

the rock which makes some of these at all possible.* The Chamonix guides received the news of the ascent with the sullen silence of incredulity, which after our departure changed to active denial of our statements.

The weather now became bad for five days, during which Todhunter and Young both left the mountains. Later J. M. A. Thomson and I, with Knubel, traversed the Matterhorn twice in three days, which brought Knubel some small measure of consolation for the departure of his beloved patron; and so home. Thus ended the most memorable and most successful season I have ever had or indeed am ever likely to have in the Alps—a season in which weather, conditions, comrades, and luck were all that could be desired, a season which has provided pleasant memories to carry one through the years to come. It is surely not possible that two such can fall to the lot of mortal man.

THE COL DE LA BRENV.†

By CLAUDE WILSON.

AT 8.20 P.M. on July 28, 1904, Wicks, Bradby and I, accompanied by two porters, walked out of the courtyard of the Hôtel Royal at Courmayeur into the moonlight. The porters were to go with us as far as the usual bivouac, but a long day was in front of us three, for we hoped to cross by the

* During the discussion which followed the reading of this paper it was stated, by some members who had previously studied this face, that large stones had been seen to fall down it. Our experience showed the face to be so sound throughout that it is difficult to understand how stones could fall on such steep rocks, except during a thaw in the spring or after a heavy snowfall; the face is normally quite dry.

† This paper was written when the events which it records were fresh in the memory of the writer. It was put by in an unfinished state, and recently unearthed by Captain Farrar in the course of his investigations into the history of the various expeditions by the Brenva Face (*see ante* p. 171). From Captain Farrar's researches it would appear that, while Mt. Blanc has been ascended about a dozen times by this face, the expedition here recorded is probably the first and only passage of the Col de la Brenva, used as a route across the range.



F. S. S. Photo

James Gordon Engineering Co. Ltd.

The Brenva face of M^t Blanc

from ridge below Aigu du Grand

*In the foreground are the Aigu du Grand and
the white snows of the Glacier du Grand*

Brenva Glacier and the Corridor to the Grands Mulets. Whether or not we reached the summit of Mt. Blanc we did not care—indeed the day seemed long enough in any case, and we had already ascended Mt. Blanc from the Midi Hut, thus meeting the final slope from the Col de la Brenva by the Mur de la Côte. The expedition is an exceptional one, and all the parties who had preceded us—some eight or nine—had camped at a bivouac six or eight hours above Courmayeur. Only once before had this route been attempted by a guideless party, and I well remember the night (August 4-5, 1894), when Mummery Hastings and Collie slept out for it: and we, on the Aig. des Glaciers, often thought of them next day. High up, they got too far to the left, and it was only after a second night out that they succeeded in surmounting the difficulties with which they found themselves confronted. All the other parties had been led by first-rate guides, and most of them had found the expedition long and arduous even when starting from the bivouac. It seemed daring and almost impudent of us to start on such an expedition direct from the valley. But we were very fit: it was the end of a fine-weather holiday during which, in addition to making numerous ascents, we had already crossed the Mt. Blanc chain five times transversely, and once longitudinally: the weather was glorious: and, most important of all, the light of a full moon began early and ran on to meet the dawn. There were in addition other considerations which affected us: we knew well the steep route up to the gîte—and we feared it in the heat of the day: and, finally, we knew of friends who had expended—some of them more than once—time, money, and energy, in reaching the miserable sleeping place, only to get wet through in the night, and to return to Courmayeur next morning. The weather was now quite perfect, and one more fine day seemed certain. We wanted that day for this expedition—and fortune favoured us.

Forty minutes by road and meadow led us to Entrèves, where we turned to the left into the rough lane which leads to the Brenva Glen. The route was quite familiar to us, but the narrow track through the upper woods is easily lost even in daylight, and, as was to be expected, we got off it, and had to scramble as best we could up the steep grass and rubble which leads to the shoulder just before the stream is crossed at the curious passage sometimes called the Brenva Brèche. Were it not for this shallow basin, where the torrent, impassable above, shallows out before its plunge into the valley, the diverse

routes to which the Brenva Glacier leads would be much more difficult of access. We had been going pretty fast after leaving the valley, and crossed the stream, after imbibing freely of its refreshing contents, at 10.35. Thence, up to the rock shelf, now generally used as a bivouac, higher and to the E. of the place made use of by the earlier parties, involves about $3\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. of exceedingly steep walking, varied near the foot of the Aig. de la Brenva by crossing the E. branch of the glacier, to the rock island which separates the upper snows of Mt. Blanc from those of the Tour Ronde. On the ice at the foot of this island we took our first meal (12.20–12.50) and started up the steep pathless slope of moraine and broken rock towards the gîte, where we arrived at 2.45. Here we dismissed our porters, shouldered the sacks, put on the rope and crampons, and commenced the climb where it is generally begun, at 3.15 A.M., seven hours after leaving Courmayeur. The rocks immediately above the shelf present some little difficulty in shadowed moonlight, but in half an hour we were above them, and on the ridge of hard snow which forms a crest between the upper basins of the glacier. Our inclination was to bear to the left as soon as possible, but there is no escaping from the ridge, which has to be followed to its logical conclusion, where it eases off, at a point rather higher than one would have chosen, and a gentle downward slope of easy snow leads in the direction of Mt. Blanc.

Dawn was now breaking, and the light sufficient to allow us to examine at close quarters the great ridge by which we hoped to make our way.* Rocks in the lower portion led up to a little peak of snow, at the top of which we knew must lie the celebrated level ice arête, above which, according to our recollection of Moore's graphic account of the first ascent, no very serious

* Our route is traced in red on the map published in the *Alpine Journal* vol. xxv. p. 497, and may be easily made out from the marked photograph in the present volume p. 203. From 1 we went transversely to the left to a point vertically below the gap between Mt. Blanc and Mt. Blanc de Courmayeur. Thence we went up the main ridge and joined the traced track at 8. Thence we followed the marked route to the highest rocks (13), from which we traversed horizontally to the right to the Col de la Brenva. On Sig. Sella's beautiful photograph, here reproduced, our route from the ice arête to the Col. de la Brenva can be easily traced. The difficulties likely to be met with above the rocks—at the level of the Col—are clearly shown.

difficulties were encountered. The arête we could not see, as it was hidden by the pyramid of snow which forms its nether end : and if what lay above should prove to be snow and not ice—as, to our encouragement, looked possible—there appeared to be no special difficulty until a small rock tower, corresponding in height to the Col de la Brenva but a good quarter mile to its S., should be reached. Here however difficulties of a formidable nature appeared. To the left, where Mummery's party had turned back, the slopes appeared horribly steep, and obviously consisted of ice : immediately above the tower a double tier of vertical, or slightly overhanging séracs, presented the appearance of a continuous wall, with no apparent gap, and looked far from encouraging : while to the right, the gentle final slope leading to the Brenva Col—where 'even a roll down would not be attended with any serious consequences'—was separated from the tower by a broad couloir of glassy ice of somewhat appalling steepness, topped by the vertical ice wall just alluded to, and bounded on the right (N.) by a ridge of broken séracs. Perhaps we did not analyse the situation very carefully : we knew that many inequalities in the ice wall might exist not discernible from this distance, and we thought that, once the 'arête' was passed, we should get up somehow, and very likely find a gap as others had done in the line of straight ascent towards the summit of Mt. Blanc. Anyway, this was no place to pause for long, so on we went, and in 10 or 15 mins. after leaving the snow ridge, came to a steep slope downwards with a bergschrund at its foot, beyond which a level passage of crevassed névé, above the ice fall of the Brenva Glacier which our route had 'turned,' led to the foot of the great ridge where the true day's work was to begin. Here we were confronted by another schrund involving some pushing of the first man, and subsequent pulling of the others ; and above this, a short steep slope of what unfortunately proved to be ice, led to the rocks of the buttress, where at 5.40 we partook of our second meal, enjoyed for half an hour the lovely air and glorious surroundings, and started off at 6.15—10 hrs. from the valley—to attempt the celebrated Brenva route—an expedition we had long desired to try.

We were soon on the ridge of the buttress, and climbed to its top by means of fairly easy rocks, interspersed with short ice slopes, passing at 6.45 the only trace of a previous party which

* Moore, *The Alps in 1864*, p. 348. Moore's account is also published in *Alpine Journal*, vol. ii.

the day's climb afforded—in the shape of Captain Farrar's card in a bottle. These rocks, owing chiefly to the large amount of interpolated ice, took longer to ascend than we expected, and it was not till 9.30 that we reached their top. Here we again partook of the harmless and necessary repast, and started off at 10.10, kicking steps up the little pyramid of snow which marks the southern end of the ice arête. The descriptions which we had heard and read of this arête had led us to expect something very terrifying. So it was, perhaps, not surprising that what we saw, though very steep on both sides, looked fairly easy. Of course, looking straight along it, there was foreshortening—and it certainly took much longer to negotiate than we anticipated. It looked as if 20 mins. might see us at the further end, whereas it took an hour. The top of the ridge consisted of very hard snow and not of actual ice, but in all other respects Moore's description of it in 1865 was exactly what we found.

'On reaching the little snow pyramid on which we now stood,' says Moore,* 'the apparent peak proved not to be a peak at all, but the extremity of the narrowest and most formidable ice arête I ever saw, which extended almost on a level for an uncomfortably long distance. On most arêtes, however narrow the actual crest may be, it is generally possible to get a certain amount of support by driving the pole into the slope below on either side. But this was not the case here. We were on the top of a wall, the ice on the right falling vertically (I use the word advisedly), and on the left nearly so. On neither side was it possible to obtain the slightest hold with the alpenstock. The space for walking was at first about the breadth of an ordinary wall, in which Jakob cut holes for the feet.' Later it became narrower, and 'regular steps could no longer be cut, but Jakob, as he went along, simply sliced off the top of the ridge.'

This latter plan was what we adopted from the first, and had we simply walked along it, all moving at the same time, as we did for a part of the distance, half an hour would have sufficed to traverse it. As it was—in the latter half—the leader made the pathway as far as the length of the rope would permit, and then sat down astride while the next man came along, so that two were always sitting to one moving. This process was repeated many times over, which shows that the length of the ridge must have been considerable, as we were using a

* *Loc. cit.*, p. 356.

100 ft. length of rope, and advanced nearly 50 ft. at each stage.*

We found but little actual difficulty, however, in crossing this arête, and congratulated ourselves on reaching its further end. The time was now about 11.30, and we had gained a height of about 12,500 feet. A steep slope of what looked like hard névé led first to the right, then to the left, and then to the right again, before we could reach a ridge of rocks which stretched upwards and ended just below the ice cliffs in the little rock tower already alluded to, some 1700 ft. above us. We had been lucky in finding the crest of the arête to consist of hard snow rather than of actual ice, and the white slopes above us looked as if one might kick or scrape steps. Alas! until we were within 15 mins. of the Col, there were not more than a dozen steps which could be so negotiated. 'Ice, white like snow, but hard like ice' (Güssfeldt), was what we had to deal with, and two or three hours were consumed before we reached the rocks. Here some help was found by climbing up the edge of the rock-rib, and occasionally upon it, but it was 4 o'clock in the afternoon before we reached the rock tower, and sat down on a ledge to take a little food. From the time when we had sat astride on the arête there had only been one place, and that only about an hour above it, where the three of us could have got near enough to each other to unpack a sack and get at our provisions.

The little tower of rock, where, at the hour of 4 P.M., we partook of a late lunch or early tea, is clearly visible on many of the photographs which show this ridge, and all of the parties who had ascended by this route must have rested there, for in the only accounts I know of this expedition (Moore—Hastings—Güssfeldt), the rocks just below the wall of séracs are mentioned, and this tower marks their topmost limit. Some would seem to have kept well to the left of the rock rib in ascending to this point, and if the ice is snow—to use an Irishism—this would certainly save time. But the ice hereabouts is in all probability very seldom snow, and I am sure we acted wisely in keeping near or on the upper rocks, though to arrive at them needed some pretty severe work.

But Moore's party having found ice on the arête—where we found snow—obviously found this part of the ascent in much better condition than we did. 'There was no particular

* The classic method adopted by the first party, and insisted on by Melchior Anderegg, is for all but the leader to cross the arête *à cheval* (*loc. cit.* p. 357).

difficulty beyond what arose from the extreme steepness of the slope, necessitating almost continuous step-cutting. Sometimes there was snow enough to help us, but . . . I suppose that altogether about every other step had to be cut in ice.' We had no such luck, and with the exception of some twenty paces on a fairly level shelf about an hour above the arête, there was no single step where we found any snow to help us. Everywhere it was ice—and hard ice. In spite of the favourable condition, Moore's party, with the best of guides, took $2\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. from the end of the arête to the rocks at the foot of the wall of séracs. We took $4\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. on this part of the ascent, and this has always seemed to me to be very slow going. But though we made some use of the rocks we must have *cut* at least three ice steps for every two of theirs, and it is not surprising that we took an unconscionable time about it. Mummery's party, on their second and successful assault, made considerable use of the rocks, and appear to have found them in better condition than we did—more free than is from ice in cracks and gullies.

I am unable to account for the idea which we had formed, and which others seem to have shared,* that no formidable difficulty would be encountered after the ice arête was passed, for in re-reading the accounts, all three parties evidently found serious obstacles where we did—and certainly in our own case the previous difficulties of the expedition sank into insignificance in comparison with the work we had to do after leaving the rock tower.

The situation in which we found ourselves was briefly this: the rocks above the tower ran up towards the foot of a vertical and unbroken wall of ice, and became buried before reaching its foot, the wall being thus separated from us by a short ice slope of extreme steepness. No breach of any kind existed in this wall, which cannot have been less than 20 ft. in height, so that progress directly upwards was impossible. We reconnoitred to the left, only to find, as we anticipated from Mummery's experience, a hopelessly long slope of steep hard ice, ending in further séracs at a higher level. To our right lay the direct way towards the col—but the only part of the route visible to us was the first 300 or 400 ft., which consisted of a hard, smooth, slightly concave slope of glassy ice at an angle of

* This notion seems still to be prevalent (*see ante*, p. 205), and though in Moore's account the formidable passage here alluded to is fully described, he distinctly states at the close of his paper that 'the ice arête is the only *very* serious difficulty on the route.'

about 65°, originating above at the foot of the ice wall, and stretching downwards to the Brenva Glacier, 8000 or 4000 ft. below—thus forming the chute by which masses and fragments from the séracs commonly descend.

Three reasons obtruded themselves against attempting to cross this formidable slope or couloir. The obvious danger of an avalanche falling while we were in transit was the least of the three. The sérac wall, so far as we could see it, formed a vertical cliff with no irregularity or overhang: the weather was intensely cold, and the sun sinking rapidly behind Mt. Blanc. There was therefore little danger from this source. The risk of a slip during the transit was a very real one, and the position was one where the rope would be a danger to the other two and of no help to the one who slipped: if one fell all would inevitably go. The third difficulty arose in the doubt as to what might be encountered at the opposite side of the slope, for it was walled in on the far side by a bank of steep and broken séracs, whose projecting pinnacles and towers stood out in sharp outline against the evening sky, almost as if cut in cardboard. Somewhere beyond them, we knew, lay the gentle slope of 'névé' on which one might 'roll' with impunity, but whether this would prove to be separated from them by another ice slope, or perhaps by impassable crevasses, we could not tell. Our position was a somewhat anxious one. To spend the night on the tower would mean bad frostbite—or worse—and to descend to the rocks below the ice arête, where Mummery's party spent their second night, was already but doubtfully possible at this hour. Go on we felt we must—but how to go on?

Our predecessors had all reached this tower much earlier in the day, but those who have left records would all appear to have experienced at this spot a similar doubt and difficulty as to how to proceed.* Let us see what each of the three printed records says.

Güssfeldt. (1892.)†—'At the moment when we quitted the rocks at 4320 m., we entered the worst phase of the expedition. . . . Moreover we began again to doubt whether we should be able to get up. For the first time we did not know which direction to take. Everywhere were steep slopes where each step required sixty strokes of the axe At 10.45 we were at a height of 4320 m. One hour later, I wrote

* Our successors also seem to have found difficulties here. See *ante*, pp. 205, 207.

† *Der Mont Blanc*, p. 234 *seq.*

in my note-book "Situation desperate." The difficulty proceeded especially from the hardness of the ice, and from the fact that we were unable to discover a good route. As I had not to cut the steps, and as we only advanced at the rate of one step a minute, I had plenty of leisure to appreciate the gravity of the situation. . . . "The minutes are like hours. The ice is white like snow, and yet hard like ice. To the right and to the left sparkling beds of bluish *névé*. Nowhere a way out. . . ." We advanced with deadly slowness. All of a sudden the way out showed itself. At 4440 m. the ice changed to snow beneath our feet.'

Hastings.* (1894.)—'The rock-rib afforded a pleasant change and some interesting scrambling. On reaching the foot of the ice cliffs we bore away to the right, cutting steps along the base of them, here resting on the edge of the rock wall until we reached a crevasse, which had opened by one half of the lower side travelling over the rocks, and by this opening we hoped to get out on to the top of the line of ice cliff. Into this gap blocks of blue ice had fallen, making a very steep pitch in a wall of about 25 ft. We tried it, did *not* like it, and thought we should be better elsewhere; so we traversed back to our left. Two chinks in the ice cliff we tried, but they gave no better line . . . and we were driven back to the crevasse opening. There seemed to be no more feasible way. The thought of retreat was dismissed. The pile of loosely tumbled ice blocks was frozen together, and covered in places by fresh snow. A short distance off a cave ran far back into the ice cliff, and while two of us stationed ourselves in it, the other man tried to get up the pile of frozen blocks. At the second attempt Collie, our featherweight, boldly overcame the difficulty by fixing the three ice axes into the interstices of this curiously formed wall, and using them as handholds and footholds.'

Moore.† (1865.)—'On our right . . . was the depression marking the head of the Corridor, being apparently about the same level as we were. There was our goal in full view, but between us and it was a great gulf which there was no obvious way of crossing. . . . Our position was, in fact, rather critical. Immediately over our heads the slope on which we were terminated in a great mass of broken *séracs*, which might come down with a run at any moment. . . . It seemed improbable that any way out of our difficulties would be found in

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xvii. p. 548.

† *Loc. cit.* p. 358.

that quarter. But where else to look? There was no use in going to the left—to the right we *could* not go, and back we *would* not go. After careful scrutiny, Melchior thought it just possible we might find a passage through the séracs on to the higher and more level position of the glacier to the right of them, and there being obviously no chance of success in any other direction, we turned towards them. The ice here was steeper and harder than it had yet been. In spite of all Melchior's care the steps were painfully insecure, and we were glad to get a grip with one hand of the rocks alongside which we passed. . . . Melchior had steered with his usual discrimination, and was now attacking the séracs at the only point where they appeared at all practicable. Standing over the mouth of a crevasse, choked with débris, he endeavoured to lift himself on to its upper edge, which was about 15 ft. above. But to accomplish this seemed at first a task too great even for his agility, aided, as it was, by vigorous pushes *a tergo*. At last by a marvellous exercise of skill and activity he succeeded.'

If the reader will look back to the paragraph preceding these extracts, he will see that our position was less fortunate than that of any of these parties. To the right and to the left of the rock tower it is probable that the slopes are much the same from year to year. Straight above, where the séracs lie, was the route by which all our predecessors had ascended, and here the condition may easily alter from week to week.* We had the misfortune to find an *unbroken* wall of ice, separated from the highest rocks by a steep ice slope. The others had found faults in the cliff: a steep slope straight up in one case; crevasses choked with irregular blocks in the others; and rocks to hold to quite close to the difficulty, or some haven where the followers could secure themselves while the leader climbed. Had we found any such passage, however formidable, I think we should have welcomed it, and would have probably echoed Moore's words, 'To the right we *could* not go.' But necessity is the

* Though great difficulty at this point must be expected, it is not inevitable. The pitch is so steep that a fairly easy route straight up must be rare, but the frequent variations make it possible. Some parties have not alluded to it, when asked to describe their route, and Captain Farrar, who found the general conditions of the ascent exceptionally severe, writes (extract from private letter): 'We found a narrow crack in the ice wall, and squeezed through it, and then got up over some big square blocks of broken ice.'

mother of more things than invention, and after spending half an hour in reconnoitring the position thoroughly, we arrived at the unanimous conclusion that to the right we *must* go, or stay where we were for the night, at a height of over 14,000 ft. ; and the risks involved in staying there were great, considering the intense cold of the early evening. We decided, and no doubt rightly, to go on ; and the next 2 hrs. of work remain as an indelible memory with us all. At 5 P.M. we started on again. Downwards from the highest rocks, just above the tower, climbing gingerly, and we were soon upon the slippery ice, with here and there a rock foothold jutting out, but nowhere anything in the shape of handhold, and nowhere a friendly knob on to which to hitch a rope. Next, ice alone, with no rocks at all, for 2 hrs. Steep slippery ice, of a hardness unknown to us before, and with a curious quality, unique in our experience, born probably of great cold and enormous pressure—a quality of viscosity, which gave the impression of cutting into something which would not chip, but whose particles clung together like stiff tar. The axe struck the surface with a thud, and the pick had often to be wriggled out, bringing very little away. The work of making steps in this material, almost as hard as marble and tough as rubber, was most arduous.* And every step had to be a fairly ample one—some to take both feet—and everywhere a rail of handholds undercut to get a grip. Our gloves froze to these holds and to the slippery coat of ice which covered completely the stocks of the axes ; and if by any chance a bare hand touched the metal, it stuck to it as if adhering by quickly fixing glue. Fifty feet of rope was between each of us, yet we seemed but very little distance on the ice ere the last man had to leave reluctantly the last little islet of rock, on which one foot at least seemed comparatively secure. About a third of the way across, a little hollow, probably once a crevasse, showed up about 10 ft. above us, and a short zigzag back was made to lead us to it. This hollow saved us some half-dozen steps, and beyond it, several small irregularities in the surface saved some extra blows in making the remainder of the track. The intense cold, the stillness of the evening, the hard work, and more than all the mental strain of traversing such steep ice for so long—combined to

* Compare Farrar (*ante*, p. 173). ‘Short stretches of ice of the colour of plaster-of-Paris were encountered, so tough and unbrittle that the axe-head simply stuck in them without bringing anything away.’

form a situation which impresses itself very firmly on the memory: and we all knew that each would have been three times as safe without the rope. At last, at 7 P.M., the séracs on the other side were reached at a point where a shelf about 5 ft. up gave access to a shallow cave beyond. From the roof of the cave an icicle about the thickness of a man's leg at the knee came down and joined the shelf, forming a pillar. The leader put both arms round the icicle, and, not without some misgiving, slung himself on to the shelf and over it into the cave. Here, with one foot against the base of the icicle, he felt secure, and at about 7.15 we all were huddled in the cave, profoundly thankful to be in a place of safety for the nonce, but still anxious as to what might lie beyond. The last man into the cave was the first man out, and, cutting steps round the dwindling shelf, soon stepped across on to another ice tower, like a gigantic tea cup upside down. Round this more steps had to be cut, and then a six-foot jump down on to very hard ice blocks in a choked crevasse, where we all collected once again. Then up the other side of the crevasse, and joyful shout from above, for we were on the edge of the plateau 'where even a *roll* would not be likely to be attended by serious consequences.' Down the welcome slope of *névé* we sped—across a fairly level stretch and up the other side—in zigzags—scraping steps, and at 8.10 P.M.—23 hrs. and 50 mins. after leaving the hotel, we again stepped out of the shadow into bright moonlight, at the head of the Corridor. Out of this time just 2 hrs. and 40 mins. had been spent in halts: the rest of it had been pretty hard work—some of it very hard.

The Col de la Brenva on which we stood is only 1500 ft. below the summit of Mt. Blanc—the moonlight was glorious, and the air still. Had we been as fresh as we felt, we might have easily ascended to the top. But the strain being removed, the effect of the work and want of sleep (it was 36 hrs. since we had been in bed) were beginning to tell, and we had stopped to 'puff' two or three times in ascending the short slope of *névé* leading to the col. We never seriously thought of ascending further, so down the Corridor we made our way, still sufficiently awake to appreciate and enjoy a moonlight descent of Mt. Blanc.

We had hoped to find traces in the Corridor, but were disappointed. Still we made a very good route till near the Grand Plateau, when we got too much to the left, and had to cut steps down the steep slopes and among the séracs near the Rochers Rouges. Then, half asleep, we made our way across the great stretch of snow and up the other side, and at length

found ourselves on the ample track made by numerous parties descending from the Bosses. Down we went, across the Petit Plateau, and down again—a long way it seemed—till at last the rocks of the Grands Mulets came in sight. No doubt we were all pretty sleepy as well as tired. I was leading and had to keep awake to find the way ; but Bradby and Wicks both saw ghosts upon the Grand Plateau—other parties near us, and that sort of thing. When our goal was in sight I suppose my vigilance also was relinquished, for I saw a curious sight, at which I marvelled, and thought how foolish of the parents to allow it, even in daylight—children playing and running about on the glacier, among the great crevasses below the hut. I kept my eye on them, and when we got near they were great blocks of stone lying on the snow, the relative position of which naturally kept changing as we zigzagged about among the crevasses higher up.

At 10.30 P.M. our long day came to an end, and we knocked up the kindly caretakers, partook of excellent soup, and went to bed prepared to sleep if need be till the following afternoon. However, in spite of most comfortable beds, we were all awake and ready to get up at 7 A.M. next day, and at 11 we reached Pierre Pointue. Here we had hoped for a good lunch, as we had been most frugal since our truly 'Royal' meal at Courmayeur 89 hrs. previously. But we had grown fastidious, and learned with disgust that the Pierre Pointue could produce no salad. Consequently we did the two extra hours of up and down, which seemed so needless seeing that the two inns are almost on a level, and lunched admirably on salad and other delicacies at the comfortable little shanty on the Plan de l'Aiguille, and dined excellently later on among the many friends we found at Montanvers. And so to bed.

MONT BLANC BY THE BRENVA AND OTHER TRAVERSES IN 1911.

By W. R. CAESAR.

(Read before the Alpine Club, June 4, 1912.)

WHEN asked to read a Paper on the Brenva route and other climbs of last season, my natural trepidation was somewhat calmed by the reflection that the subject would enable various slides to be shown. Thanks to the kindness of