

climbing. Anyway, we who preferred the upper snows were rewarded by a first-class climb and an incomparable view extending from the Ortler to Monte Viso, the Dauphiné, and the Jura. The day was the clearest without exception that I have seen in the Alps. Next day, starting early, we all walked to the Monte Moro Pass, where we, who had survived so many ridges, were turned back by a *gendarme*. Why the good man didn't understand my Italian, I don't know. Anyway, we longed for Symons' presence here, which might have saved a lot of trouble. 'Avete voi una scatola di flammiferi?', the only sentence I know, was utterly unavailing. He could make nothing of a Greek limerick or the name of some Scotch mountains, so we had to withdraw. It was too late when we had found another pass, by compass in the cloud, to get to Macugnaga at a reasonable hour, so we were forced to return to Mattmark, whence we started next morning for a fight against a six-hours' blizzard over the Adler Pass.

It was evident that the good weather had gone, and we must be going too. Accordingly, Beetham and I left on the 13th, leaving Roberts very reluctantly, as it was obvious that serious climbing was gone for some days, and any decent rats who leave the sinking ship hate seeing their late companions left behind to get wet.

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## TWO SMALL FIRST ASCENTS NEAR MODANE.

BY LOUIS COMBEROUSSE, C.A.F.

IT is the fashion to say that there are no more virgin peaks in the Alps; no doubt none of the great peaks remains unconquered, but it is likely enough that in remote districts which are difficult to reach virgin summits may yet await the climber. Still, it would be hard to credit that at the very gates of Modane the mountaineer could build his victorious cairn on a previously untrodden peak. Yet this is what happened to us this year on two occasions.

On May 15, 1921, accompanied by my friend J. L. Baud and by his sister, I left Modane as soon as the train had arrived. Various Lenten ceremonies which were taking place at Aussois detained us there till 10 o'clock, and it was only at 1 P.M. that we arrived at the chalets of Fond, heavily laden as we were. It was very late to think of climbing anything, and there was

a great temptation to devote the remainder of the day to the varied occupations of 'hut' life. The Pointe de Plan Net, however, was well seen at the end of the valley, and had attracted our attention on the way up. The weather was threatening, and, fearing snow and fog for the morrow, we decided to start and climb as high as the approach of night would allow. I was tempted to regret this decision, as at my suggestion we had refrained from bringing snow-shoes. Two months earlier, indeed, I had climbed the Pointe de Labby, and had got as far as the glacier without touching snow. I had thus beguiled my companions by describing the Aussois Valley as a sure refuge from winter and its horrors. This year, however, the winter had only come in spring—and scarcely had we emerged from the Fond basin when progress became troublesome owing to the deep soft snow. My friends' reproaches now so shamed me that I withdrew to the rear of the party, where I had the double advantage of no longer hearing their harsh words and of having a well-made track to walk in. Our objective was the Col du Cré de la Roa; but in order to avoid avalanches we kept straight up under the peak, and, by very steep snow-slopes and intervening ice-glazed rock pitches, at 5.30 p.m. we finally reached the base of the wall. The rocks were very cold, the rope frozen, and the last illusion of a comfortable ascent soon vanished, blown away by an icy wind. After a short scramble we took to the N. arête, which was crowned with fine cornices and afforded good going; yet it was necessary to leave it on account of the cold. We traversed the E. face, and by 6.30 p.m. we were on a little platform at the foot of the last tower, which was the top. Between the tower and our shelf was a wide gap spanned by a snow-bridge, and, since it was ordained for this day that all the luck should be on our side, we found that the bridge would bear. It led us on to the actual wall of the tower, and by means of a last chimney in the W. face above a superb abyss we at length reached the summit. We were certainly delighted with our success, but it was 7 p.m., and we thought it unwise to prolong our stay on this virgin summit in wind and sleet and with the threat of approaching night. We quickly crossed the snow-bridge to return to our platform, and, abandoning the route of our ascent, we scrambled down the middle of the E. face by a combination of ledges and chimneys admirably suited to our haste. Then once more soft snow and glazed rocks; night came on, and it was not till 9 o'clock that we got back to our chalet. It was past midnight when

we turned in. All the interval had been employed in drying ourselves.

On returning to Lyons I had leisure to read in the *ALPINE JOURNAL* an article by Mr. C. F. Meade on the environs of the Polset hut. He mentioned a virgin peak which I knew well, and had already coveted. The Pointe Orientale de la Partie (3350 m.), which rises at the W. foot of the Pointe de l'Echelle, had attracted Mr. Meade's attention, and I assumed that he was contemplating the ascent of it. I must confess that this idea decided us to attempt at once to get there first. With this intention we left the express at Modane on June 28, 1921—my friends, Matter, Petitpierre, and myself. Lorgère is an enchanting situation, but we passed through the glen without stopping; and by means of the Col de Chavière footpath, and then by that of the Col du Ravin Noir, we at last arrived at 11 A.M. on the Glacier Sud de la Masse at the base of the Pointes de la Partie.

Some months before the war I had ascended the Petite Pointe Orientale by way of a snow couloir in the S. face. Another couloir parallel with it led to the western arête of the Haute Pointe Orientale, and we decided to follow it. I remembered in time that I was the photographer of the party; everybody knows that it is difficult to cut steps and use a camera simultaneously. I therefore roped last, and for two hours was able to enjoy without fatigue the agreeable spectacle of my friends busily carving a comfortable staircase for me up an ice-wall covered with crumbling snow. But all things come to an end, and we emerged on the eastern arête, where a flat slab enticed us to breakfast while we gazed at the panorama. I must admit that the panorama was more attractive than the breakfast, so we were soon at work on the snowy arête, reaching soon after the final rocks. They were fairly smooth but free from snow, and so warm in the sun that climbing them was a real pleasure. The top was destitute of cairn; we built our own, and a few mètres lower down discovered a spacious cleft where, for two hours, we could smoke while admiring the magnificent abyss that surrounded us, and the sparkling horizons of an almost unlimited panorama. But it was 4 o'clock, and it behoved us to descend. We all agreed that our way up would not do for the return, as it would be dangerous from the sun. There was no other solution but to follow the S. arête in order to rejoin our tracks on the névé below. To tell the truth, the rocks looked rotten, but it is generally agreed that stone avalanches work on a

more modest scale than snow avalanches, and besides we had no choice. I was given the honour of being first to test the holds in the descent, and I made every effort to leave only good sound rock behind me. To judge by their exhortations my companions seemed to derive the greatest pleasure from seeing the stones thundering down to left and right of the ridge; I, on the other hand, had the satisfaction of performing the duty allotted to me, and also the less disinterested pleasure of insuring myself against dangers that might otherwise descend upon my head. At length, after three hours of noisy progress, we came to peaceful snow, and making a short traverse we were able to rejoin the tracks of our ascent just above the bergschrund. We raced down past shale and rhododendrons, and then over flowery grass slopes; finally, with bunches of narcissi, we entered the 1 A.M. express for Lyons.

There are, therefore, still virgin peaks to be found; and if such conquests are somewhat slight when they appear in the *ALPINE JOURNAL* beside the narratives of Himalayan explorers, I think, nevertheless, that it is quite worth while devoting a spare Sunday to them. For my own part, I have derived from these climbs an intensity of happiness which I have often failed to find on greater and better-known mountains. Is not the mountaineer's highest reward the discovery of a new world, however humble it may be?

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#### MAPS OF THE ALPS OF NEW ZEALAND.

[Through the good offices of Mr. A. P. Harper of Wellington, the Surveyor-General of New Zealand has been kind enough to present to the Club:

Nine sheets on the scale of one inch to one mile covering the county of Westland and showing the west side of the New Zealand Alps from Harper's Pass to Mt. Aspiring.

Eleven sheets on same scale covering the eastern survey of the same range.

A map of the South Island on the scale of one inch to ten miles.

Mr. Harper has been good enough to endorse many explanatory notes on the maps themselves and adds the following details:

1. The sheets only show outlines of rivers, glaciers, etc. The peaks are trigonometrically fixed and measured.

Details of topography are not shown on large-scale maps—and when shown on smaller scale are not very reliable from a climber's point of view. Such maps as are published in the *Annual Survey*