced himself, and welcomed us effusively in a curious mixture of French and Italian. It seemed, to judge from the visitors' book, that we were the first English visitors he had had for two seasons, and he was most anxious to do his best for us. But unfortunately a battery of artillery had been there the previous week and had swept the village of all the eatable chickens, but he offered a stewed marmot, three months old, and a variety of other well-sounding dishes for supper, and in due time appeared a huge bowl of cocka-leekie, the hapless marmot (which was rather greasy and would have been the better for skinning), rizotto (which means rice cooked in grease), and an omelette, followed by coffee.

We thought we were in for a good thing in 'tabling,' but it dawned upon us later that our host had put not only his best but his only leg foremost, and a prolonged stay under his roof would have soon put us on famine rations. The present was, however, provided for, and nothing could mar the cheerfulness of the old man, who was always dropping in with some new morsel of wit which we did our best to appreciate.

He has been already immortalised by Sir Martin Conway, and the impression was evidently mutual, to judge by the

respectful way in which he always referred to that gentleman as 'M. le Président du Club Alpin de Londres,' or simply as 'il Presidente di Londra.'

That he keeps the place for profit seems hardly credible, and we were driven to conclude it was for the sake of conversation and company.

The news of our arrival had spread down the valley, for at 9 o'clock next morning appeared two *gendarmes* with a polite request for our passports. Fortunately we had them with us, although they were much out of date and in fact Ellis's stated that he was travelling abroad with his wife! But, as the officers could not read English and would have painfully copied out the whole document, beginning with Lord Salisbury's full list of titles, if we had not furnished them with a summary, it did not matter very much, and they left without making awkward inquiries about Mrs. Ellis.

We spent the rest of that morning in discussing with the guides and our host the best way of crossing the Rutor to La Thuille, which would have been possible to do in one day by starting very early in the morning, but this would have meant again breaking our rule of not sleeping twice in the same beds, and, moreover, the snow on the further side would have been very soft by the time we reached it. And as we were not sure how long the food supplies at Fornet would last out we determined to start at once and sleep out for the peak.

The Refuge used by Sir Martin Conway in the St. Grat valley would have suited our purpose best, but we should have had to fetch the key from the next village, so we decided to make for the Defey Club Hut on the Col du Rutor. Our guides had not been there before, and our host was too old to go with us, so he sent his son Peter, an amiable young giant, who waited at table and looked after things generally. If there were any women about besides the old lady we did not see them, and they were probably more profitably employed in agricultural pursuits.

Hotel bills are, as a rule, only too easy to understand, but Peter seemed to think that his literary effort in that line required a word of explanation, and he proceeded to 'justify' each item as if he were before a Taxing Master in Chancery. The total came to 22 fr. (including 8 fr. for his own services, 2 fr. 25 c. for wine for the guides, and 4 fr. for provisions), which for three messieurs and two guides could not be called

excessive.* We could only get him to accept a *pourboire* by telling him, much to his father's amusement, to give it to the *bambino*, which was lying outside in the sun strapped and swathed in its cradle like an Egyptian mummy.

We left after lunch and mounted straight up the western slope above the village, and followed a path to the right round the base of M. Pela, to the Alp de la Vieille, a small cluster of chalets, where we stopped to admire the great mass of the Bec de l'Invergnan, on the other side of the valley, and the Grande Sassièrre and Tsanteleina, at the head of the glacier we had descended the day before. We were perhaps even more impressed by the unusual sight of a wooden signpost and a row of posts like telegraph posts. But these were explained by the presence of several empty barracks built on the neighbouring heights to protect the important military pass of the Col du Mont, on the other side of the hill.

We followed the posts up a steep grass couloir to the tiny Lac de Morion, and came to the edge of a glacier, and then it began to dawn upon us that we had started after lunch to climb to the top of a peak over 11,000 ft. high, in bad weather, somewhat like the gentleman who

Breakfasted in the afternoon
And dined on the following day.

But there was no help for it, so we roped and started across the glacier.

It was Peter's first experience of snow craft, and he seemed much amused with the idea of a rope. There were few

* The bill is worth reproducing as a philological study.

' Le 2 Septembre 1901.				' Le 3 Septembre.			
			Fr. C.				Fr. C.
Les grides	.	.	1.00	Matier	.	.	1.00
La Soupe	.	.	0.50	Cherre de Conser	.	.	4.00
Les enfleur	.	.	0.50	Vino	.	.	2.25
Le risse	.	.	1.00	paing	.	.	1.25
Les rorte	.	.	1.00	fontine	.	.	0.80
Les Cafet	.	.	0.60	Soupe	.	.	0.80
Le pirn	.	.	0.80	patate	.	.	0.50
Ler Cafet	.	.	0.60	ove	.	.	1.50
Le lie	.	.	3.50	baure	.	.	0.80
Soirre	.	.	8.50	cafe	.	.	1.00
							18.50
				a Citeé	.	.	8.50
				BOIS PIERRE			22.00

crevasses, and we mounted steadily up the gentle slopes, making a circle round to the left bank till we came to the rocks which form a rampart to this side of the mountain. We had no very clear view of where the Col ought to be, and as we got under the shadow of the rocks we could only see what was just in front of us, and it was growing dusk. But we climbed up more or less cheerily and as nimbly as a very short rope and Peter's big basket, in which he carried the blankets, &c., would allow. The rocks were not really difficult, and if we could have seen our hut would have given us an enjoyable scramble.

We arrived eventually at the foot of a rock peak with an iron balcony and a French flag on the top, and a gap at its side which seemed a likely place for a col, but there was no sign of a hut, and when we emerged on the top of the rocks at 8 P.M., and found ourselves looking down on to a vast expanse of snow, with the Mont Blanc range grey and ghostly in the distant north, and the Grand Paradis group veiled in mist and illumined with summer lightning in the east, we began to wonder 'why did we ever leave our happy, humble home?'

The guide turned to Peter and demanded where his 'pappa' had said the hut was. Peter only smiled; young Mangard (who was rather fond of teaching his father how to, figuratively, suck eggs) blandly suggested crossing the glacier to a rock peak on the other side (which would have taken us till midnight); my brother read and re-read the few precious lines out of 'Ball' which said the hut was several hundred feet *below* the Col, and pointed out that we were then a hundred feet *above* anything like a Col. I suggested that, at the worst, we could walk down the glacier in the dark. Ellis, wise man, said nothing.

But a happy thought led us down the snow ridge on the right, and there, sure enough, was the hut—a tiny wooden cabin built fortunately on the very edge of the rocks. If it had been hidden away among them we might have looked for it all night, as it was now almost dark.

There was just room to walk round the platform on which the hut is built to the front door; but it was snowed up, and Ellis and I waited round the corner till my brother and the guides had opened it out. As we waited we were startled by a crash from the inside which seemed to shake the mountain, and we hurried in only to find that my brother had 'slipped up' on a mass of hard ice which covered half the floor. Further search revealed a stove-pipe, but there was no sign of

a stove, and we were driven to conclude either that it had been stolen or that it lay, mammoth-like, encased in the ice. It would have taken all night to hack it out, so our guides brought in big stones and built a fireplace. We had gathered some fagots as we came up, and, after filling the place with smoke, we managed to melt some snow and make a meal 'of sorts.'

The door faced east and there was a continuous display of summer lightning in that quarter, and the electric element came even nearer and fringed our caps with rows of tiny globes of light, an experience new both to us and our guides. As I stood looking out of the door Peter came smiling round the corner, and slipping off the narrow platform went sliding down the snow slope in front into the darkness. Mangard went down and brought him up, still smiling and no worse for his glissade, which he probably regarded as an ordinary incident of travel, and he was quite willing to go back next day across the glacier alone; but of course we did not allow it and he went down with us next morning and, I hope, got home safely by the valley, much, no doubt, to his ancient father's relief.

The beds were literally planks, and not fastened, but only laid on wooden battens, and very narrow. We had only brought up three blankets, and how to divide them fairly between six people in two tiers was as difficult a problem as that of the ferryman with the fox, the goose, and the corn. We did not try to solve it.

It snowed all night and was very cold, and there were six inches of new snow and a thick mist outside when we awoke, or, to speak accurately, got up, next morning. We had, however, the one consolation which attends the ascent of a peak the night before, that all the coming climbing would be downhill.

It is hardly fair to find fault with free lodgings, but if the window were mended, the door made double, the bed planks fastened more securely, and the stove replaced, the Defey Club Hut would be more abreast of the march of modern ideas.

We left at 7.30 A.M., September 4, and went down the glacier, which was almost free from crevasses, and, leaving it by the right bank, followed the moraine to the St. Marguerite Club Hut, and so to La Thuille. The clouds lay low on the mountains, but the rocks and waterfalls and glacier pools of the Rutor Glen were seen all the better on that account.

From La Thuille we drove down the Little St. Bernard road to Pré St. Didier, had a natural hot bath at the establish-

ment there, and went on to Courmayeur—to civilisation and clean linen. We 'rested' at Courmayeur one day (*i.e.* we climbed Mont Chétif for the view), and the next, after sending our luggage round to Geneva, went up to the Col du Géant hut, where the cooking is very good, and on the third crossed to the Montenvers, where we found only two other guests.

On the morrow we fled from the Sunday crowd at Chamonix to the austere shelter of the Pierre à Bérard hotel, crossed the Buet the next day in glorious weather to Sixt, and reached Champéry the following day in torrents of rain, and so went home by way of Geneva.

We had thus traversed the ancient kingdom of Savoy, to employ 'alliteration's artful aid,' from Chambéry to Champéry, and if anyone wants a pleasant tour through an unexploited country with an unspoilt people I commend our route to his attention. My one word of advice would be to read and implicitly rely on every word in the new Ball's Guide, of which, as was said of an old statute, 'every line is worth a subsidy.'

THE GSPALTENHORN, 3,442 m., FROM THE TSCHINGELFIRN.

By G. HASLER.

SEVERAL attempts have been made in the last ten years to reach the summit of the Gspaltenhorn either by way of the S. face or by its E. or S.W. arête, the N.W. arête having hitherto been the only way of access.

The possibility of forcing the S.W. arête (from the Gamchilücke) is extremely faint, as it is crowned with a multitude of huge gendarmes, which are not only steep but generally overhang on all sides.

A combination of the S. face with the E. arête promised more success, though I knew that we would never be able to climb *over* the two great gendarmes which block the—otherwise not difficult—arête between the Gspaltenhorn and the Tschingelspitz; it would also be quite impossible to turn these gendarmes on either side, as I had seen on previous attempts. The only thing was to mount straight up the S. face to the gap on the left-hand side, or to the W. of, the higher of the two gendarmes. A long, narrow, and almost perpendicular crack (see Illustration) extends from the level of the Tschingelfirn to the gap. Descending from the summit of the mountain I had twice before reached this gap, and had looked down the crack, only to abandon every hope at once, for when trying to go down a few steps in it the