

but recalling some of the old prints of the early ascents of Mont Blanc. The Cevedale, bathed in the early sunshine of a glorious summer day, was swarming with life, and, though it must yet be some time before the Schaubach crowd would arrive, we counted no less than seventy people, in groups of two, upon its slopes. Some were on the top, and some already coming down, when we reached the summit at 6.15; but we were the only party who descended by any route other than the gentle cart-track by which we had gone up, and by 6.30 we had reached the col beyond it, where we roped to descend the rather steep slopes towards the Forno Valley. The walk down the valley was delightful, and, passing the splendidly situated Forno inn at about 11, we arrived at Santa Caterina at 12.30. That night we slept at Bormio, and the next evening found us once more in fairyland, amidst welcoming friends at Masino. Here we spent the last week of our holiday, and made three delightful expeditions among those fascinating peaks. But our tale of the Ortler district is told.

ACROSS COUNTRY FROM CHAMPEX TO CHAMONIX.
AUGUST, 1913.

A Roundabout Ramble.

By B. LAWFORD.

THE distance dividing these two points is roughly thirty miles, and it could, I suppose, be accomplished in a long day's journey by way of the Col d'Orny, the Fenêtre de Saleinaz, and the Col du Chardonnet. The way taken, however, was certainly more interesting, and inasmuch as the journey occupied nearly three weeks, it was equally certainly longer. If I add that perhaps a better title for this Paper would be 'More Cabbage, Worse Cooked' ('A.J.' xxix. 242), I shall have given sufficient warning to those who are indifferent to such homely fare to enable them to pass it by.

My first intention was to go to Bourg St. Pierre and cross the Col du Sonadon to Chanrion. Heavy thunderstorms on July 30 and 31 put this out of the question, so on August 1 I left Champex at 6 A.M. in a very ramshackle little char, accompanied by G. Biselx and a porter. The descent to Orsières is abrupt and bone-shaking; in one place we had to

lift the cart over a small landslide, due to the torrential rains of the previous day ; a long slow drive up the Val de Bagnes brought us to Lourtier, where we shouldered our packs and strolled up to Fionnay. I may add that Biselx, when told the time, remarked 'Tiens! nous avons couru!' After lunch, a hot stuffy grind to Chanrion, enlivened by losing three-quarters of an hour attempting a short cut, which failed owing to our being unable to cross the torrent coming down from the Breney Glacier.

The first night in a hut is generally disagreeable, and this was no exception, unless the sight of a young and good-looking Swiss girl smoking a briar may be called one. A Swiss guideless party came in about 10 o'clock, and made a fearful racket ; still, that was better than having to turn out and look for them, as would have been the case at midnight had they not arrived, as they had left the hut early that morning for the Ruinette, and there was a good deal of cloud and fresh snow about.

We left the hut at 3.15, under a brilliant star-sown sky, stumbled over moraine to the Breney Glacier, and romped up this to the Col de Breney at 6.30, the snow being in excellent order—on our way up we paused to see the sunrise on the Combin, which was a joy to behold. Leaving our sacks on the col, we diverged to the Pigne d'Arolla, whence we obtained splendid views in all directions. Plunging down through soft snow, we reached the Pas de Chèvres at 10, amidst the rank and fashion of Arolla, and the latter place at 11.30. Here I found W., whom I had come to meet, and G., also many friends, mostly of the Club. A slack Sunday, including an afternoon stroll to the Lac Bleu, introduced me to some of the varied charms of Arolla.

G., with her two guides, Albert Supersaxo, of Saas, and his son Pierre, W., and I set out at 3.20 on August 4 and struggled up the steep, rhododendron-covered slopes to the foot of the Aig. de la Za ; but it was nearly 11 before we perched on the summit, like crows on Cleopatra's Needle ; and one of the party, at any rate, was by no means sorry to have the aid—I beg pardon—the 'moral support' of the rope over the second of the two difficult pitches. An enjoyable hour on the top was too soon over, and a rather roasting grind over soft snow landed us at the Bertol Cabane by 3 P.M.

Pleasant hours on the sunbaked rocks passed all too swiftly, as we watched alternately the play of light and shade over the magnificent snowfields and on the Dent Blanche, and gazed

into the purple valleys leading to the tumbled sea of peaks in the west. The hut that night was desperately full ; parties kept arriving until well after 9, and the first crowd to leave were moving about before midnight ; so none of us had overmuch sleep ; but we had the benefit of the place to ourselves for breakfast, and the merit of being the last party to leave at 5. It struck me that the descent of the Bertol rocks by lantern light must be quite a ticklish operation, safeguarded though they be. We had a beautiful walk across the upper névé of the Ferpêche Glacier, which was in fine condition, to the Col d'Hérens, reached, after diverging to the Tête Blanche, at 7.10, where we spent some little time admiring the Dent d'Hérens, and the stupendous west wall of the Matterhorn ; then we made a fairly speedy descent to the rocks of the Stockje, where we spent a sunny hour. The descent to Zermatt followed in due course ; as all know, it is something monotonous, and we arrived hot, dusty, and dishevelled, to find we had an hour or two to wait for a train to Randa. However, the time passed quickly between the barber's shop, the post-office, and Seiler's tea-garden. Randa was reached at 5, where we were warmly welcomed by M. de Werra, and, better still, by my friend and guide, Pierre Cotter of Zinal. After consultation, we wired for his nephew, T. Theytaz, to join us ; and so, after an early dinner, to bed.

Next morning G. left us for London, taking the Supersaxos with her down the valley. It may perhaps be of interest to observe that the previous entry to G.'s in the Führerbuch of Supersaxo was simply signed by a Christian name, 'Albert,' one of the Club's most honoured honorary members.

We moved out after lunch for the Dom hut, having arranged with de Werra to send up Theytaz on the following day with more provisions and possibly P., should he arrive, our intention being to climb the Dom one day, and the next to cross the ridge to Saas. But in this country the weather disposes ; we got a soaking or ever we reached the hut at 6.15, and a night of storm was succeeded by heavy thick clouds of the densest variety, which forbade any attempt at a start. So having the hut to ourselves, we luxuriated in blankets, and reposed till a late hour. Of course, when it was far too late to dream of doing anything, the sun broke through ; but I am fain to admit that I would not willingly have missed that day from my life, perched high on the hill-side, now in the glorious sunlight, watching the mists boil and rise from the valley below ; anon driven to shelter from a sudden spurt

of rain; then, when this had passed, watching wonderful effects of the Weisshorn breaking through the mist and the rainstorm driving up the valley towards Zermatt. One picture in particular stays with me of a sharp storm on the Mettelhorn, blurring this hill to a shapeless indigo mass, while the sun shone resplendent on Schallhorn and Weisshorn.

Towards late afternoon, W. became restless, so we put on boots and axes, and sallied forth up the moraine to the Festi Glacier, where we indulged in some gentle exercise, Pierre remaining in the hut. Returning an hour later, smoke curled from the chimney, and two or three figures approached the hut from below. We got back to find Theytaz, a sturdy, good-looking youngster ('il est *très noir*' was Pierre's description of him), and a party of four guideless German boys, intent on the Dom. For our part, we made up our minds to give the latter a miss, and cross to Saas should the morrow be favourable.

At 2 o'clock, on August 8, Pierre called me, and we inspected what ought to have been the heavens, but was a dense mist. At 4 o'clock we looked out again: the mist was still dense, but for one short moment I caught a ghostly glimmer of the Weisshorn with a single star shining clear above it. This was enough; we pulled the others out of their bunks, breakfasted, and left the hut by 5, the Germans remaining, as they didn't care about the look of the weather. After an hour's steady grind, the mist suddenly became less opaque, and almost at once we emerged into brilliant sunshine; looking back across the sea of fleecy white clouds which filled the valley, the Weisshorn shone golden in the morning light. We soon gained the Festijoch (7.15), descended to cross the head of the Hohberg Glacier, and mounted fairly steep slopes to the ridge running between the Nadel- and Hohberghorn—a short climb along the ridge landing us on the latter at 9.45 A.M. The view should be fine, but was partially obscured by a good deal of shifting cloud; we observed parties on the Nadelhorn and Südlenzspitz. After breakfast, prospecting north along the ridge, we soon reached the lowest point between the Hohberghorn and Dürrenhorn, and considered the next move. The wall drops pretty steeply to the Ried Glacier, some 1200 feet below, according to the map (but it looked about ten times as much!), so turning face in, Theytaz started to go down slowly, and as the rope tightened, one by one we followed him, leaving Pierre in the post of honour. Only one moved at a time, jamming feet and hands well home at each step, and

luckily the snow was in splendid condition. I remember looking down between my feet on one point, and seeing the top of W.'s hat ; then looking up to see Pierre's face grinning at me between his knees, so I take it the slope was tolerably steep. I know the sun on my back was very hot, and by the time we reached the bottom at 12.45 I had had quite enough, and was glad to lie on my back and repose. When it came to moving on, we were in a bit of a quandary—Théophile, who was the only one of us with any local knowledge, had acquired it by climbing the Südlensspitz in a snowstorm two years before : there was plenty of shifting cloud about, which made it difficult to pick up landmarks ; so we decided to make for a very obvious col across the glacier, which we gained at 2.40, the guides being cheered on the way by traces of another party, which (needless to say) subsequently disappeared when most needed. We were now on a heavily corniced arête, which fell sharply from our feet to a much crevassed glacier a long way below, as far as we could see through the occasional gaps in the clouds that drove constantly by us. We were, of course, actually on the summit of the Ried Pass, and not the Windjoch, where we desired to be ; and, consequently, there was nothing for it but to traverse the Ulrichshorn, which lay between us and our goal, as a descent from the Ried Pass looked very uninviting, and we could not afford to waste too much time hunting for the proper line. A steady pull brought us on to the Ulrichshorn just before 4 ; we did not linger, but rattled down the other side to the Windjoch, and thence at a good swinging pace across the glacier, and so to the Mischabel hut, reached at 5. A rest here, and a cup of tea was very welcome ; then, as the hut was rapidly filling with climbers from Saas, we jogged down the steep zigzags, and were welcomed by Fräulein Marie, at the Hôtel du Glacier, shortly before 8.

Saturday was a thoroughly lazy day ; it rained and was very cold ; we found friends at the Grand, and P. arrived in the early afternoon from Täsch *via* the Alphubeljoch.

Sunday, 10th, the weather was better, so, after a quiet morning, we left at 9 for the Britannia hut, *via* the Plattje, following the attractive path that runs high above the Mattmarkthal. The hut was crowded as usual, but we got away by 5.30 on the Monday, a cold clear morning, and plodded up to the Adler Pass, reached at 8. Our only excitement was to see Pierre, who was leading, occasionally disappear knee- or thigh-deep in a crevasse. The wind here was bitterly cold, and after we

had gone a little way up the Strahlhorn slopes became too much for P.—as he was fresh from Gibraltar it is not much to be wondered at. We had unluckily no spare rope, so all turned tail and descended to the Fluh Alp—the afternoon passed dozing in the sun, varied on my part by a dip in the cold waters of the little lake, and admiring the, from this point, particularly fine view of the Gabelhorn. There were several parties in the little inn that evening, all bound like ourselves (except P., who deemed discretion the better part) for the Rimpfischhorn, and the table d'hôte was correspondingly scrappy.

Next morning, 12th, the stars winked in ominous fashion, and all the guides displayed a reluctance to start. However, a middle-aged damsel of fifty-five, whose second season it was, set everybody an example by leading off at a good round pace; and one by one all the parties followed. I will frankly admit that the Rimpfischhorn, as a climb from this side, appeals to me very little; I recollect it chiefly as an interminable grind over an unending waste of stones in a more or less (but chiefly less) unstable state of equilibrium, clouds and mist on the snow, and snow and clouds on the rocks. It was very cold; there was no view; and as we undertook it, I cannot recommend the expedition even to a novice. The weather was too bad to permit of a traverse to the Allalin Pass, as we had intended; so somehow we straggled back to the Fluh Alp, and descended in pouring rain to Zermatt. Damp and disconsolate, we took train to Stalden, where we dried our clothes and had a comfortable evening. Next morning the sun shone, so after an early breakfast, we tramped up the valley to Saas, meeting our friends coming away just below Grund, and reaching Fee, by the always beautiful Kapellen Weg, in time to clean up comfortably before lunch. A cold wet afternoon and evening did not give much promise, but by midday on the 14th the sun came through, so we bade farewell to Saas about 3, having despatched our bags to Champex, and set forth anew on our wanderings, heading first for Mattmark, where we lay the night. The inn was most comfortable and clean, and the people obliging. I remember particularly that we got hot rolls for breakfast, which at 3 A.M. I consider to be a most Christian charity. We stepped out of the inn at 4 o'clock, into a clear cold night, the stars shining, the little lake ruffled with gusts of an icy keenness that swept down from the snows. Straggling up the steep grassy slopes below the Strahlhorn by lantern light, we took our first halt at the

edge of the Schwarzberg Glacier in two hours' time, where we roped up and made good time up the glacier, which was in excellent order. The col was reached at 8 easy going, and here we halted for breakfast, getting a few feet down on the Italian side for shelter from the wind, which was very cold. The drop into the Macugnaga basin is superb, swirling white clouds played at our feet, giving tantalizing peeps now and again of the valley bottom, and over against us the splendid eastern bastion of Mte. Rosa stood out into the ocean mist.

Bearing round to the right, we followed the crest of the ridge to its junction with the upper névé of the Findelen Glacier, and then took a half left turn over this, resisting Pierre's suggestion of one of the minor summits that crown the ridge between the Schwarzberg and the C. de Jazzi. Presently we reached the little gap of the Neu Weiss Thor, and, again bearing to the left, embraced the rocks on our downward journey, and in due course arrived at the Sella hut (10.15). While breakfasting here, two Italian guides came in on their way home from Zermatt. We stayed a long while sunning ourselves outside the hut, the day being yet young, and had some discussion as to our proposed route over the C. delle Loccie, which from this point of view certainly looks very steep and forbidding. Then on again, with some good glissades on old snow beds (*Facilis est descensus in Anzasca!*), till just before reaching the valley, we paused again and rested awhile on the grassy slopes. We dreamed and dozed in luxurious comfort on the warm turf, enjoying that most delightful pleasure of picking out the way you have just come down from the upper regions, as well as the way by which you propose to re-ascend to them. Something of my present state of well-being I endeavoured to communicate to Pierre, and was well pleased with his reply: 'Oui, Monsieur, ces petites heures de repos sur l'herbe sont bonnes!' Followed the attractive walk down the valley to Macugnaga—the upper reaches of the Vale of Anzasca are delightful, and I can well imagine the pleasure of a prolonged stay in that charming spot—perhaps some day we may revisit these holiday haunts. The big hotel at Macugnaga was full of well-dressed Italians, busy with the pleasant flurry of a dance for the evening, and a gymkhana for the next day. I remember, after a multicourse dinner, sitting on a lounge in the lobby, and waking to find ourselves the cynosure of a laughing group in full evening dress—and indeed, we snoring, with our red faces and our

gray flannels, must have struck them as an odd spectacle; so, first joining in the laugh, we retired to bed.

The next morning, the 16th, was quietly spent, writing letters or strolling in the village, until towards 3 P.M. we shouldered our packs, and set off to spend the night at the Belvédère. A delightful stroll of about two hours brought us to this quaint mixture of hut and hostelry, set in an emerald cup between the glaciers—an English-speaking Italian made our wants for the night clear to our hostess, who could apparently comprehend neither French, German, nor the patois of Zinal. But why should I attempt to describe what has already been far better done by the able pen of Mr. Reade, even to the cocks' heads which they gave us for supper? ('A.J.' vol. xxix. p. 135). While waiting for the evening meal, I climbed to the head of the island, sitting there alone for some time, while the red glow faded higher up the sinuous sides of the valley, and the purple hills in the distance gradually merged in the growing obscurity. Later on, just before turning in, when the moon, now nearly at the full, had crossed the neighbouring crest, and flooded the basin with her mysterious light, how still more beautiful were the precipices towering above us, silver-crowned, to meet the brilliance of that perfect night!

We made an early start at 3.15, but ere we roped at the foot of the ascent to the col, the giant cliffs of Mte. Rosa were reddened by the rising sun. The ascent was a much less imposing affair than it had appeared the previous day, the snow was in good order, and though a little care was needed in turning a few crevasses, I can remember no difficulty worth mentioning, and at 7.50 we reached the col, and half an hour later, along the ridge, the summit of the Mte delle Loccie. Here, rightly, ensued a long pause; the view is magnificent, whether you gaze on the right hand into the Val Anzasca, or on the left into the Val Sesia; but invariably the eye returns to the splendid line of cliffs running from the Pyramide Vincent to the Nord End, and culminating, or appearing to culminate, in the Pta. Gnifetti, with which the ridge on which we were perched articulates. How quickly time passes in these delightful situations all climbers know; but eventually Pierre, ever mindful of the softening snow on the glaciers below, reminded us that we had still a long way to go to reach the Col d'Olen, our proposed resting-place for that night. An easy descent over glacier, moraine debris, and pleasant pastures brought us to the Upper Vigne chalets by noon, where we

Improved the shining hour by another meal, washing it down with copious draughts of milk—how good it was, and how pleasant a halting place, in spite of an evil-minded black pig or so, and a peripatetic photographer, who had come up from Alagna with a large camera! I remember particularly the bare feet of the handsome woman who served us, and the enormous copper cauldron from which she many times replenished the smaller bowl, which served us as milk-jug.

The inexorable Pierre would not allow us to dawdle too long; so presently we straggled off, quitting almost at once the main path to the valley in order to traverse the rhododendron-covered slopes below the Sesia Glacier as high as possible, so as to gain the lateral glen leading up to the Colle de Bors. It was, as I remember, rather a cross-country scramble, where each took his own line, and your neighbour invariably seemed to be getting the better of you: there was, too, some little difficulty in crossing the torrent that foams down from the glacier; but eventually we all foregathered at the little hamlet of Bors, and then set out on a long, hot, be it confessed somewhat wearisome, trudge up the valley towards the fine waterfall at its head. The track mounts steeply on the right bank of the stream, but having reached the upper level, we bore far to the left, mounting ever over rough and broken ground; until eventually, passing between some pretty little tarns, we reached the Bocchetta delle Pisse, which pierces the line of cliffs overhanging the Olen valley. The track turns at a sharp angle and runs along below the cliffs, descending gradually to meet the main path from Alagna to Olen. The afternoon was now closing in, and mists were forming over the mountains and driving down from the col; and not until we were close upon it did we discover the little inn, where one member of the party, at all events, was glad to throw off his pack, and slake an ever-increasing thirst (the day had been very hot) in much cool beer.

Next morning we were enveloped in heavy white mist of the cotton-wool variety, which lifted now and again to disclose a tantalising glimpse of snow and sun far above us. We did not make a move till about 3 o'clock, when we set out, some time after a long caravan, for the Gnifetti hut. The clouds still hung low, and we passed various parties in the mist, but crossing the glaciers we were clear of cloud. The hut reached, we watched the caravans below, some five and twenty persons, winding in a long serpentine over the snow.

The hut is large, but there must have been fifty odd people in it that night, of whom few were climbers; many women and children, who reached the place in varying degrees of sickness and discomfort; and one Italian sportsman with a couple of dachshunds! It is a pity the hut is so easy of access, thus tempting the dwellers in the valleys below to make the expedition for the night, with no intention of climbing next morning, adding much to the discomfort of those who do use the hut for the purpose for which it was, doubtless, primarily intended.

However, the night passed in due course, though there were violent thunderstorms and much wind, and the day broke in very threatening fashion. We got away about 5, and struck up for the Lysjoch, overtaking the Italian with his dogs, who floundered amiably in the snow, poor beasts. The wind was very cold, and by the time we had reached the Zumsteinspitze, we considered the traverse of this peak and the ascent to the Höchste Spitze from the saddle would be too exposed, and not warranted under existing weather conditions. We therefore turned in our tracks and fled downwards, winding amidst the mighty crevasses of the Lys Glacier—we forebore to halt at the Bétémps hut, but hastened across the Gorner Glacier, reaching the Riffelhaus by noon, just in time to escape a drenching from the opening heavens.

Having once opened, they forebore to close till towards mid-afternoon of the following day, but I don't think any of us were particularly sorry for the enforced rest. After tea, we ran down to the Riffel Alp, with some friends, where we met others, returning in due course for dinner.

Next morning I witnessed a splendid sunrise on the Matterhorn; and at 7, in somewhat doubtful, misty weather, we set out on our travels again, toiling across the Gorner Glacier and up past Gandegg to the Théodule. In the mists we met a large party crossing from Breuil, amongst them acquaintances from the Col d'Olen; and on the summit I remember a fashionably dressed Italian, in velvet-collared overcoat and fine russet-leather shoes, who was chanting agreeably in a minor key for the delectation of himself and a friend. Once over the frontier the weather cleared, and all the mountains showed forth with far less fresh snow than I should have expected. Finding an agreeable spot on the slopes above Breuil, we indulged in lunch and an open-air siesta, finally dropping down past the Chapel in the gorge to the little inn at about 3 o'clock. The rest of the afternoon and evening was pleasantly

spent among the green meadows, watching the, from this point of view, hitherto, to me, unknown Matterhorn.

We were away next morning (22nd) by 4, and made for the very obvious snow col below, and to the S.-E. of the Château des Dames; (7.30) we did rope on the snow for form's sake, but it was scarcely necessary, and by dint of nothing worse than easy scrambling we gained the summit at 8.35. It was a glorious day, and we enjoyed a splendid view; the Matterhorn naturally looms large in the picture, and I consider this view of him one of the best. After a long rest, we descended first the easy ridge to the N., then by snow-slopes on the W., in places decidedly steep, where Pierre played some of his Zinal tricks, driving a piton into the snow, and using the spare rope doubled as a handhold, thus avoiding considerable step-cutting.

The descent was hot work, and as we approximated to the valley bottom, I kept a sharp look-out for a certain pool, of which Dr. Clapham has spoken, in 'A.J.' vol. xxvi. p. 411, in the following words:

'A sunny bathing pool above Prarayé fed by water—warmed on the Alp—that slides into it unbroken down a long steep slab.'

Ever since I read his paper, I have had this pool at the back of my mind; and at last, at long last, behold it, crystal-clear and full of promise to our heated wayworn limbs! Clapham had not said a word too much: we despatched the guides to Prarayé for provisions, and revelled in our bath of water, sun, and air.

Whilst dressing, along came a corporal and two men on the look-out for smugglers. 'Bon jour, M. le Caporal!' 'Bon jour, Messieurs, vous venez . . .?' 'De Breuil.' 'Aha, vous êtes des Français?' (A pat on the back this for my accent!) 'Non, M. le Caporal, nous sommes des Anglais.' 'Des Anglais—oh! là, là, là, là!' And the shrug of his shoulders conveyed complete comprehension of that madness which had previously puzzled him.

Before we leave this idyllic spot for an alfresco bath, I may mention that, in 'A.J.' vol. xxviii. p. 154, Dr. Clapham says: 'As you come down the Monte Moro, towards the bottom, go right into the bed of the stream, and if you do not find the best bathing-pool in Italy, it is not my fault.' This is manifestly unfair, since it puts me to the disadvantage of either again seeking the unknown, or else of disbelieving Dr. Clapham!

Eventually, we literally 'pulled up our socks,' and wandered off up the valley to the Za de Zan Glacier, and before we had got far, the guides overtook us. Each chose his own path, and we straggled up the glacier in pleasant comparative solitude, too far apart to be bothered with conversation, but near enough to feel neighbourly. The Rifugio Aosta was gained at 5, and to our delight we had it to ourselves. A beautiful sunset promised well for to-morrow.

Next morning, 23rd, we left the hut at 2.15, in such a refulgence of the moon, now nearly at the full, as made lanterns superfluous—the snow was in excellent order, and, climbing steadily, we gained the summit of the Dent d'Hérens shortly before 7. Thence what a view was ours! For my part, I frankly admit that I turned my back on the frowning Matterhorn, and spent the greater part of that delicious hour—it was beautifully warm in the morning sun, and wonderfully still—in watching the sea of cloud, that filled the Aosta Valley gradually writhing its sinuous way upward along the Valpelline, and the mountains of Cogne, that made so brave a show above the mist on the farther side. But time, alas! forbade us to linger too long; and so we addressed ourselves to the descent, which was so rapidly carried out, again by means of the piton-and-rope device, that we had returned to the hut by 9.30. Gathering our belongings together, we hastened down to Prarayé. By this time it was powerfully warm, so we had an hour's rest and *déjeuner*, starting again at 1. Many people have told of the extreme length of the Valpelline; and I will only say that I cordially endorse their remarks, with a few extra lurid ones of my own thrown in, as regards the descent by means of the villainous pavé at Bionaz and Oyace. But the valley is most beautiful, and so impresses itself on my memory; combined, however, with a strong recollection of footsoreness, and the power of the afternoon sun.

Six o'clock, and Valpelline at last; we straggled through the village, and sank on to the veranda of the little inn, with one voice demanding tea. To us, dirty, dusty, dishevelled and unshaven, approached with much courtesy a French doctor, and requested permission for his wife to provide us with *English* tea, as some slight return, so he put it, for the hospitality he had recently experienced in London at a meeting of the Medical Association: and thus we spent a most enjoyable half-hour, discussing the vagaries of our respective nations with these pleasant people, they motoring through the valleys, we traversing the hills. To explain to our hostess the attraction

of the mountain-bath was a delicate task ; though I hope I succeeded, yet, in moments of depression, I have my doubts.

Long after they had gone, we succeeded in getting a ramshackle little trap, with a driver who was either drunk or in his dotage, which conveyed us eventfully by leaps and bounds to the hospitable doors of the Hôtel du Mt. Blanc, at Aosta, soon after 8 o'clock, where dinner and a bed were both welcome.

Sunday, 24th, was very hot, in the valley. I spent the forenoon writing letters, and at 1 we set out in all the style of a carriage and pair for Courmayeur—personally my feet were so swollen from the previous long day's tramp that I could not comfortably endure my boots, and so was glad of the drive in stockinged feet. Courmayeur was reached at 6 o'clock without mishap, save for a stumbling horse.

The hotel, the Mt. Blanc, was full of Italians ; but we did ample justice to a very fine dinner, and made arrangements with Madame for our provisions for the morrow. About 8 o'clock, R. rolled in from Champex, *via* the C. Ferrex, not bad going, as he had only got our wire at 9 that morning.

On Monday, the 25th, we managed eventually to get away at 8.15—it was a lovely morning, and as we trod the familiar, but always beautiful, way, past Notre Dame de Guérison, and through the woods into the Val Vénî, our spirits rose steadily to set fair. We had already had a good course of *hors d'œuvre*, and were about to close the campaign with the *pièce de résistance* ! Passing Visaille at 10, we left the valley track by the Combal lake, and turned into a grassy basin at the foot of the Miage Glacier, for the double purpose of having lunch, and collecting wood. Then on again, up the great moraine and so on to the glacier, at first covered with flat stones, but gradually clearing to clean ice as we mounted. We arrived at the Dôme hut at 3.30 in some state of warmth, the sun being very powerful ; and as we had the place to ourselves, we made ourselves exceedingly comfortable—it is a charming spot with lovely views ; and our thoughts went back to a previous attempt four years earlier, which, alas ! was turned down by bad weather. At supper time, Pierre came out strong as a cooker of omelettes, and we enjoyed a right merry evening, preparatory to turning in at an early hour.

At one we are astir—breakfast, at which we finished the jam, over, we packed up, and leaving some of our food, of which we had too much (and, alas ! also my drinking cup), stepped out at 2.15 into the brilliant moonlight, where again

the lantern was superfluous, save over the rocks at the start. The wind was cold, and we plodded steadily up, with little or no difficulty, save at one point in crossing a larger schrund than usual. Dawn found us on the col at 5.10, thence along the ridge, which, *pace* greater authorities, did not strike me as particularly narrow, and so to the Dôme Plateau. Here clouds drifted down upon us, and awhile we wandered on the great snowfield, like lost souls; but after one false attempt, Pierre struck out the right line, and we emerged into brilliant sunlight just below the Vallot Hut at 7. The lower half of the door was jammed with ice, and the outer compartment had also a fair amount of ice in it; we scrambled over, however, and found a Swiss guideless party, belated from the previous day's ascent, who must have spent a somewhat comfortless night there, with no fire. They had, however, a spirit stove, on which they kindly let us heat some tea. At 8 we set out again, and moving quickly up the Dromedaire ridge, where the wind was very keen (so much so as to put R. out of action), reached the summit at 9.5. No trace of the hut was to be seen, and the summit itself was a long ridge of snow. The wind was very bitter, and we could not stay there with any degree of comfort—just long enough to realise how flat everything looks, as I think Leslie Stephen has remarked; and to realise also that I had attained what has been almost a lifetime's ambition—not much to gain, you will say, but still something, I reply!

The hut was regained at 10 o'clock, and quitted fifty minutes later. I think most of us were pretty fit, but even so, we must have covered the ground at a good pace, for we reached the Gds. Mulets in just under the hour, some fine sitting glissades taking us down at a rare rate. Out of the wind, it was extraordinarily warm, and one developed a corresponding thirst. We did not stop at the Mulets, but raced across the broken glacier, quitting the ice at the Pierre à l'Échelle, and stopping for lunch on a grassy bank just beyond, beside a little stream. Here, on the warm turf, we enjoyed the repose of the righteous; then sauntered at our ease down to the Pierre Pointue and beer (much to W.'s indignation, but he drank his share); and so, full of content, down through the pinewoods, in all the glory of a lovely afternoon, to Chamonix at 6 o'clock, where tea and hot baths at Couttet's were the pious travellers' reward.