

must occur to us, that the respect due to even the simplest-looking of the great peaks is lessened to a dangerous extent by frequent indulgence in very difficult climbs. To some men, I suppose, climbing really does become insipid unless it is strongly spiced with danger; but I hope that neither I nor my recruits will ever be of the number. We desire no more 'Golden Age' of climbing than that which began five years ago, and I cannot believe that the discoverers of the old routes got a much keener pleasure out of them than ourselves. Many of these routes are no more vulgarised than the naves of our great cathedrals. Everyone dislikes to see them strewn with orange-peel and sandwich-papers, or to hear their solemn stillness broken by cat-calls. But they are not vulgarised because other men have worshipped there before us. And judging by our own experience, the probability of being crowded off one's seat on the summit is much less than is supposed. You would be surprised if I were to tell you the number of well-known peaks of which we have enjoyed undisturbed possession for a day. And with so many less frequented districts of the Alps still unvisited, we can look forward to the same privacy on many future days.

Perhaps my recruits will not be content with doing what becomes each year more easily within their powers. But I am hopeful; and when I read through the simple story of our climbs—it has reached its fourth volume—there is nothing that gives me more satisfaction than to find that we can still appreciate as of old the simple snow climb. Of course we do a few audacious things, we should not be young if we didn't; but we have tried to live up to our belief that there is an influence more purifying than danger in the beauty of the snows; and that among the countless ridges and recesses of the Alps, we shall find an outlet for the energies of youth without having constantly before our eyes immediate prospects of dissolution.

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#### THE BREGAGLIA GROUP.

By CLAUDE WILSON.

THE accompanying map will recall the situation and indicate the general outline of a singularly interesting group of mountains which afford granite climbing rivalling in interest and difficulty the well known aiguilles of the Mont Blanc range. The district is, according to Mr. Coolidge,\*

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\* *The Alps*, 1908, pp. 884-5.

'more rarely visited and explored than perhaps any district in the High Alps, save perhaps that which extends S.E. of the Tour du Grand St. Pierre, in the Eastern Graians;' and it has, moreover, received the scantiest attention in the pages of the 'Alpine Journal.' Consequently the following notes need no apology.

There would appear to be considerable divergence of opinion as to what the district should be called, and the title selected has, though sanctioned by use, been objected to on the score that there are mountains on the other side of the Val Bregaglia. Still the 'Saasgrat' has become a well-fixed name, the 'Chamonix Aiguilles' are not often confused with the Aiguilles Rouges, and the competing names are not free from objection, while they mostly lack the merit of brevity. A short distinctive name for this sharply defined group is to be desired, and the writer has selected that which, in his opinion, is most likely to survive.

The 'Bregaglia group,' then, with its offshoot and culminating point, the Monte della Disgrazia, forms a complete and separate 'massif,' which is cut off from the Bernina mountains proper by the Muretto pass and the Val Malenco. Concerning the Disgrazia but little will be said; indeed it merits little at the writer's hands, for twice at least it has evaded him, and its northern slopes, which were of special interest to him and his companions during a recent holiday, never permitted themselves even to be seen. The Disgrazia has, moreover, received a very large share of attention in the pages of this 'Journal,' being the subject of a map, two illustrations, three papers, and thirteen 'references.' It occupies indeed *the* place of honour in the 'Journal,' for the first paper in vol. i. relates its first ascent, the only prior printed matter being the title-page, the contents table, and the immortal 'Introductory Address' in which the then Editor, Mr. H. B. George, states, with some diffidence, that 'we can assure the most sceptical reader that the Alps are not nearly exhausted.' Now, nearly half a century later, no sceptical reader will be found to doubt the assurance that *the Disgrazia* is not nearly exhausted; for, in spite of its two south huts, its two north routes (each made but once), and its accessibility from the Forno glacier, there remains new work to be done both on the peak itself and on its immediate satellites; while the Bregaglia group, which forms the subject of the present communication, is still practically unknown, save to a handful of guides and climbers. It is true that no important summits now remain unscaled, but some of them have only yielded to

the attack, and sometimes the repeated attack, of perhaps the strongest guiding combinations which have ever been brought to bear on granite crags. Several of these mountains have only been ascended once; most of the difficult ones have been gained by one route only; and many of those whose summits can be reached with comparative ease present faces, ridges, and chimneys as yet untried, and which, though tempting, will prove difficult, if indeed possible.

The climbing history of the Bregaglia district takes one a long way back, for some of the easy passes were used by smugglers and others long ago, and Mr. Ball crossed the Zocca pass in the very early days of Alpine climbing. In 1864 both Mr. Tuckett and Mr. Freshfield visited the group, the latter returning during the two next seasons, and ascending, with F. Dévouassoud, Cengalo and Castello in 1866. Next year the Piz Badile was scaled by Mr. Coolidge—again with F. Dévouassoud—and though they found at once the only easy way up, this may be said to mark the beginning of serious rock-climbing in the district. In the very early eighties Count F. Lurani explored, sketched, and mapped the south slopes of the chain, and it is unfortunate that his charming pamphlet\* is now out of print and not easily obtained. It was not, however, till 1891, when Herr A. von Rydzewski became smitten by its charms, that the real difficulties of the group began to be faced. This gentleman had with him as his constant companion the one great guide the locality has produced, Christian Klucker, of Sils, a guide whose name will always be associated with these climbs, and to whom, beyond all doubt, the chief credit rightly belongs. But Rydzewski brought from east and west some of the most notable cragsmen in the Alps to co-operate with Klucker, who had the opportunity of working for many years with Mansueto Barbaria, of Cortina, and for one season (1893), when the Ago di Sciora was first ascended, with Emil Rey, of Courmayeur. For ten consecutive years did Herr von Rydzewski, with such-like guides, renew his onslaughts, and it would indeed be strange if any peaks of note remained unscalded. Among other names connected with the district, though hardly calling for special comment in a short *résumé* such as alone is aimed at, that of Dr. Curtius stands out prominently, and some little space must be given to the work done during the present century by Herr H. A. Tanner, of Basle, who has, again with Klucker, repeated many of the

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\* *Le Montagne di Val Masino.* Milan, 1889.

more notable ascents and made a few new routes. Herr Tanner has, moreover, published a convenient little monograph on the region,\* which contains sections on its history, its botany, its geology, &c., and devotes about half its space to a practical climbing guide. The book is amply illustrated and contains a map reduced from the Swiss Survey. At the present moment this book holds the field alone as a useful guide; but the new edition of 'Ball' will, one hopes, be published shortly, and it is understood that a 'Conway and Coolidge' 'Climbers' Guide' is in course of preparation. It is merely as an introduction to such sources of detailed information that the present paper is intended.

No map of these mountains as yet exists which can be regarded as satisfactory. The Siegfried map is by no means free from faults even on the Swiss side, while beyond the frontier its details are quite unreliable. The Italian map stops at the frontier, and is very far from satisfactory even in its own territory. Count Lurani's map of the Val Masino and its surrounding mountains and glaciers,† is quite the best map of the Italian slopes, but it is unfortunately not 'available,' for it is out of print, and, like the Italian Government map, it shows nothing on the Swiss side. A rather poor reproduction of a portion of Lurani's map will be found in vol. xvii. of the 'Alpine Journal,' illustrating Mr. Freshfield's paper 'Behind the Bernina;' but to those unfamiliar with what lies to the north and to the south of the narrow strip of territory portrayed this map must have a strictly limited value.

The etched map ‡ which accompanies the present paper, the general outline of which is based on the Siegfried map, to which grateful indebtedness is expressed, has grown out of a very rude attempt to indicate in a somewhat diagrammatic manner the relations in height and position of the various centres and huts to the chief peaks and easy passes of the range. Encouraged, however, by Mr. E. L. Strutt, who has most kindly placed his unrivalled knowledge of the topographical details of the group at the writer's disposal, an attempt has been made to produce a map which may serve a rather more ambitious purpose. All that is irrelevant to

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\* *Forno-Albigna-Bondasca*. Basel, 1906. Pp. 158.

† *Le Montagne di Val Masino*. Milan, 1883.

‡ Copies of this map can be obtained, post free, price 6d., from Mr. P. S. Lankester, photographer, 15 Mount Pleasant Road, Tunbridge Wells.

mountaineering is omitted, and points of special interest—such as the position of the huts—are emphasised in a diagrammatic manner. Below the snow line no details of any kind are indicated, except the roads and paths by which the upper glens are reached. As will be seen later, the paths are of exceptional importance, and to denote on which side of the gorges the chief paths lie, where they leave the valleys, and where they cross the streams is one of the features aimed at. Above the snow line the upper slopes are portrayed with moderate accuracy, though with limited detail, and the summit ridges have been drawn and redrawn until a true picture of their main features has, it is hoped, been attained. Each peak is indicated by a dot, and each hitherto-made pass, with the exception of a few freaks on the subsidiary ridges, is shown in a diagrammatic manner. The nomenclature made use of is that which will, it is believed, be finally accepted; but in some sections, notably in the Ferro group, no two authorities have hitherto agreed. A few names have, from want of space, been omitted, and where double names (*e.g.* Ferro Centrale or Cima della Bondasca) exist, only one has been inserted. Many additions and corrections both in topography and nomenclature will be found on comparing this map with those it is intended to supplement, and to one point in nomenclature a special note of explanation may be welcomed.

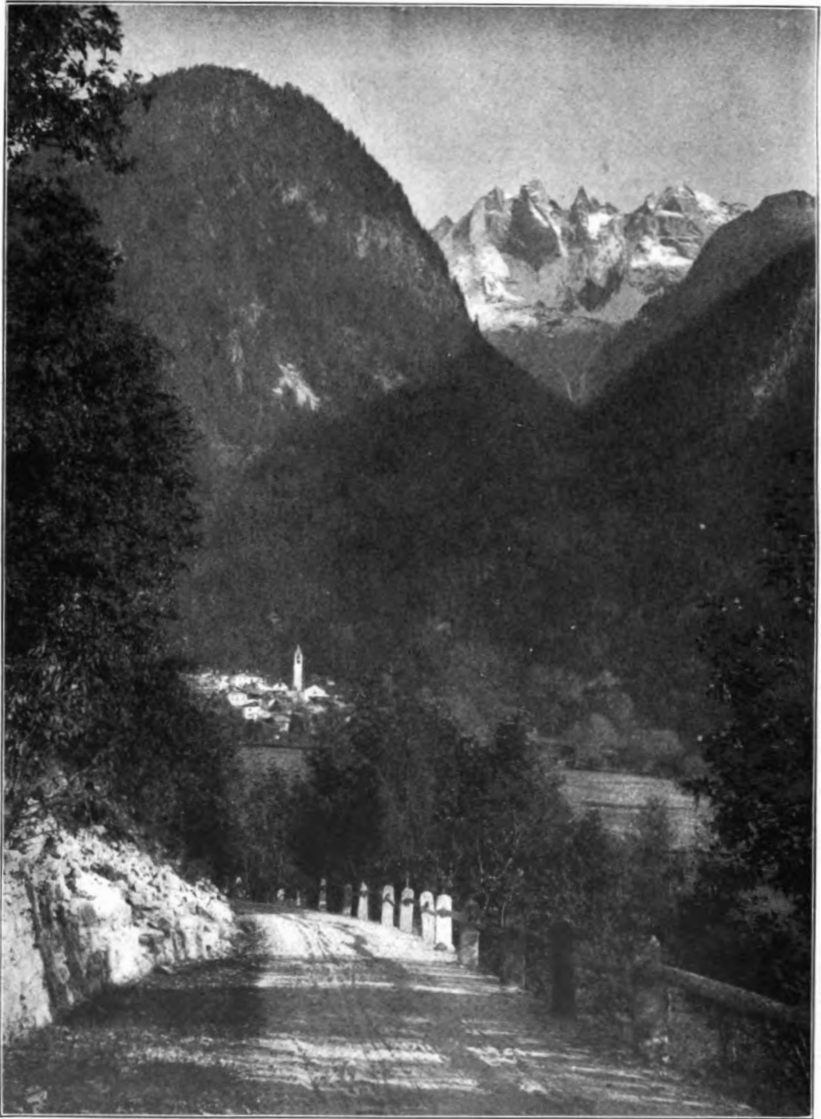
If one looks at almost any small-scale map of the Alps, a confused little patch of white, indicating snow mountains, will be found in this region, and over the whole area the words 'C. del Largo.' A map on a somewhat larger scale may show the Forno and Albigna glaciers, and at the S. extremity of the two, where they meet, the above name will be found; and very few other names will there be in this region on such a map. The true name of the mountain which occupies this position is the 'Cima di Castello' (3,400), the culminating point of the Bregaglia district proper, and the Siegfried map prints, in large letters, one above the other, with the height between the two, both names; while near the N. extremity of the ridge which separates these glaciers will again be found, in small type, the name 'Cima del Largo' (3,188), in its true position. It is not very difficult to conjecture how the mistake, which must have been copied from map to map, originated. The true Largo, as seen from the Maloja road above Vicosoprano, is one of the few mountains of the district which is ever seen by the ordinary tourist or traveller, and it is indeed one of the most striking rock

aiguilles to be seen from any carriage road in the Alps. It occupies a position between the Albigna and Forno glaciers, and looks far higher than the Piz Bacone (8,243), which lies to its south. Castello is practically visible from nowhere, and yet a survey shows that it is the highest point between these glaciers, as indeed in the whole group; and no doubt the early cartographers concluded that the highest point and the most prominent one coincided, and thus the name of Largo got misplaced, and the official Swiss surveyors must have thought that the name had got so fixed upon Castello, as well as on the Vicosoprano aiguille, that they declined the responsibility of deleting it. Now that the mountains have been explored and climbed the names have got finally settled in their proper places, and no future map which aims at showing any detail at all will be likely to perpetuate the mistake. It is, however, only since the maps in use were drawn that the nomenclature of the chain can be said to have become anything like fixed. In the older maps but few names appear at all, and in some of the books still consulted by those who seek light upon the region (Freshfield's 'Italian Alps,' for instance) the confusion of names is singularly confounded.

If the foregoing remarks may be regarded as a literary introduction to the group, those which follow are intended as a practical one; and, as it forms no part of the scheme of the present paper to obtrude any narrative or description of personal experiences, the space remaining may perhaps be best utilised by giving a few short notes under appropriate headings.

*Access.*—The Albula railway runs from Chur to St. Moritz and Pontresina. The Maloja is two hours' drive from the former, while from the latter a light railway will shortly be opened over the Bernina Pass, thus forming a direct railway communication between the Engadine and the Val Tellina, where there has for years been a line of rails to Colico, at the northern end of Lake Como. From Colico another line runs north to Chiavenna, which is connected by the Maloja road with St. Moritz. The diligence service on the Maloja is excellent, and private vehicles can be hired at all the villages. Masinobagni is reached by an old road, at the present time in course of reconstruction, and carriages are obtainable at Ardenno. The drive takes about four hours up and three down.

*General Features.*—The five words 'steep mountains and deep valleys' sum up the most conspicuous features of the



*Capt. Bligh. Photo.*

*Siron Electric Engineering Co., Ltd.*

BONDO AND THE SCIORA GROUP  
FROM NEAR PROMONTOGNO.

group. The main ridge lies on the frontier between Switzerland and Italy, and runs west from Monte Sissone to the Teggiola pass, at the S.W. foot of the historically interesting Pizzi dei Vanni. The southern side of this main backbone presents a fairly continuous granite wall, with offshoots running south, between which lie snow fields and small glaciers, with streams draining into the Val di Mello and the Val dei Bagni, which, joining at San Martino, form the Val Masino (pronounced Māsino, with the accent as in 'domino'). At the Badiletto, and not at the Badile, as would be gathered from a study of all pre-existing maps, the long Porcellizzo ridge runs southwards, and limits the Masino basin on the west, as does the Disgrazia on the east.

On the northern side of the main backbone three considerable glaciers—Forno, Albigna, and Bondasca—flanked by three great ridges of peaks, run towards the Maloja road, and while that which forms the right bank of the Forno glacier, along which the frontier runs to the Muretto pass, consists mostly of snow and easy rock summits, those which enclose the Albigna afford granite climbing as attractive as that to be found on the Southern Watershed itself.

*The Glaciers.*—The Forno is a gently sloping glacier nearly five miles in length. Though often well protected by its snow it is plentifully provided with crevasses, some of which run at unexpected angles. On its E. side rise graceful snowy peaks, while on its W. steep lateral glaciers and precipitous rock walls hem it in at all points save one, the much-used Casnile pass, just opposite the hut. The wall which closes the S. end of the glacier rises very steeply from the névé, and at but few points can it easily be reached. A route to the Val di Mello runs over the summit of Monte Sissone, and a useful pass close to the precipices of Castello leads to the Zocca hut.

The Albigna Glacier is even flatter than the Forno, and is remarkable for being practically free from open crevasses, though the bergschrund on the slope running up to the Zocca pass, which is often concealed, has been the scene of one or two minor mishaps. On its E. side Castello and Cantone present easy slopes of snow, which may conveniently be made use of in descent when these summits have been gained by other routes. At the head of the glacier is the easy Zocca pass, the beautifully chiselled Monte di Zocca, and the Ferro wall; while on the W. rise precipitously the dangerous Colle del Albigna and the remarkable group of the Sciora peaks, which are preferably ascended, and practically



must be descended, on this side. North of the Sciora lies the useful and easy Cacciabella pass, or passes, for the ridge can be crossed at several points.

The Bondasca glacier is very different from its two eastern neighbours. It is a short, steep stream of ice, plentifully riddled with very large crevasses, which late in the season are often but scantily provided with bridges—so much so that its descent has occasionally been found to be impracticable. Even when a plentiful supply of snow is present the passage of this glacier in the afternoon, or when the snow is not in good condition, always demands great care. The peaks which surround the head of the Bondasca valley present some of the boldest, steepest, and most massive faces of unbroken granite to be found in any region of the Alps.

The southern glaciers, or glacierettes, as perhaps they may be called, demand but little notice. They are numerous and small, but some of them are steep, and crevasses should be carefully looked for.

*The Peaks.*—As will have been gathered the chief mountaineering interest in the region lies in the fine rock-climbing it affords, and in the bold and beautiful outlines of the peaks. The height above the sea is never great; but while the summits are but 10,000 or 11,000 ft. in height they rise from valleys which lie very low, and, unless the huts are made use of, some 7,000 or 8,000 ft. will often intervene between the climber's quarters and his objective. Most of the peaks of the main ridge, and many of those of the offshoots, lie in an extraordinarily retired position. On the S. side not one of the mountains is visible from any road or any inn, while from the N. but few are ever seen save by shepherds, smugglers, surveyors, and mountaineers. The striking view of the Largo from the road has already been alluded to; the Sciora group can be seen from near the bridge just below Promontogno, and the great mass of the Badile is strangely prominent from near and far, being visible from the railway station at St. Moritz. From the seldom-visited village of Soglio, half an hour from Promontogno, on the N. slopes of the Val Bregaglia, all the peaks at the head of the Val Bondasca are in full view, and present a spectacle difficult to surpass. It was here that Segantini painted several of his most famous pictures, and from the Soglio road that Captain Bligh's beautiful photograph of the Sciora group, here reproduced, was taken. Of the many summits which are never seen by the swarms of tourists and *pensionnaires* who pass or take up residence so near them possibly

Monte di Zocca is the most beautiful. Its grand south cliffs are hardly less imposing than the finely moulded symmetry of its N. face, so admirably shown in the photograph which Count Lurani has kindly sent to illustrate this paper.

*Paths.*—These are not numerous, but the chief are well marked and remarkable for the extent to which flat paving-stones are made use of in their construction. When height has to be rapidly gained extensive staircases of flags are often met with, and the path to the Albigna glen will ever be remembered by all who have gone up or down it as a monument of rustic engineering. It is important in these valleys not to lose the track, and when it is likely to be missed, among trees or on stony wastes, dashes of red paint should be looked for and adhered to, or much time is likely to be lost. The less frequented paths are small and very intricate, and often wind among steep and dangerous cliffs. Even those who have traversed them before—Klucker among the number—have been known to lose hours in finding and following them.

Perhaps this is all that need be said about the paths; but, if an Irishism be permissible, a word may be added about a path which does not exist at all, and never will. It must have occurred to many that a traversing route from the Maloja pass to the Albigna glacier would be invaluable to mountaineers. But the ravines and precipices of the Largo and Bacone run right down into the valley, and afford no possibility of traverse; so that those who would reach the Albigna from the Maloja must first descend about 2,000 ft., or must cross by way of the Casnile pass.

*Centres.*—On the N. side of the chain are three centres, corresponding to the outlets of the glaciers. At Promontogno the 'Bregaglia' is the chief hotel, but the Pension Scartazzini is well spoken of and preferred by some. At Vicosoprano the 'Helvetia' is in every way excellent; and at the Maloja there is ample choice. The Hôtel Château (Maloja) deserves to be better known as something between the misplaced splendour of the 'Kursal' and the somewhat primitive conditions which obtain elsewhere. On the S. side there is a rough mountain inn at San Martino, and the extensive and ancient barrack-like building of Masinobagni, beautifully situated among the chestnuts, a short three miles up the Val dei Bagni. The telegraph, electric light, and perhaps the barber's shop, are innovations, but otherwise the place has probably changed but little for fifty years or more. The 'Grand Ancient Italian Bathing Establishment, at which 140 people of distinction

dine daily at a magnificent *table d'hôte*,\* cannot have altered much since 1862: the doctor, the curé, and the Milanese visitor, remarked upon by Freshfield in 1864,† are still there playing bowls and ninepin billiards.

*Huts.*—It will be noted that, with one exception, all the centres lie low, and the Maloja is a considerable distance from the peaks at the head of the Forno glacier. Consequently four huts have been built, two on the north and two on the south of the chain.‡ The writer is not one of those who advocate the multiplication of Alpine huts, but there is some talk of erecting a fifth at the foot of the Albigna glacier, and he may say that, in his opinion, a hut in this position would be more useful than some of those already in existence. The shepherd's cabin which is there already has occasionally been used for sleeping quarters, but few who have explored its limited and uninviting interior would care to stop there longer than they could help.

The four huts are all kept locked, and the precaution is said to be necessary to prevent looting. Keys can be borrowed at the various hotels, but must be returned without undue delay, a condition which somewhat limits the advantage of the Zocca and Forno keys corresponding, as do also the keys of the Sciora and Badile huts. But even if all four keys corresponded, and could be bought by accredited individuals, the difficulty of provisioning a hut on the other side of the chain would make it well-nigh impossible to work from hut to hut, as would often be convenient, and save much wasted time spent in descending into the deep valleys and reascending. Were such a process easily practicable the huts would be of much more use than is the case.

The Zocca hut is four good hours from San Martino, and nearly five from Masinobagni, not counting halts. The other huts are, in each case, about three and a half hours from

\* *Alpine Journal*, vol. i. p. 12.

† *Italian Alps*, p. 58.

‡ In this district generally, but outside the Bregaglia group proper, three other huts exist—the Capanna di Carnarossa and the Capanna Cecilia, on the S. side of the Disgrazia, to facilitate ascents from Chiesa and Val Masino respectively; and the Capanna Volta, at the head of the Val dei Ratti, about four hours from Vercega, on the Lago di Mezzola, and five from Masinobagni, by the twin Passi della Vedretta. The Volta hut is surrounded by rock pinnacles some eight or nine thousand feet in height and bearing a reputation for difficulty. This little corner is very rarely visited, and some of the points remain as yet unclimbed.

their respective bases. Of the four, the Zocca is the one best placed for mountaineering, though it is certainly less used than any of the others. The fascinating rocks of the Zocca, Castello, Rasica, and the Torrone Occidentale lie close around it, all presenting fine climbs already made, and 'problems' galore as yet untried. The Zocca pass is but an hour distant, and the foot of the Sciora climbs an hour more. Probably there is as much rock-climbing within easy range of this hut as in the Coolins, the Lakes, and the Snowdon district put together; and, looked at from a British point of view, not a hundredth, perhaps not a thousandth part of it has been done: 'the Alps are not nearly exhausted.' Of the three remaining huts it may perhaps be said that they are all of them superfluous. The Capanna Badile is, in spite of its height, not much more than three hours above Masinobagni, and the Piz Badile, for which it is chiefly used, can often be reached in a couple of hours more. The Forno hut, though well placed for a stay of some days, and occasionally used as a starting-place for the Disgrazia, for which purpose it is not well situated, is needless for single expeditions from the Maloja. If the Sciora hut is superfluous it is for quite another reason. Nothing could surpass its position for a stay of two or three nights, were it not for the fact that only the less attractive among the splendid peaks by which it is surrounded can be descended to it, and the best are preferably ascended from elsewhere. The summit of Cengalo has been gained by an excessively dangerous direct climb from the north; and for the rest it may be said that the cols between the peaks can be reached by stone-raked couloirs, none too safe at any time and always dangerous in the afternoon—that the summits are attained either by the sky line or from the back—and that the descent must always be into another valley.

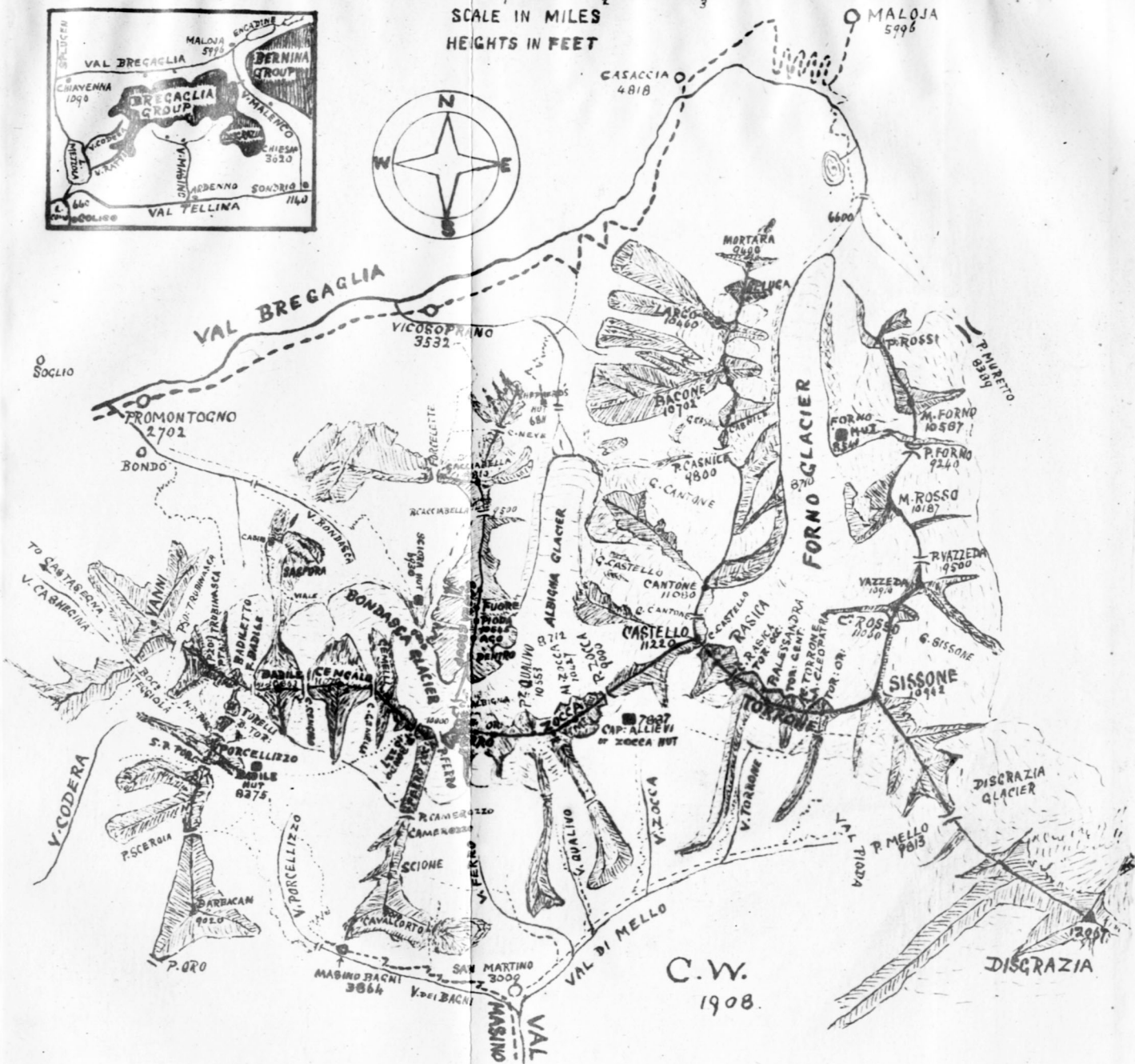
*Guides.*—Climbers who visit this group must be their own guides, or must take guides with them. At San Martino there are three guides who are said to be brilliant rock-climbers, the brothers Fiorelli and Bartolo Sertori. In the Val Bregaglia there are no guides worthy of the name, and in the Engadine, since Klucker has retired, Martin Schocker, of Pontresina, is the only guide who has a general knowledge of the district.

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A friend to whom the writer recommended the Bregaglia district replied, 'No; I mean to stick to big things so long as I can: the little ones can wait.' Of course Mont Blanc is a bigger thing than the Grépon or the Charmoz, but if the

1:100,000.

SCALE IN MILES  
HEIGHTS IN FEET



C.W.  
1908.

DISGRAZIA

latter are worthy of attention so are the Bregaglia mountains. Further, few people realise how low these valleys lie: seven or eight thousand feet from base to summit is common, while the Disgrazia is nearly as high above Sondrio as Mont Blanc above Courmayeur. Again, it will be found here, more than in most districts, that the best way down often differs from the best way up, and leads one into quite a different valley. Great variety of scenery and long days out are easily secured, and on the rocks themselves there will be found full scope for the agility of the youngest. If one leaves them too long one may fail to get up some of them at all; and for those who want to try something new and startling there remains as yet plenty in the realm of new routes. The Zocca has been climbed but twice, once from the north and once from the south, the splendid W. arête from the col having never yet been tried. The E. ridge of the Rasica and the S. ridge of the Badiletto remain, and plenty more; and there remains—perhaps there will always remain—the great N. face of the Badile: the man who first climbs that can rest assured that he will have done a very ‘big thing.’

#### EARLY JUNE IN THE PYRENEES.

By VICTOR H. GATTY.

ON one of the closing days of May last year I found myself driving up the twenty kilometres of hilly road which separate the end of the electric railway at Luz from Gavarnie. A pleasant, elderly, red-faced man riding a donkey alongside discoursed to me about the mountains, of which he seemed to have a thorough knowledge; he proved to be Henri Passet, Charles Packe's old guide and his companion on most of the many expeditions which make his ‘Guide to the Pyrenees,’ though published forty years ago, still the most useful and reliable for the mountaineer; indeed, so far as I could judge, the Pyrenees, more fortunate than the Alps, have altered little since that day.

Accounts of Pyrenean ascents have most generally described the conditions existing in the later part of the season, when ice and snow have retreated to their furthest strongholds. Perhaps the charm of the early summer, when the winter's snow still covers thickly summits even of secondary rank and throws out long tongues towards the lower valleys, bringing the mountains and the views from them more nearly to an