

THE TÊTE DE GRANDCROU AND THE TOUR DE GRAUSON.

BY THE EDITOR.

WHEN Benjamin Pession and I arrived at Cogné on August 8, 1909, I had hardly made up my mind as to what I wished to do. On the day after our arrival I wandered out as usual into the middle of the Cogné meadows, and lovingly regarded once more the well-known landscape with all its wealth of pleasant memories. And then two questions persistently presented themselves. The Tête de Grandcrou and the Tour de Grauson are not great peaks, but they are conspicuous from that green triangle of the St. Ours pastures. Had they been climbed? If so the ascents must have been made last year. Inquiry followed. They had certainly not been climbed within the last twelve months. I at once hastily cried to Benjamin: 'Well, then, they have not yet been climbed at all.' This added zest to the construction of a programme—if I may use so serious a word of the unpretentious task which we proceeded to set ourselves.

But before taking them in hand—or ought I to say afoot?—I wished to visit the ridge between the Val de Grauson and the Val d'Arpisson. I wanted to ascend all the points in it S. of the Tour d'Arpisson. The new map has on it a Punta Vachères which I knew not. So on August 10 we went up this point *via* the Testa Chaplane—a splendid point of view. Fine as is the prospect from Gmillian, that from the Testa surpasses it. Those who have visited it speak of it with enthusiasm. But the thorough exploration of the ridge which I had purposed was defeated by the weather, for thunder came on, and rain and mist completed our dismay; though when we were well on our way home the weather improved.

August 11 I spent at Cogné, and on the 12th Benjamin and I climbed the Cima di Leviona, or Punta del Tuf, by a variation of the route by which Sig. Bobba and I had made the first ascent in 1893. We then descended the W. ridge—a new way. On our way up above the Campement du Roi at Lauson we saw a great herd of chamois, probably nearly 100, and the best *Gentiana lutea* I have come across in the Alps. On the descent we followed a sort of special bouquetin route, and then took to the actual crest. I enjoyed the pleasure of leading. We went over point 3262 of the new map. The rocks after this point was passed became steep and slabby. And when I turned to

the right, I had some trouble on steep slabs with shallow snow upon them—'Assez raide,' as Benjamin said, when we were looking back from the snow at the foot of the Inferno Glacier of the new map. The rocks near the summit were red, but these truculent fellows were a blackish grey. There were many flowers on this mountain. On our way down to Dégioz the most conspicuous blossom was *Campanula cenisia* in charming tufts. The views of the Herbetet and the peaks between it and the Paradiso were imposing in clear sunshine. We got down to Dégioz about 7.0 in the evening after a very enjoyable day.

On August 18 we went up to Pont, and then to the Rifugio Vittorio Emanuele. We had engaged a porter at Dégioz, of whom more hereafter.

From the Vittorio Emanuele Refuge we crossed the Col du Grand Paradis, traversed the great Noaschetta Glacier, ascended the Becca di Noaschetta, which enjoys a view of Cogne over the main chain, and traversed *via* the Colle di Noaschetta to the gap between the Tête de Valnontey (11,625 ft.) and the Tête de Grandcrou (11,286 ft.). This point had not previously been attained.*

So far all had been easy, but a change now ensued. It took us 1 hour 30 minutes to descend the 462 ft. to the Col de Grandcrou. We had many amusing bits, and it was distinctly exhilarating to hear Benjamin, after peering over the cliff in answer to demands for direction from the porter, shout 'Avancez seulement,' with a smile on his face, which was a better comment on the situation than mere words. The rocks were, in places, loose and sometimes came away in one's hand when tested. We encountered various narrow chimneys and one curious tunnel floored with ice, which the porter regarded with much suspicion. The porter was somewhat of a survival from earlier stages of mountaineering. He was not, I ought to say, on the official list. He reminded one of those porters of old who were wont to contribute the comic element to Alpine expeditions. Benjamin and I knew him as 'Bottles,' as he had a perfect mania for collecting empty bottles. When we

* The illustration, for which my hearty thanks are due to S. Vittoria Sella, shows the Gran Paradiso and his satellites to perfection. In the left-hand corner is the Col de Grandcrou, above it the Tête de Grandcrou, then the Tête de Valnontey (very dark), then the Tête de la Tribulation with the ridge running to the Becca di Noaschetta, the rocky dome at the extreme left of the picture. The sharp point behind is the Pic de la Lune or Pointe de Ceresole:



Vittorio Sella, photo

Swan Electric Engraving Co. Ltd.

THE GRAN PARADISO, FROM THE COLLE BARETTI.

arrived at Noasca (to anticipate a little) and I proceeded to search my rucksack for a clean shirt, the first thing I pulled out was an empty bottle. I searched again, and drew forth another bottle. I searched a third time, and yet a third empty bottle appeared! He was a three-bottle man! But I forgive him much for supplying my broken teacup, which I preferred to a tin drinking cup, with the title of 'le goblet.'

After one or two more little difficulties, I remarked to Benjamin 'This is rather an amusing little peak.' 'Oh justement,' he replied. After a bad place the porter exclaimed that he had been on the Paradis and the Herbetet, but they had not faced him with such difficulties as these. As a fact we really had a good many by no means easy places to descend. The excitement was kept up to the last, for the final difficulty took the most patois and the longest time. When we reached the Col and looked back Benjamin said 'Can you trace our route?' 'No!' I answered. 'Nobody,' he added, 'would believe that we had come down there.' I agreed with him, but we were both in an expansive mood, for the little peak had been a banquet to us.

I ought to mention that I discovered many flowers in the crevices of the rock walls, which I searched pretty carefully while waiting for the porter to find the way. *Geum reptans* was the most striking—jewels of gold, like glittering stars, set in the crannies of little sheltered ledges.

The wind had been lively and rather cold, but on the Col de Grandcrou the sun was hot. The sky was lovely, belted with tender clouds—long gauzy lines of a milky white, suffused with pink in the upper layers, and with a red or purple tint in the lower.

We had intended to go down to Cogné by the Col de Grandcrou, but when we had been to the eastern end of the pass and traversed back westwards toward our peak, it became quite clear that a descent on the Valnontey side would involve a good deal of step-cutting in ice, and this, after consultation with Benjamin, I decided not to tackle; as, though the porter had done fairly well on rocks, his movements on steep snow were not such as to encourage us to face a staircase in ice in his company. We therefore, at 1.35, returned to the col, and started for Noasca.

After we had left the glacier and descended rough pastures where there was a large herd of cattle, though the herdsmen were too far off for us to consult them as to the road, we took a path to the left. There is no question, I think now, that we ought to have followed a track that seemed to lose itself in a

shallow lake on our right. I had great doubts as to whether we were choosing wisely, but the voluble assertions of the porter that we were making a great mistake possibly helped to decide me, out of a spirit of pure contradiction, to continue to the left. We presently came to a narrow glen with a noisy torrent, and found that the bridge over it had been carried away. I think the porter expected us to turn back, but we stuck to our digression 'like the driven pig,' as a famous climber puts it. We crossed the torrent by way of a huge rock, which projected well into the middle of the water, and a vigorous leap. Then we came to a place which looked like the battlefield of rock-hurling giants. It was not possible to go quickly, but still we progressed, and still the rocks confusedly hurled called for energetic, if spasmodic, athletics. I could imagine a cheerful critic crying 'Let me see thee caper—ha! higher! ha,—ha! excellent!' Unpleasant questionings as to where we should spend the night now began at times to suggest themselves. One could imagine this vast wilderness of rocks to be the spot where dwelt :

Pigmies and Polyphemes, by many a name,
 Centaurs and Satyrs, and such shapes as haunt
 Wet clefts,—and lumps neither alive nor dead,
 Dog-headed, bosom-eyed, and bird-footéd.
 SHELLEY, *Witch of Atlas*, stanza xi.

By-and-by we saw that the torrent made almost a right angle and disappeared round a cliff-end. I felt certain that there was no passage for us there, as indeed was the case, but eventually we got down into a little marshy plain, spied a bridge of two planks across the torrent, where he had forgotten his exasperation with the steep rocks and meandered lazily through a morass, and so crossed to the true right bank of the stream. Here Benjamin pursued some youths who were carrying up wood for fuel, and obtained from them some information about the way. I think he must have misunderstood their directions, as he declared that they said we must, when we had gone to a point visible below us, turn to the right. Now, though I *had* made a mistake higher up, one thing I *did* know, and that was that if you were going to Noasca you must keep to the left; so when we got to the junction, though the porter was against me, Benjamin, on my appeal to the map, supported me. It was here, as far as I can remember, that we looked back and saw the Grand Paradis, the Glacier de l'Abeille, and the Cresta Gastaldi, greatly exalted and glorified in the afternoon sunshine.

We before long came down to the great hollow to the S.W. of the mass called Blanc Giuir on the new map. I think what most struck us here was the extreme steepness of the pastures on the other side of the torrent under the ridge running from Blanc Giuir through Trasen Rosso to Gran Carro. Benjamin remarked that the cattle must have been reared on the spot to be able to graze on slopes so steep. 'Cattle from an ordinary Alp,' he laughingly added, 'would tumble off the mountain side.' I was very glad to see this great hollow under favourable circumstances—it remains with me as unique of its kind. There were many flowers and ferns—the flower was *Dianthus neglectus*, and the Parsley fern, *the* fern; but holly and beech ferns were also fairly plentiful. When nearly at the bottom of the hollow, we enjoyed a feast of bilberries. The path just below the bilberries had been destroyed for a considerable distance, and we had some trouble.

It was still a good way to Noasca, but the evening was beautiful; and when we got sight of the Levanna Orientale a golden sunset cloud was just enfolding his comely head. The last part of the descent we made by a new zigzag track which afforded easy walking but took us a long curve to the right. Night had fallen before we reached Noasca and were welcomed by the cold air and sonorous voice of the Orco.

The old rhyme about Noasca is no longer true—

Noasca, Noasca,
Poco pane, lunga tasca.

at any rate, as far as the first half is concerned; for we found good food and clean beds at the Albergo Reale. We were not the only visitors, for a party had just come in from Locana in a motor-car and were at supper when we arrived.

After supper I paid off the porter and agreed with the owner of a carriage to take us to Locana and Pont. We were to reach Pont at 11.30; I need hardly add that we were late.

On August 15 we soon descended into a beautiful world of chestnuts and walnuts, gurgling streams, rich meadows, and mellow sunshine. There were many pale green willows in the meadows, and many a dark green ash, though the latter had been severely cropped. The alders down by the Orco were beginning to lose their leaves, but the birch was grace itself. There were many country people in the road, as it was August 15, one of the great festivals of the year.

At Fornolosa there were some fine richly coloured geraniums in big pots on the balconies of two of the houses. A little

lower vines trained on tall trellis-work or up and over the houses were very picturesque. There were also figs, apples, and plums, and of course everywhere beans, often mixed with potatoes, growing rampantly. Hayfields here and there richly scented the fresh morning air with a homelike fragrance.

At Locana there was a great crowd. Our first task here was to send a telegram to Cogné to mine host of the Grivola to let him know our whereabouts, as we had said we should be back there on Saturday. There was much fruit on sale in the street—the market was, in fact, glutted. We bought good peaches at 2½d. the kilo (2 lbs.), and Benjamin said quite good small ones could be had for 1d. for the same quantity. Nectarines looked very tempting, but our ‘coward lips did from their colour fly’ when their adamant hardness became but too undeniable.

At Pont, at the Corona Grossa, there were seventeen people at lunch. After a meal, we drove up to Ronco. Just as we got out of the town we saw a beautiful fair-haired girl very becomingly gowned, with three roses in her bosom, and immediately afterwards two young women in picturesque dresses driving three cows.

In this valley of the Soana the people seemed more smiling—perhaps they had a stronger appreciation of the feast day—certainly no one could wish for more beautiful natural surroundings than are here to be found. The valley is clothed with wood, mainly chestnuts, though walnuts may also be seen, and the Soana far below the road makes music in its foliage-hidden bed.

Before we got to Ronco we came upon a rustic festival in full swing, with a tent and a planked floor for the dancers. Ronco was much altered since my last visit in 1895. It now boasts a big fashionable hotel—the Lavina-Soana—and offers the traveller excellent accommodation in lieu of the ‘entomological night on crackling maize-stalks in an old lumber-room’ of which history speaks in 1859! There were many people to be seen, most of them visitors who had come up from the plains to avoid the heat. We went on up the Val Campiglia to Campiglia, where we found quite a decent inn. On the way we saw some boys killing a snake in the road.

The cool of a beautiful evening was very grateful to us, and the voices of falling streams, not too loud to be musical, soothed our ears. The rambling inn seemed full of people, but I secured quite a decent room. The food was fair. The landlord was polite and anxious to do his best for us, but the cares and toils of probably the heaviest day in his season had obviously told upon him. Card-players were still busy and



C. F. Bennett, photo.

Swan Electric Engraving Co., Ltd.

TOUR DE GRAUSON.

noisy when I went to bed, and Benjamin said that the landlord could not get rid of them till August 16 was some hours old.

The next day, while we were parleying with an old herdsman at the Rancio chalet, I saw a very fine dog which reminded me of the splendid creature I had seen there in 1882. This I mentioned to the old man. He seemed to be much pleased, and said that the present dog was a descendant of the one I had admired so much twenty-seven years ago. We crossed to Cogne by the Col des Eaux Rouges. There were many flowers, *Saxifraga longifolia* amongst them, and we saw a number of chamois. Instead of going to Brouillot, we kept on the left bank of the main torrent and eventually joined the route from the Col Bardoney. The day was beautiful.

On August 19 we went up to the Grauson chalets. Before turning aside into the little flat where the chalets lie, there is an exceptionally fine view of the Grivola which fills the end of the valley. In the evening light I thought it one of the most impressive views of the great Cogne peak that I had seen. Later, with a new moon in the sky, we watched it again.

The herdsmen at Grauson were very hospitable—they gave us new milk, and offered us the choice of their own beds or clean hay in a chalet a little distance away. We chose the latter and were quite comfortable.

When I remarked to a herdsman that the pastures looked very brown, he said 'Yes; we have not had sufficient rain this season, and consequently we have not here as many cows as usual.'

We left the chalets at 6.20 A.M. on August 18.* We crossed the Lussert torrent and then went N.E. to a little col in the N.E. arête of the Tour de Grauson, from which the Lussert lakes were visible. After that we ascended for some time in a south-westerly direction along this arête. We then went from S.E. to N.W. from ridge to hollow and from hollow to ridge, the inclination in many places being decidedly steep. At 10.30 A.M.—about 8½ hours' walking from the chalets—we arrived just under the summit of the peak. When we had examined the peak from Cogne we had been very doubtful as to which of the many points of the summit ridge was actually the highest. When we found, after careful examination, that we were undoubtedly on the highest point I was much pleased, for it was unnecessary to spend the rest of the day in exploring all the 'fantastic

* See *Rivista Mensile C.A.I.* 1910, pp. 279–80.

pinnacles' of which the 'Climbers' Guide' speaks. The mountain on the N. or Lussert glacier side is very steep, and seemed to us decidedly dangerous by reason of falling stones. Of course it is quite possible that a better way up may be found from below than we could discern from the summit. We built a stone man on the highest point.*

On the descent we followed an entirely different route. There are several great couloirs in the S. face of the mountain that are well seen from the Grauson chalets. One of them begins almost under the very summit, descends straight down for some considerable distance, then turns to the right (W.) and finally becomes a torrent-bed, in parts very steep and not altogether easy. In this couloir, or on its sides, except in one place where for a short time a lateral gully was followed, we made our descent, Benjamin leading. The very last bit of the torrent bed, the steep part of which was about 100 metres above the Grauson chalets, was turned by the left bank.

Our route is probably much the quickest for the descent, as we only took 2 hours 10 minutes actual walking from the summit to the Grauson chalets. This couloir, in which we descended at least 3000 ft., is the great feature of the mountain, and was carefully examined by us from the chalets on our return.

The most interesting part of the view from the summit was the sight of the Valnontey from end to end. We returned leisurely to Cogné, well satisfied with our day's work.

THE FIRST ASCENT OF THE MATTERHORN BY THE FURGGEN ARÊTE.

By DR. MARIO PIACENZA.

[We offer our hearty thanks to Dr. Mario Piacenza and to the Editor of the 'Rivista Mensile' for permission to publish the following article. The translation we owe to Major E. L. Strutt.—EDITOR 'A. J.']

TO climb the Matterhorn by the Furggen arête has been my idea for many years, and has inspired in me a great desire to lift the veil of mystery which enshrouds it. The expedition certainly appears strenuous and impossible for

* I am indebted for the illustration to the kindness of Mr. C. F. Bennett. The photograph was taken from the Valnontey and gives an excellent idea of the Val de Grauson as well as the Tour.