wrought such havoc in 1924. We were denied those few days of grace which might have given a fair chance of success to so strong a party.

We are agreed that the mountain, if it is ever climbed at all, will be climbed in late May or early June; but strong reserves of men thoroughly accustomed to guideless climbing are necessary, because it is very doubtful if a man, however strong, can make more than one really high ascent, and because practically every member should be capable of independent movement on the mountain.

A last word must be said about the porters. With few exceptions their behaviour was beyond praise. Without them we could have done nothing, and our respect and affection for them are an abiding memory.

[See the Survey of India map, *Mount Everest and Environs*, scale 2 miles to 1 inch (1 : 126,720). For the approaches, see the Expedition map, 1921 : scale, 4 miles to 1 inch.

For other illustrations of Everest and adjacent peaks see 'A.J.' **33,** 295, 297; **34,** 116, 210, 347, 431, 448 *et seq.*; **36,** 195, 214, 217, 260, *et seq.*; **43,** 3. See also 'G.J.' and the three 'Mount Everest' volumes, 1921, 1922 and 1924.]

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## Col Maudit and other Climbs.

By T. GRAHAM BROWN.

(Read before the Alpine Club, November 1, 1932.)

ALTHOUGH Col Maudit had been longer in my thoughts, our first meeting was in 1931, and we came to know each other more intimately in the following season. There is a curious similarity between the events which came my way in the months of July, 1931 and 1932. The weather was bad in each, but worse in the latter year; in each, we laid long siege to the great classical routes on the Italian side of Mont Blanc, and accomplished one of them at the very end of the month; the days of waiting were occupied in every case by many lesser adventures—amongst which we had the good fortune to number new ascents; and in each, Col Maudit was the object of our last expedition.

The weather of *July* 1932 was worse than that of the 1931 season, but we had greater fortune during last summer—

when *August* was fine—and were able to accomplish more interesting climbing. This was due largely to the fact that three climbing holidays of progressively worse weather have not been without their lessons, and have tested some rules for circumventing the weather which we have come to accept. The thought occurred to me of dealing at greater length with this subject; for it would seem that the demons which used to inhabit the summits have been driven from them only as far as the clouds—in other words, that bad or uncertain weather is regarded with far too much of that superstitious horror with which the actual mountains were wont to be invested. To discuss this subject at length would be to neglect the actual climbs, but our principles may fortunately be packed into a few sentences: Live at the hut, so that you do not lose the rare fine day; go out on the dull morning, for if the weather improve you will otherwise have lost a climb; continue as long as the weather permits, for the sun may break through; turn back, if that be necessary, before the limit of safe retreat is over-stepped. In short—test the weather and feel it with your hands, as you must test and feel an unknown route. To do all this, a party must have a greater knowledge of its speed and capacity—and a greater confidence in them—than would be the case did it venture only on fine days, and, it must know with a greater nicety to what extent it may rely upon its own judgment of the weather and upon its decision of the point beyond which safety is like to be overstepped. To 'feel the weather with your hands' brings a fascinating factor into the science of mountaineering—and enables climbs to be made, which would otherwise be lost.

The accomplishment of one or more of the great routes on the S. side of Mont Blanc had been one of the main objects in our plans of campaign for the past two summers; and it was an ambition of considerable standing. As far as may be gathered from a somewhat prolonged study of the books in the Gamba hut, it is quite usual for those who attempt the Péteret arête to do so unsuccessfully on several occasions before their object is finally attained. That experience was to be mine also. In 1927, a visit to Courmayeur with E. S. Herbert was made in weather too uncertain to allow us to think of the greater routes which we had planned. In 1928, Herr Zürcher and I reached Courmayeur when the good weather had broken; after a disappointing delay we went elsewhere. In 1929, the weather we encountered at Courmayeur was no better. Apart

*Photo, T. Graham Brown.*]

Col du Fresnay, L'Innominata, and Aig. Noire de Péteret at sunrise.
From foot of E. face of Mont Brouillard.

[*To face p.* 232

*Photo, T. Graham Brown.*]

SUNRISE ON GRAIANS: AIGUILLES ROUGES DU BROUILLARD (ON EXTREME RIGHT).
From the Brouillard Glacier.

from two visits to the Torino hut, our time was spent chiefly in walking down the road to admire the new snow lying on the S.E. face of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur. The weather in 1930 almost attained a record for badness—or so we thought at the time, being then fortunately ignorant of what was being held in store for almost the whole of the 1931 season and for July 1932—and we did not even go to Courmayeur. It is sufficient to say now that it was not until last summer that my first actual visit to the Gamba hut was paid, and a resolve was then made to stay in the hut until it could be left by the Péteret arête. Two such attempts failed. The third was successful.

### *Mont Mallet by the N.W. Arête.*

Basil Goodfellow and I went out together in 1931 with the object of devoting attention to the S. side of Mont Blanc, although we never actually arrived at the foot of it. We had drawn up ambitious plans which included the Rochefort arête and the Brenva route in our first week. Bad weather and a plentiful fall of snow forced us to devote our first week to more usual climbs—a traverse of Grands Charmoz ; and then three expeditions from the Requin hut on ski (my first and only such experiences)—the Col du Géant, the Aiguille du Midi, and the Tour Ronde. It was only early in our second week that we could attack the Rochefort arête.

That arête had long been an ambition, and our member Signor Cajrati had advised me in 1928 to approach it by climbing Mont Mallet from the side of the Requin hut. On this side there is a long snow slope down from a shoulder on the N. arête of the mountain to the Glacier des Périades, and the ordinary route passes up that slope. But the mountain is rarely climbed by this way and the term ' ordinary route ' is scarcely a correct one. In any case, when we set out with Knubel and Graven on July 13, we selected instead the fine unclimbed arête which lies to the N. of the snow slope and runs down N.W., from the outer end of the shoulder on the N. arête, straight in the direction of the Requin hut.

Leaving the hut at 3.18 A.M., a walk of about 2½ hours, at first by candle light, brought us through a labyrinth of enormous crevasses to the foot of the arête. Here, a little N. of its terminal rocks, the arête was guarded by a difficult bergschrund. When this had been crossed, not without difficulty, the rocks above it were found to be too smooth and we were forced to

retreat. We therefore walked along under the schrund in the direction of the true end of our arête, until we found and crossed a somewhat rickety snow-bridge at a place where the rocks above gave greater promise. We reached them at 6.34 (having lost half an hour or more in our first attempt), and then ascended a short couloir of rather insecure rock—the only bad rock we met on the expedition. This took us to a little neck on the crest of the arête, where we halted for a rest, and thereafter firm, steep and interesting rock led us up in a more or less well-defined line. The rock was at first easy, but at 7.45 there came an interesting passage up to and then round a gendarme of a curious shape—for it resembled a feather, or a wave breaking over to the right. The way continued to be of interest above this and soon we saw that the arête steepened in what looked to be a tower across our path (but it was merely a step). This would have been difficult to take direct, and we approached it with some anxiety. But a gully was disclosed on the far left, and when we had come to the foot of the face, we found some snow-covered ledges which led along and up to it. The long traverse and the subsequent ascent of the gully were alike interesting, exposed and by no means easy in the obtaining conditions. A little easier rock then led us to the foot of a steep ice arête, above which there was good honest snow. Up this we continued, occasionally meeting scattered rocks, until our arête joined the N. ridge of the mountain about an hour or less below the summit.

We reached the summit of Mont Mallet at 11.40—or in not quite 7 hours of actual climbing (including our lost time)—for the arête is a respectable one, perhaps 2500 ft. or more in height, and there is some distance to go down and up from the Requin hut before the climb commences. Notwithstanding our merit, we were however denied much view from the top, and we had to complete the Rochefort arête—over the Dôme and Aiguille—to the Torino hut in cloud and on much soft snow. Our only reward was an occasional lifting of the mist, but what we saw was reward enough.

This entry to the Rochefort arête makes the traverse a more worthy expedition than the usual method from and to the Torino hut, fine as that may be. Further, the N.W. arête of Mont Mallet affords climbing of considerable interest, which cannot be described as easy, while the views during the ascent are of great magnificence. The whole expedition occupied us for 12 hours of actual climbing, but we were heavily laden with kit for a long stay at the hut, and the snow which we met

on the Rochefort arête itself made the going laborious. The complete climb—this route to Mont Mallet, followed by the traverse of the Rochefort arête—offers *at least* as much technical difficulty and interest as the traverse of the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret of which I shall speak later on. Also it is longer.

### *The Brenva Route.*

The week which followed our ascent of Mont Mallet was one of disappointment, for the Brenva route was our next objective, and the weather was against us. We stayed in the Torino hut, and on more than one occasion thought we should be able to make the climb next morning, but awoke to find snow falling again. The weather played cat-and-mouse with us—a snow-storm, then a brilliant day followed by two days less fine but in which the condition of the snow was becoming possible again, and then another snow-storm. We made lesser excursions, in one of which, on July 16, we climbed the Calotte de la Brenva by a different line from that which I took in 1929, and also a point of La Fourche. Goodfellow now had to go home, and we climbed the Aiguille du Géant on our way down next day.

Snow-storms then held me in Montenvers for several days, during one of which, in sheer boredom, we climbed the Tête de Trélaporte (on July 21) by its Mer de Glace face, attained some distance above the glacier—quite an interesting scramble. An ascent of the Aiguille des Pèlerins on July 22 is a brighter memory. It was a snow mountain that day and a really difficult climb ; but the view from its summit of the Chamonix Aiguilles covered with more than a winter mantle of snow was an unforgettable one, rarely to be repeated.

The Brenva route had by this time raised a certain stubbornness in us, but we now knew that it would have to be ' stolen ' from the weather. So we broke loose from Montenvers, going up to the Col de Rochefort on July 23 and thence to the Torino hut by traversing the Aiguilles Marbrées. Then came bad weather again, and we could do nothing at all, save make plans—and these had to be made with care. I have spoken of the ' pattern ' of the weather. The first of four days would be a brilliant one. On the second, the weather would begin to look doubtful late in the afternoon. On the third, the weather would take a turn for the worse earlier in the afternoon—when Mont Blanc would become heavily overclouded, but nothing very serious would happen. The fourth day

would be devoted to a snow-storm. Then the cycle repeated, but sometimes there were two days of snowfall for variety. Our only chance was to 'steal' one of these third days. The snow should just be satisfactory on the third of three sunny July mornings, but the serious part of the climb itself must be completed before midday—when Mont Blanc would have put on its thick cap of cloud. We calculated our times for the different parts of the route and discussed and tested the quickest way to get to the foot of the climb. Thus on July 27, one of the snow-storm days, we made the first crossing of the Col de la Calotte to see if it would offer a quick way to the upper Brenva Glacier. But the new col was by no means easy, and we decided in favour of the Col Est de la Tour Ronde, across which we returned.

A great German climber has called the Brenva route 'a half-day stroll,' [1] but such a description desecrates one of the finest ice climbs of the Alps. The route is great even when every factor of time and condition is in favour of the climber. When the margin of available time compels every minute to be calculated, the ascent becomes one of the most interesting problems the Alps can provide. Our plan was to set out, from the Torino hut, late enough to be able to cross the Col Est de la Tour Ronde without artificial light; to climb to our calculated programme; and to retreat in safety, if need be, from the upper slopes if the weather broke earlier than we expected, or if the condition of the snow had upset our calculated speed. We thought the traverse across to the Col de la Brenva might possibly afford an alternative to retreat if the condition of the ice promised a rapid passage.

The day following our crossing of the Col de la Calotte was also one of snow-storm, but July 29 was a serene and beautiful day. Greater climbs being out of the question because of the new snow, we spent the day in a traverse of the Aiguilles d'Entrèves and du Toule from the Col d'Entrèves to the Col Est du Toule. It fell to my lot to go first all day, as I had done little leading since we were on the Rochefort arête, and the expedition was found to be a most interesting and enjoyable one—one to be strongly recommended for such occasions. The S. arête of Aiguille d'Entrèves from the col gives sensational situations, and there is a fascinating cockscomb of gendarmes, all of which we traversed, between the Aiguilles

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[1] No remark can illustrate better the complete irresponsibility of the 'modern' scrambler.—*Editor.*

d'Entrèves and du Toule. Next day, July 30, we spent lazily scrambling on Mont Jétoula and the Aiguilles Marbrées, but the weather began to look unsettled in the late afternoon and seemed to predict a shorter available time than we had hoped for the morrow. For we were now again ready to start out on the Brenva route next morning ; on four previous occasions we had stood by, but in the morning snow had been falling. This fifth occasion was to be more fortunate.

We left the Torino hut about 3.30 A.M. on July 31 and crossed the frontier ridge by the Col Est de la Tour Ronde, under which we had to pause as another party—Rand Herzon, Félix Simon, and P. Aschenbrenner—which was on the same errand as ourselves, occupied the rocks above us. We were however soon at the top of the col whence a rapid walk landed us on the crest of *Col Moore* in not much more than a further half-hour. The rocks of Moore's arête carried much snow, but we were able to reach the outer end of the famous ice arête in 1 hour's fast climbing from *Col Moore.* The time was then only a few minutes after 7.0, but the weather already gave signs that it might begin to break a little earlier than we had expected. A large cloud cap was forming over the summit of Mont Blanc, while heavy low cloud in the Val Veni was beginning to rise up the Brenva Glacier towards us. On the other hand, we were ahead of our calculated time, and it looked as if we should be able to complete the climb earlier than we had originally thought. So we went on. The famous ice arête itself was very narrow and corniched to the N.W. at its inner end. A man who had crossed this arête led me to understand that the passage takes 45 minutes or so even under good conditions ; and it might well do that if the arête consisted of a razor blade of ice, as it sometimes does, or if the party did not move all together. On this occasion it was certainly narrow at its inner end ; but a rapid piece of step-cutting took us along it, to my surprise, in 9 minutes only. Then followed a perfectly straightforward ascent of the steep snow slopes turning to bare ice in their upper third, and an hour's rapid climbing from the ice arête landed us at the first rocks above the slope—with the cloud cap growing on Mont Blanc. Another 15 minutes' ascent up ice and rocks took us to the highest rock, which we reached at 9.0. The cloud cap was now deeper and its lower blanket occasionally swept down past the Mur de la Côte. Darker clouds had risen further from the valley beneath us. We looked across to the Col de la Brenva and saw that the traverse was impossible. Our way therefore must lie up through the

séracs, or we must retreat ; but we thought that the weather was certain to hold up for the next two hours at least. The passage through the séracs took exactly an hour, and it was here that the technique shown by Knubel and Graven reached its highest excellence. For rapid climbing in these circumstances, the leader (whilst being amply safeguarded in his work) should himself be asked to spend a minimum of time helping and safeguarding the remainder of the party. If this ideal can be carried out, the leader climbs almost as fast as if he were alone, while the other members of the party (being naturally able to ascend faster than he in the steps which he has made for them) can devote all their time to security. Thus we managed it both on the lower parts of the climb, and, particularly, in the passage of the séracs where Graven (who led this portion of our ascent) cut through the séracs almost without pausing. At 10 o'clock exactly we emerged at the top of the intricate way through the séracs, but at the same time entered the cloud. After a rest, we went on with several pauses to remove the ice which formed on our snow glasses, reaching the summit of Mont Blanc through cloud at a few minutes after 11 A.M., or in a little less than 6 hours of actual climbing from the Torino hut. We soon went on in cloud down to the Vallot hut. The weather looked much too doubtful for us to attempt to descend over the Aiguille de Bionnassay, as had been our plan. So we went down to sunshine at the Grands Mulets by the N. face of the Dôme du Goûter—a route which I had long wished to follow, first, because it was one of the earliest made to the Dôme, and, secondly, because Adams Reilly and Birkbeck had descended that way after climbing the Dôme du Goûter from the Col de Miage. The Brenva route had been fairly and squarely 'stolen' from the weather. The state of the snow had been safe, but had only just become so—for a party had been turned back by it on the previous day. As for the weather—it had threatened us, but it never really broke down at all! Had it done so at our predicted time, it would have caught us safely housed in the Grands Mulets.

### *The 'Col des XIV Points.'*

Graven and I went out next morning to try to cross Col Maudit, but all we could accomplish before the weather turned against us was the passage of the icefall of the Bossons Glacier between the Grands Mulets and the foot of a new route which

we had planned on the previous afternoon. But, having overcome what may in some seasons be impossible and was nearly so in this, we found that the level glacier could have been reached above the icefall quite easily by means of a little pass immediately S. of *Pointe du Président Wilson*. We then returned by this col, probably making its first passage.

This insignificant pass is almost necessary for the successful traverse of Col Maudit itself, and in some seasons may be essential. It deserves a name, and the tragedy of its neighbour, lonely 'Pointe Wilson,' suggested one. Surely that great President should have been honoured by at least fourteen of them in a district where every Point is named. It struck me that we might bring the President's Points up to their appropriate number by naming this pass the 'Col of the *XIII* others.' But to do so might be too subtle for coming generations (and the point would be lost in the French), so it is perhaps better simply to name it the 'Col of the XIV Points'—even if that does give the President one more in all than his proper ration!

After the guides left me, some solitary scrambling came my way—Tête Pelouse, Buet, and lesser hills. But my serious climbing had ended in 1931 with the Brenva route, and with the unsuccessful but useful attempt on Col Maudit. The season of 1932 was to bear a strong resemblance to that of 1931.

### *A new descent of Les Droites.*

When Knubel, Graven and I foregathered at Montenvers on July 3, 1932, the weather of 1931 at once commenced to repeat itself—to a still worse degree. But two good days first flattered our hopes. On July 4 we climbed the Aiguille du Moine—the untrodden snows of which lay in great masses, while next day we ascended the W. peak of Les Droites—with the intention of traversing to the E. summit. When we arrived on our peak by the ordinary way, the traverse was at once seen to be impossible in the conditions. Accordingly, we looked for some other mode of descent by which we might avoid the rather too abundant and soft snow up which we had come. There is a deeply cut couloir in the S. face of the mountain, which starts above very near to the W. summit and a little to the E. of it. This couloir has the advantage of directness—for it falls in one steep and narrow groove to the glacier below; it has also the advantage that its depths remain long in shadow and its snow remains hard late into the morning. Down this we went, at

first moving together. But soon the angle steepened, the couloir narrowed and its snow thinned. Here we started to rope down, finding that at the foot of each *rappel* of 100 ft. there was almost always a convenient rock at the side for the commencement of the next manœuvre. As *rappel* followed *rappel*, the angle of the couloir steepened. First came about 160 ft. in which the angle rose to about 60°, then an easier 100 ft. of snow at about 50° was succeeded by 300 ft. of ice in which the angle rose to between 60° and 70°, next followed 200 ft. of an easier slope again and, at the end of our eighth *rappel*, we came to the top of a long snow slope down which we descended until we could cross the bergschrunds and reach the Glacier de Talèfre.

This long and steep descent had proved to be an interesting exercise—if somewhat severe on the hands. Our route seems to cross that by which Distel and Pfann made a descending traverse of this face in 1904, but it is a much more direct one. It provides an excellent and safe line of descent in the then conditions. We saw nothing fall, in spite of the bad reputation of Les Droites for stonefall ; Pfann says that he was equally fortunate.

### *The Gamba Hut.*

A veil must be drawn over the three days of rain and snow which followed ; then came a difficult traverse of the Aiguille du Tacul on July 9—to admire the N. face of Grandes Jorasses, which it has been my fortune to examine often, but rarely from a place of greater advantage. We descended by that arête situated in the direction of the Requin hut as far as two curious gendarmes, and then left it to gain the easy couloir between the arête and Les Périades. Monday, July 11, found us setting out on our second attempt on Col Maudit—this time from the E. ; but there is little to tell you. Mist and then snow caught us on the upper Géant Glacier ; we dug a shelter and defended it with a wall of snow blocks in order to wait there for at least a view of this side of the col. We did obtain a brief and scanty view and then turned back, crossing the Cols des Flambeaux and du Géant to Courmayeur. Even so late as the middle of July, the soft snow was lying in thick masses almost down to Mont Fréty on the Italian side. We roped for the descent until we had nearly reached the mule hut !

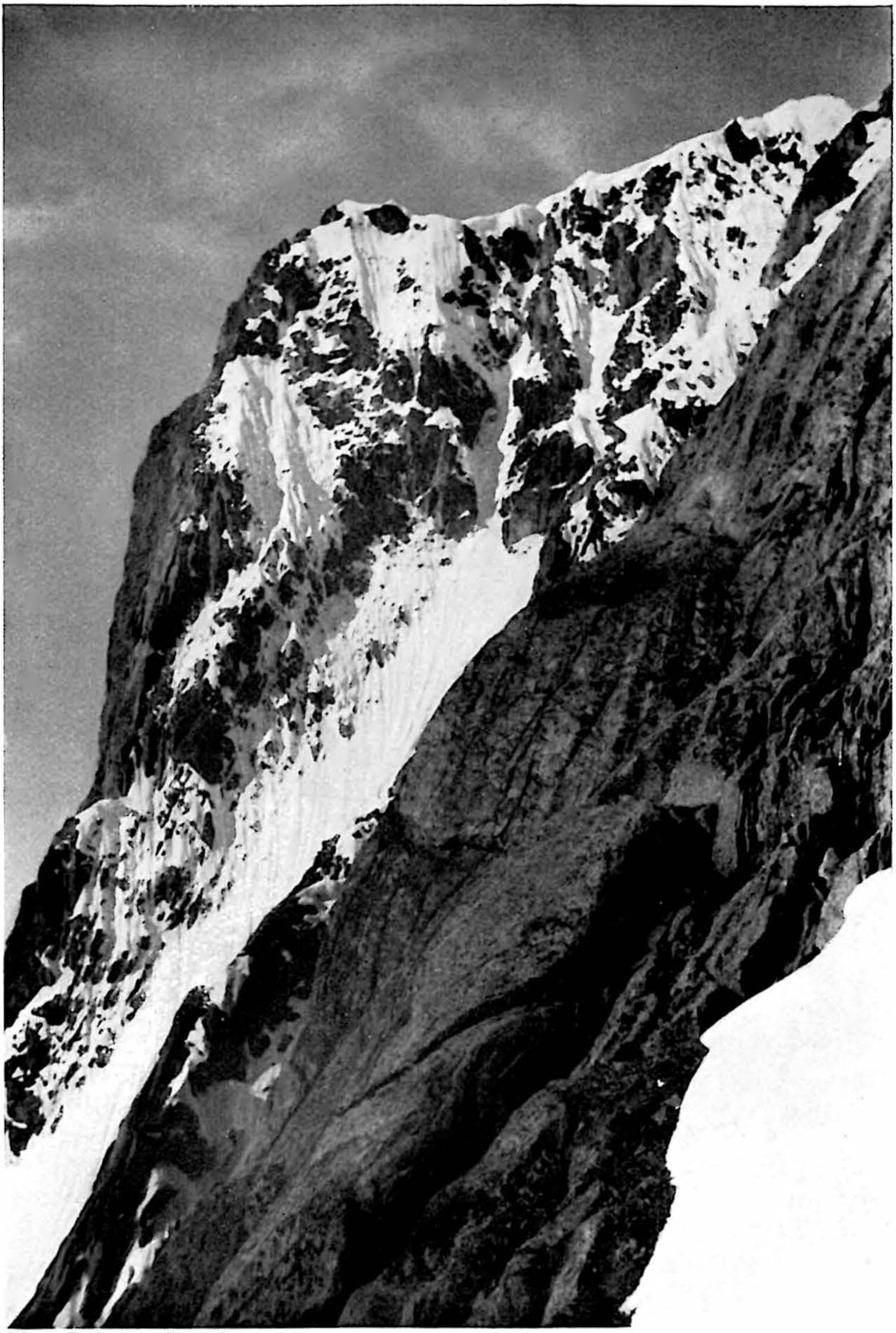
Next day, July 12, we went up to the Gamba hut, but without realizing that it was to be my sleeping place for the next

*Photo, T. Graham Brown.*]

THE DAMES ANGLAISES AND NEIGHBOURING COULOIR ON THE FRESNAY FACE OF AIGUILLE BLANCHE DE PÉTERET.

From summit of L'Innominata.

[*To face p.* 240



*Photo, T. Graham Brown.*]

SHOULDER OF P. BARETTI. FROM FOOT OF E. FACE OF MONT BROUILLARD.

eighteen nights—nor would it have troubled me overmuch to know that, so fine is the situation of the hut. When the first of our three attempts on the Péteret arête failed at the end of our first week at the hut, it seemed that there *must* be at least one possible day of good weather in store, and I vowed to stay there until the climb was accomplished and to be one of the few who have climbed the Péteret arête at their first visit to the Gamba hut. To keep this vow meant my sleeping alone in the hut next Saturday night, whilst the guides descended for Sunday Mass and to bring up more provisions. Knubel left with some playful misgivings about my being troubled by ghosts at night and, I think, with a hopeful anticipation. My sleep, however, was undisturbed.

If there are ghosts at the Gamba hut, they live in the pages of the old hut books : the ghosts of hopes and of failures, of determined and repeated attempts, of great disappointments and of great successes. Few hut books can be so full as these of endeavour and adventure. Names renowned in our climbing world are there and the same names recur again and again, for few attain their ambition on their first visit to the hut. Sometimes the entry is merely—' Bad weather,' sometimes the record is that of unsuccessful adventure, sometimes that of achievement. But always there are drama and romance. My long stay at the hut was made pleasant by these books and by the companionship of these ghosts.

### *A traverse of the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret.*

July 13 was spent in making a good track across the Fresnay Glacier to the foot of the couloir descending from the Brèche Nord des Dames Anglaises, and in preparation for an attempt on the Péteret arête on the morrow. The glacier was difficult and it was by no means easy to find a possible way across. At one place we thought failure almost inevitable, but crossed at last after innumerable returns from attractive but impossible passages. We had by then engineered the best and most direct route within our power to make. We had entered the glacier below the Aiguille Croux—what is now called 'Col Croux'—but returned over the Col de l'Innominata, finding the way across the glacier to it both intricate and difficult and that our lower route on to the glacier had been the better one—in this season at any rate. Snow began to fall whilst we were returning and we did not traverse Aiguille Joseph Croux, as had been our intention.

Rain was falling early next morning and we had to postpone our attempt on the Péteret arête. But the weather cleared up in the afternoon—as it had done on previous days. We then saw that little or no new snow had fallen on the higher summits and therefore decided to attempt the Péteret arête next morning. The condition of the mountains was probably excellent, and the weather might clear up at about 11 o'clock, as it usually did. So we planned to set out for the whole climb if possible, or, at the worst, try La Pointe Isolée of the Dames Anglaises if nothing more serious could be attempted, but sooner traverse the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret if that were justifiable; the final decision to advance or retreat to be made on Col de Péteret. If we *had* to retreat, the descent from the col offered an interesting problem. Knubel had ascended the lower part of Jones' route to the Aiguille Blanche with Eustace Thomas in 1928 before having to retreat in bad weather, and he suggested that we should be able to descend from Col de Péteret, then traverse and so gain Jones' arête more or less where he had turned back. I did not then know that Francesco Ravelli and Guido Rivetti with Evaristo Croux had descended by a somewhat similar route (though perhaps not quite by the line which we were to take), when they made the first *descent* from Col de Péteret to the Fresnay Glacier in 1922.

We started out at 2.35 next morning, and had crossed the Fresnay Glacier by 4.30—when light hail began to fall. But we resolved to wait to see what dawn would bring, and so made our way for shelter up to the foot of the rocks of the Dames Anglaises near the end of the *south* couloir, where we halted between rock and ice. Here we waited for about three-quarters of an hour, at the end of which time it looked as if the weather were safe and would improve. So we went on at 5.32, traversed to the foot of the N. couloir and ascended it in the usual line to near the top, where we had to take to the steep and loose rocks of the traverse on the ordinary route.

We had climbed so far in absolute calm and broken mists through which we had fascinating views of the Dames Anglaises and the Aiguille Noire. But having reached the S.E. arête of the Aiguille Blanche, a cold wind met us. That it came from the E. was a good sign, but the wind soon died down and the remainder of our time on the arête was spent for the most part in calm. Up it we went for a little, had another long rest and then followed the upper traverses on the Brenva face, until we finally came to the crest of the arête again. The way was interesting and safe, for the mountain was snow-

bound. But the snow increased the difficulty of the long rock rib up which we went to the main arête after traversing several couloirs. Whilst ascending the rib, we met two short snow arêtes corniched on both sides—a phenomenon which must be seldom encountered in that place. The climbing was eerie, for the mist about us was dense and we had no views. After another traverse on the Brenva face and the shorter ascent of another rib, we reached the main ridge again for the third time at the lower end of the snow arête. We ascended this and reached the summit at 10.40—having spent about 6½ hours in actual climbing, including our digression for shelter from the hail.

We did not pause for long, but went on towards the N. Gendarme (*Pointe Güssfeldt*) and, on turning it, obtained a view making ample amends for the previous mists.

There are two great moments during the ascent of the Péteret arête. The second of these is on the arête itself—the S.E. ridge of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur—somewhere near the 'Eckpfeiler'—where you look over into the great hollow filled by the Brenva face of Mont Blanc. But the first gives you an even greater sense of magnificence. It occurs when you reach the summit of Aiguille Blanche, or better still, its N. Gendarme. Fate had kept down the curtain until we arrived just past the latter point. We had no view at all from the actual summit, and were only given glimpses for a few seconds when it did come. But they were seconds to be remembered always, for there we saw suddenly the depths of the Col de Péteret beneath and the heights of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur above.

It is ridiculous to speak of the Aiguille Blanche as if it were built upon some colossal and peculiar scale of its own. Its scale is the same as that of any other mountain of the same elevation rising for the same height above its glaciers; neither of these dimensions of the Aiguille Blanche is unusual. But when you have climbed some 5000 ft. and have reached a fine and difficult summit, you usually think that the day's work is over. As you come towards *this* summit, the view in front is largely hidden. When you reach it, you see the great hog's-back of the 'Eckpfeiler' rising across the valley formed by Col de Péteret to a height of perhaps 1000 ft. above the col. And that itself is only a step on the way to Mont Blanc de Courmayeur, which soars up to the left another 1500 ft. or so above the 'Eckpfeiler.' Your fantastic feeling of accomplishment disappears. What you have done becomes merely a measure

of what is still to do, and you realize, for the first time in its fullness, the magnificence of the ridge you have set out to climb.

We were fortunate. The mist had given us the summit of Aiguille Blanche as it should be—a fine thing all by itself—while the feeling of accomplishment had not been diminished by higher views. Then, on proceeding, the mist lifted for its brief moment while we were still on the brink above Col de Péteret. That 'pass' was still filled with thin cloud, hiding the bases of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur and of the 'Eckpfeiler' mass. We looked across—or rather up—to see these high steps floating in bright sunlight at impossible angles above. It was almost a shock to see them so far above us, and we felt as if we were still at the level of a hut, with the climb before us yet to be accomplished. The chance, giving this moment at the only point and time in the climb from which it can be fully appreciated and the completeness with which all the preparatory views were hidden, had indeed been rare.

But the mist closed on us again, and our hopes of clearing weather were not fulfilled. We descended to Col de Péteret by a line which kept well away to the left, and not by that straight down on the right to the ridge of the col. The descent was a difficult one, for there was much ice on the rocks and some bare ice below them, but we finally reached the col at 12.25 with ample time in hand for the ascent to Mont Blanc. But the elements had already decided against us, and now another factor, what may be called an 'accident' of the weather, made us hasten on our proposed line of descent. A thunderstorm was coming up from the S.W., and it was not a day on which thunder-storms should have been about.

We at once went towards the Fresnay side of the col, and descended into the great couloir to the S.E. of the buttress of rock in the centre of that side of the slope of Col de Péteret—the buttress climbed by Gruber. With this on our right, we went down the couloir for about 30 minutes, sometimes encountering ice, and rock at least once. Finally the couloir began to steepen *too* much and to be filled with black ice, so we quitted it to our left (S.E.), and, after a not too easy traverse, found a convenient resting place a little short of the rib of Jones' route.

Here we looked across the face of the buttress to the great wall of ice on its other side—the path by which the ice from the face of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur descends, whilst our couloir drains that from the face of the Aiguille Blanche and

from the southern part of the Col de Péteret. As we rested, hail began to fall and thunder broke on the Aiguille Blanche above us. But the latter passed—would that the hail had done the same! Then we went on again, gaining Jones' arête and continuing down it. The climbing was safe, always interesting, but never exceptionally difficult. My chief memory is of curious streams of hail—harmless and beautiful—in every little gully. The whole S.W. face of the Aiguille Blanche was flowing with it. On leaving the crest of the rib we descended by couloirs on its S.E. side and then had to pass through such-like hail streams. Once we crossed below a hail waterfall—quite a disagreeable experience. Finally came a long snow slope, two bergschrunds and the flat surface of the Fresnay Glacier.

We were still in mist and hail and decided to go straight down the glacier until we found our old tracks, rather than try to find the Col de l'Innominata in the mist. This route we took, but it was not until the fourth attempt that we found a place (a delicate and intricate one) where the icefall of the glacier could be descended. Below this we reached our tracks, the hail changed to snow, snow to rain, and we reached the Gamba hut wet to the skin, with our boots full of water.

The expedition had been well worth making for that wonderful view and for the interest of the descent. Unless the conditions flattered it, the route should be a safe one. But it had been a great disappointment to stand on Col de Péteret at an hour early enough to have given ample time for the traverse of Mont Blanc, and yet be forced to retire. That evening the vow was made to sleep at the hut until we could depart successfully by the Péteret arête.

### *Mont Brouillard by the E. Face.*

Next week, the second passed at the Gamba hut, was one of weather which enforced shorter expeditions. On Monday, July 18, we traversed l'Innominata and Aiguille Joseph Croux—gaining the former from the Brouillard Glacier by a steep and shallow rib meeting the S.E. arête between its junction with the S. arête and the summit. We descended by the S.E. arête *direct* to Col de l'Innominata and found that the last part of the descent gives a piece of good rock-climbing. The traverse thence of Aiguille Joseph Croux was amusing, but the views were spoilt throughout by mist and we were again badly caught by the rain.

Rain fell on Tuesday. On Wednesday, July 20, we invited Signor Celso to join us and ascended Pic Eccles from the Col du Fresnay. We did not take the usual route by the E. flank of the mountain, but followed its S.E. arête, perhaps for the first time, direct to the summit—there being one very difficult piece of rock just before arriving there. Mist again caught us, but we returned dry to the Gamba hut—our first and almost solitary achievement of the sort. But even had we been drenched again, we should have been happy, for the climb itself, as taken by this route, is a pleasant one. The short *impasse* is interesting, the traverse thence over the S.E. to the N.W. summit of the peak is along an extremely sharp arête and the mist-veiled views obtained of the great face of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur defy description.

The E. face of Mont Brouillard, which I examined with care during the preceding climb, is constructed on a rather unusual plan. Although it is a face seeming scarcely to be broken by arêtes, it is in fact indented by a shallow couloir. This at first traverses the face in an upward direction from left to right (S. to N.), but gradually bends as it ascends until it runs up in the line of the face itself, its upward direction then being westerly. The axis of this shallow couloir thus curves round and it runs more or less parallel with that of the deep couloir to the right (N.) of the mountain, falling from Col Emile Rey to the Brouillard Glacier. The true left side of the shallow couloir is bounded by a steep rib of rock in its lower part and by a sharp crest of ice or snow in its upper. The rib itself meets the main crest of the mountain very near to the summit, and between it and Col Emile Rey. The height of Mont Brouillard above the Gamba hut is about 5000 ft., but the greater part of that is won during the ascent of the Brouillard Glacier to the foot of the face.

We decided to try this face if possible and, if it did not go, to ascend Mont Brouillard by way of Col Emile Rey instead. But rain fell next morning, giving us the advantage of another examination of the face in the afternoon, when the weather cleared. The rib at the side of the couloir obviously promised a better and safer route than the couloir itself, and the initial part of the couloir (apparently a steep ice-filled chimney) looked impracticable. But I had seen a line of fault in the face, running from near the middle of its base up to the left and seeming to give a possible way to the rib above the initial difficulty. This could not be seen clearly from the hut but we resolved to investigate it.

We set out with this intention at 4.13 A.M. on July 22, ascending the Brouillard Glacier as far as a point level with the Col du Fresnay on a brilliant morning with clear views to the S. From this point the rocks of our route looked steep and formidable and as if they might stop us so that the day would be wasted—such was the solemn warning conveyed to me. But I decided to take that risk, inherent in any novel route, and we set out on the difficult passage of the glacier to the foot of the face, arriving there at 6.45. In some seasons the crossing of the glacier might be impossible.

Our examination had at once shown that the fault or ' entry ' afforded certainly the most practicable, perhaps the only, method of attaining the rib safely, while our traverse landed us at the foot of it. Up we went, finding the climbing interesting but never difficult, and reached the rib itself, at the top of the ' entry,' in less than 25 minutes. Then came rock which was certainly difficult ; so much was this the case that Graven (who led it) relinquished his sack—a rare gesture. The route was steep and interesting, complicated and full of delightful twists and surprises. All too soon, at 7.53, we came to the last of this rock and rested. It then looked as if the remainder of the ascent—up the snow arête—would be a rapid and easy one.

Setting off again at 8.16 we mounted some broken rock, obtaining our first clear view of the snow arête above. It was steep, narrow and corniched on both sides—so that the ridge stood up like a row of séracs seen end-on, reminding Graven and myself of the upper parts of the *Viereselgrat* of Dent Blanche as we saw it early in the snowy season of 1930. It is true that our present arête was on a smaller scale (is ' Dreiesel-grat ' an appropriate diminutive ?), but the scale of such arêtes has little to do with their difficulty and it was at once evident that we had some very hard work ahead of us. It has been stated above that there were corniches on either side of the arête ; in some places there were two or even more on either side—sharply cut walls of ice or snow superimposed in tiers and each perpendicular. I have never seen the like before. Double corniches are not unusual ; we saw them on many occasions this season, but here the corniches were quadruple or multiple. The snow bulged over the tops of these icicle-fringed walls.

We had little time to spend in admiration, and at once tackled the arête. Sometimes we moved along the narrow top—not a yard across—distributing the weights of our bodies as widely

as we could ; sometimes we were forced off the crest on to a terrace between the tiers. Once we came to the anchorage of a rock, perhaps a buried gendarme, and there was one passage of exceptional difficulty and delicacy. But the last of the multiple corniches was safely behind us at 9.12. A comparatively short portion of the whole climb had occupied us continuously for nearly an hour, during which we had had remarkable views of the couloir on the Brouillard arête of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur.

The arête above us was now a simple but steep crest of snow, and its ascent occupied 6 minutes only. We then stood on the junction of our own arête with the summit ridge—which the conditions made by no means easy—but in less than 10 minutes, at 9.27, we attained the summit itself.

A rest there was devoted to photography and food ; we then descended to Col Emile Rey and came down the couloir to the Brouillard Glacier, following the line close under the rocks of Pic Luigi Amedeo which Eustace Thomas and Knubel took in making the first descent of this side of the col, and being ourselves the second party only to make that descent. We had some difficulty in finding a way through the uppermost icefall of the glacier, but did so close to the rocks of Pic Eccles, and so descended *via* the Col du Fresnay and our old tracks to the Gamba hut.

The new face accomplished is of no great height, but even to arrive at its foot is a good expedition. The face itself is continuously interesting, for it seems to contain a little of everything, while that little is of high quality. All the rock encountered was excellent, and no stone falls occurred while we were on the route. That may, however, have been due to the abnormal conditions, but there is no objective danger (or possibility of it) once the actual arête is won, and not only is the 'entry' no channel for falling stones, but its passage seems to be protected from above by a steep wall of rock on the right. The corniched snow arête proved the chief difficulty. There can be little doubt that the conditions were abnormal, but I think that a sharp, steep and interesting arête of snow or ice will always be found there. If that is correct, the route will be always one of more than usual interest—quite apart from the magnificent views of the S.E. face of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur. But the guides think that, under *normal* conditions, the climb would rank with that of an ordinary first-class peak by its usual route.

*Photo, T. Graham Brown.*]

PIC LUIGI AMEDEO (FORESHORTENED).

S.E. face and the Couloir on Brouillard arête route to Mont Blanc de Courmayeur (seen on left of centre). From a point on E. face of Mont Brouillard.

[*To face p.* 248

*Photo, T. Graham Brown.*]

POINTE DURIER. FROM THE UPPER PART OF THE W. SIDE OF COL MAUDIT.

*Some minor Climbs.*

The eight days which were to pass before we finally climbed the Péteret arête were days of bad weather and increasing doubt. On July 23, the day after our Mont Brouillard ascent, we again attempted the Péteret arête, but snow soon began to fall, and the morning was spent in exploring the S.W. face of the Aiguille Blanche and determining a shorter variation of the new way up to the S.E. arête used by Hoerlin and Schneider in 1929—a short cut which was to save an hour on the day of our ascent.

Professor Guido Miescher (in 1912) first had the idea of reaching the S.E. arête of Aiguille Blanche by a shallow couloir to the left (N.) of what is now the usual gully of ascent, but bad weather prevented him from actually trying it. In 1921, Lauper, at Miescher's suggestion, set out to try this way but was forced to return from the Fresnay Glacier. Hoerlin and Schneider independently saw the possibilities of the route in March 1929 and used it in the following summer. Our own attention was drawn to it by Viktor Grössl, and a careful examination from the S.E. arête of l'Innominata disclosed a more direct line, rising for about 500 ft. from the glacier by a narrow gully and chimney and then meeting the Hoerlin-Schneider route at the foot of an easy couloir a little distance below the point where that couloir is reached by the traverse on the ordinary route. Although our line *looks* almost impossible, it is not difficult and gives a very safe, rapid and also interesting ascent. Having mounted by our route as far as the easy couloir, we descended by the Hoerlin-Schneider route so as to compare the two, returned over Col de l'Innominata and again reached the hut in a wet state—whereafter there was a very heavy fall of snow, postponing all thought of serious climbing.

Much new snow lay far below the hut next day; July 26 was another day of rain, and on July 27 we tried the S. arête of l'Innominata with Viktor Grössl and Peter Epp—only to be driven off by falling snow when we had overcome many of the difficulties and had reached the foot of the final steep rise. On July 28 we examined an old bivouac on the rocks above the Châtelet Glacier, which must have been that made by Birkbeck in 1864, used later by Marshall in 1874 and by Eccles at his first exploration in 1875. Then we went (for remembrance) in the path of these pioneers over a col on to the Brouillard

Glacier [2] and (for fun) made a new variation of the S. arête of l'Innominata, reaching the neck at the foot of its last steep rise, at the point where we had been stopped before on the orthodox route, by an interesting but ice-filled chimney from the Brouillard Glacier. We descended by another unusual way from the S.E. arête, taking for this purpose the true left side of that couloir to the Glacier du Châtelet lying next to the N.W. from Col de l'Innominata. The route cannot be recommended, but it is not dangerous. July 29 was a fine day; conditions seemed to be set for the Péteret arête next morning, and we passed the day lazily in traversing the Aiguille Joseph Croux again.

### *The Péteret Arête.*

On July 30 we succeeded at last in climbing the Péteret arête. The day was a brilliant one, which kept my camera busy with the views denied to us on our former attempts. This time there was no need for digression; our new variation served its purpose admirably in saving time and in avoiding objective dangers. Having left the Gamba hut at 2.15 A.M. (it was like tearing up our roots!) we reached the summit of Aiguille Blanche at 8.39 with some long halts on the way—our actual climbing time having been 5 hours from the hut. The condition of the mountain was almost exactly as it had been on our first visit a fortnight before. The curious double corniches were still there, and the snow on the rocks again gave us trouble. We went on from the summit until we came to *Pointe Güssfeldt*, and, as the question had been disputed between us, we climbed that point to see if it really *is* higher than the true summit—and found that truly to be the case. We then descended directly to the crest of Col de Péteret, encountering difficulty from bare ice on the way and reaching the Col at 10.50—a little ahead of our predicted time. Here we took another long rest.

Setting off again at 11.43, we tackled what was to prove the hardest part of the whole climb—the ascent to the 'Eckpfeiler.' The bergschrund gave us trouble and caused delay, the ascent was complicated by snow on the rocks and our line took us at

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[2] This col was used by Enzenhofer, von Hibler, and Weitzenböck on July 28, 1913. Eccles' description, a very clear one, shows that he used it in 1875, and, from what he says, it is clear that this col and route to the Col du Fresnay or near by was taken for the first time by John Birkbeck (jun.) in 1864 (before July 3).—*A.J.*, **8.** 409.

one place across some difficult rock. But we overcame these difficulties and, with a single pause on the way to collect and drink water, attained the Péteret arête a little above the 'Eckpfeiler' at 1.45—suddenly to experience the second great moment of the climb.

The view into the Brenva face of Mont Blanc from that point is perhaps more interesting than beautiful, yet each of its parts contains its own individual beauty. You see great ice cliffs gleaming in the sun and rising in a *crescendo* from the top of the old Brenva route to above that of the 'Sentinelle.' Brilliant snow slopes sweep downwards from beneath these, pleasantly varied with folds, crevasses and projecting rocks. At your feet and in shadow on the left lies a gulf, then snow slopes again and above them, perpendicular ice walls and buttresses of rock. Still to the left and higher than these, the sun catches large séracs on the sky-line. There is so much to see that the eye roams haphazard. It is drawn down by the sweeping line of the rib of the 1928 climb to Mont Blanc de Courmayeur ; it looks on to the floor of the Brenva Glacier and at little *Pic Moore* sitting like a watch-dog. Then the gaze is caught up in an eddy, as it were, to follow the rocks of Moore's arête until it rests (but only for a moment) upon the famous ice ridge of the Brenva route. Attention is swept here and there—so that one can hardly escape from this fascinating maze to look at Monte Rosa in the distance, or the masses of Grandes Jorasses, or Mont Maudit nearer at hand. Such splendour overwhelms, nor is there escape. Turn about and you have the majestic S.E. face of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur on your right—the Innominata arête and the Pic Luigi Amedeo. And a little to your left, the Péteret arête falls away and you look down past the now insignificant Aiguille Blanche to where the Aiguille Noire seems to close in the foot of the Fresnay Glacier with curious dignity. Until you reach this point on the ridge, you have had little time to devote to the view. Then, when the arête is reached—at the same instant—the view is opened in front and you win freedom to look about. Surely this moment is a great one ?

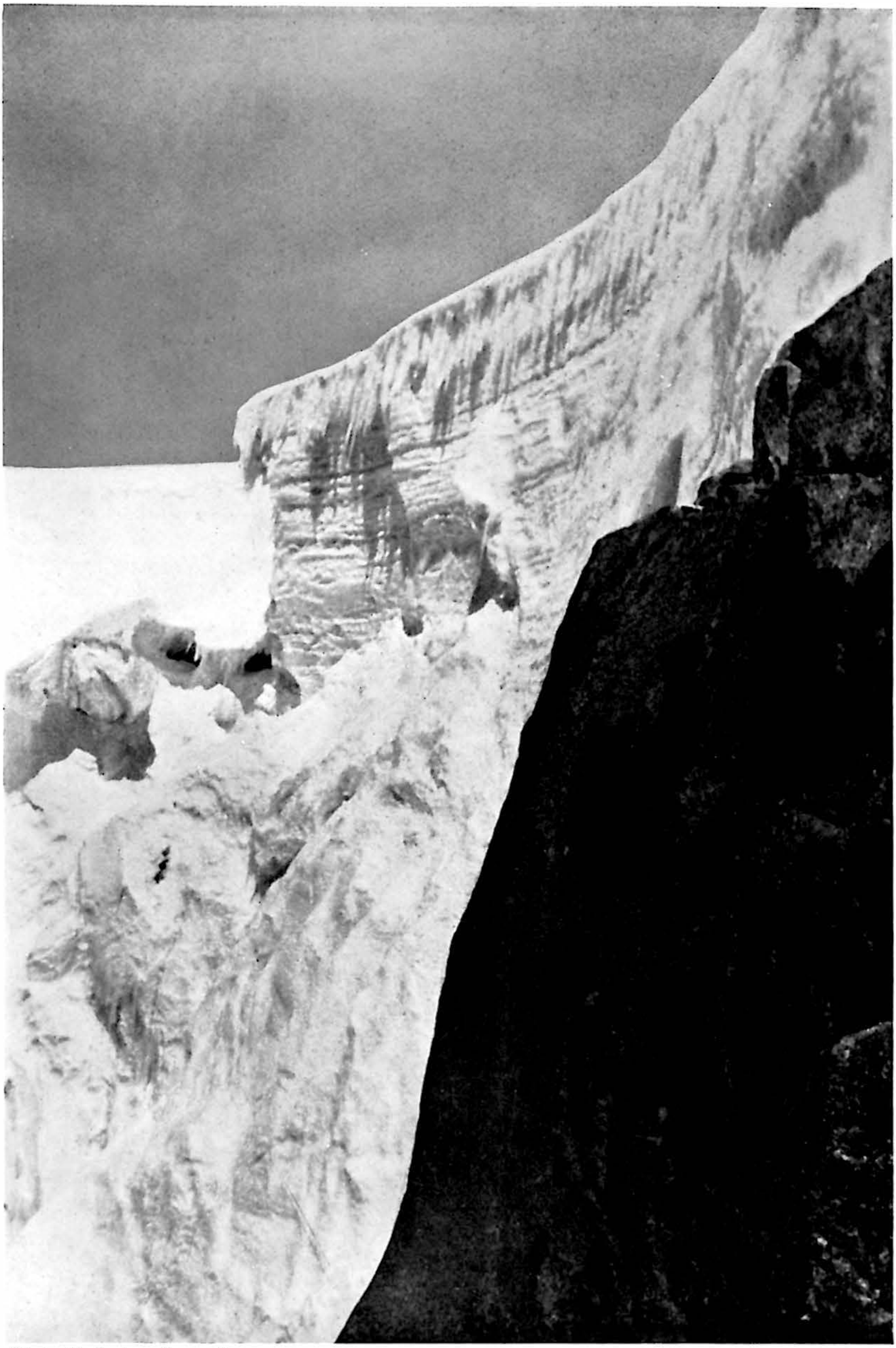
After resting here to allow the ridge above to come into shadow, we left again at 2.37 and reached Mont Blanc de Courmayeur at 4.11—an hour and a half of grinding work. There was a bitterly cold W. wind on the summit and we soon went on towards Mont Blanc itself, which we reached at a few minutes before 5 o'clock—our actual climbing having occupied little more than $10\frac{1}{2}$ hours from the hut. We saw tracks down

the Bosses arête—they were not deep, for there had been few ascents so far this season—but we elected to descend by the untrodden snows of the 'Corridor,' as I had not been that way before and it would take us out of the wind. So we came down at a leisurely pace, halting for a final lazy picnic on the Col de la Brenva where we first met warmth after the summits, reaching the Grands Mulets at 7.46—in the light of sunset and in comfortable time for a good dinner.

## *Col Maudit.*

Col Maudit seemed to me to hold some hidden mystery—for why else had it not been crossed? Its wonderful E. face—1200 ft. of glacis and ice wall, with steep rock on either hand—had long been familiar; there could be little mystery there. Indeed, Stafford Anderson and Bowlby ascended that side of the pass with Hans Almer and Abraham Imseng in 1888, by a very difficult route to the S. of the ice wall; but G. B. and G. F. Gugliermina, de Petro, and Ravelli had found a much less difficult route on the N. side of the ice wall in 1921—a route which looks and is quite straightforward. Col Maudit, however, enjoys the merit—rare even amongst the high passes—that *both* its slopes are steep and difficult, so that it is not easy to say which excels the other. The top of the pass is formed by the high glacier-filled trench lying between the summits of Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Maudit. The E. end of this falls suddenly to the Géant Glacier in that wonderful face which has just been described; at its other end the W. face of Col Maudit plunges down no less steeply to the Bossons Glacier, through an even greater vertical height, 1600 or 1700 ft. This W. slope was less familiar to me and here, if anywhere, must lie the mystery. Yet Migot and Savard had ascended this side of the pass in 1927 by an exposed and difficult route. It may be that the description of the route up the W. side of the pass was deterrent, or it may be that the idea of *descending* either slope, even the E., was formidable. But the neglect of the pass as such is in any case a strange one. For it obviously offers views and situations of the greatest interest and magnificence, together with problems and difficulties of a high order: glacier troubles on the way to the foot of its W. side, tribulations of rock and ice on the climb, problems of route-planning and discovery. The prospect of trying to find the answer to these riddles was attractive.

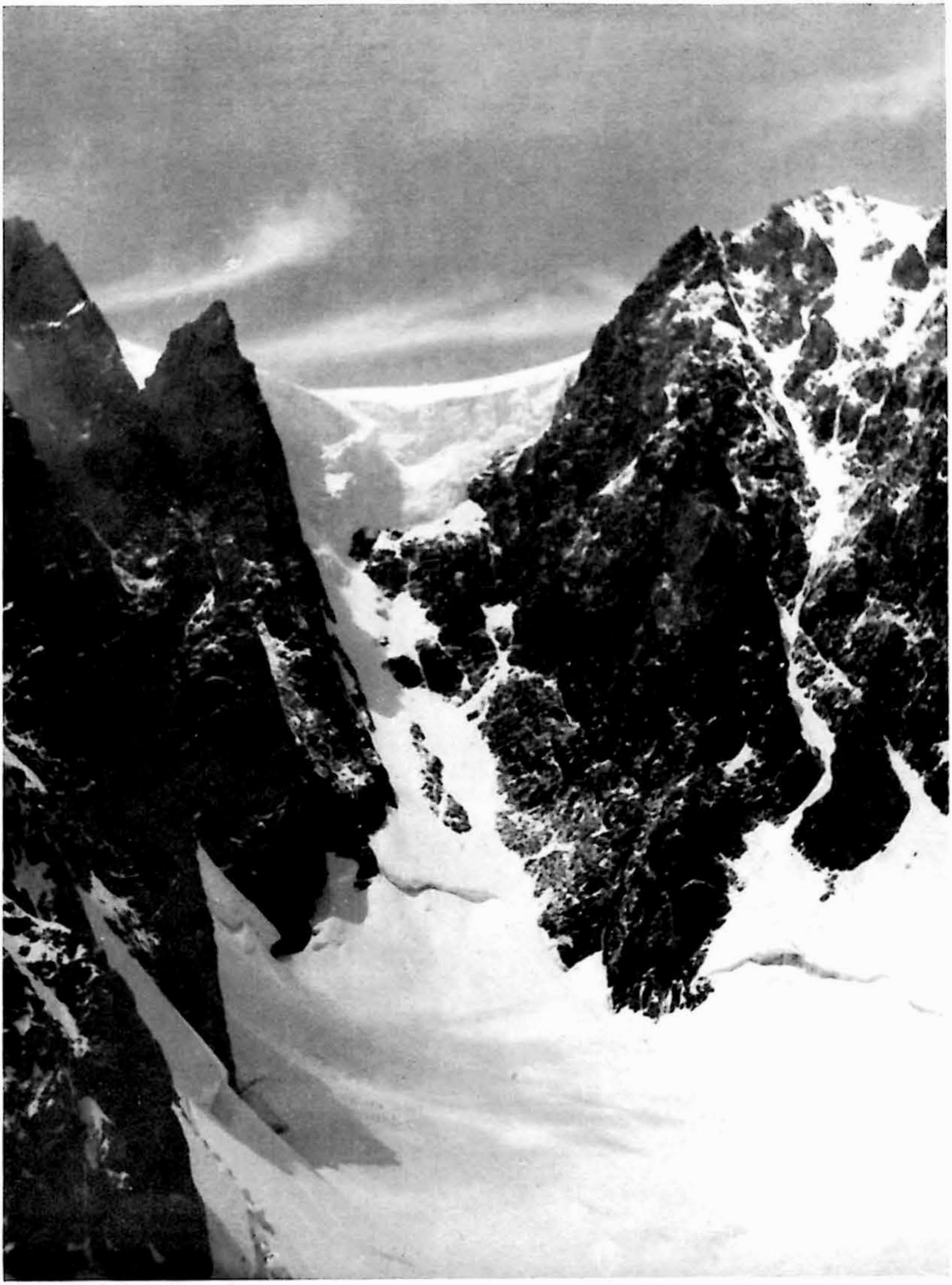
The attempt which Graven and I made in 1931, although we



*Photo, T. Graham Brown.*]

COL MAUDIT, E. FACE—N. END OF ICEWALL.
From a point on 'Gugliermina' route.

[*To face p.* 252



*Photo, T. Graham Brown.*]

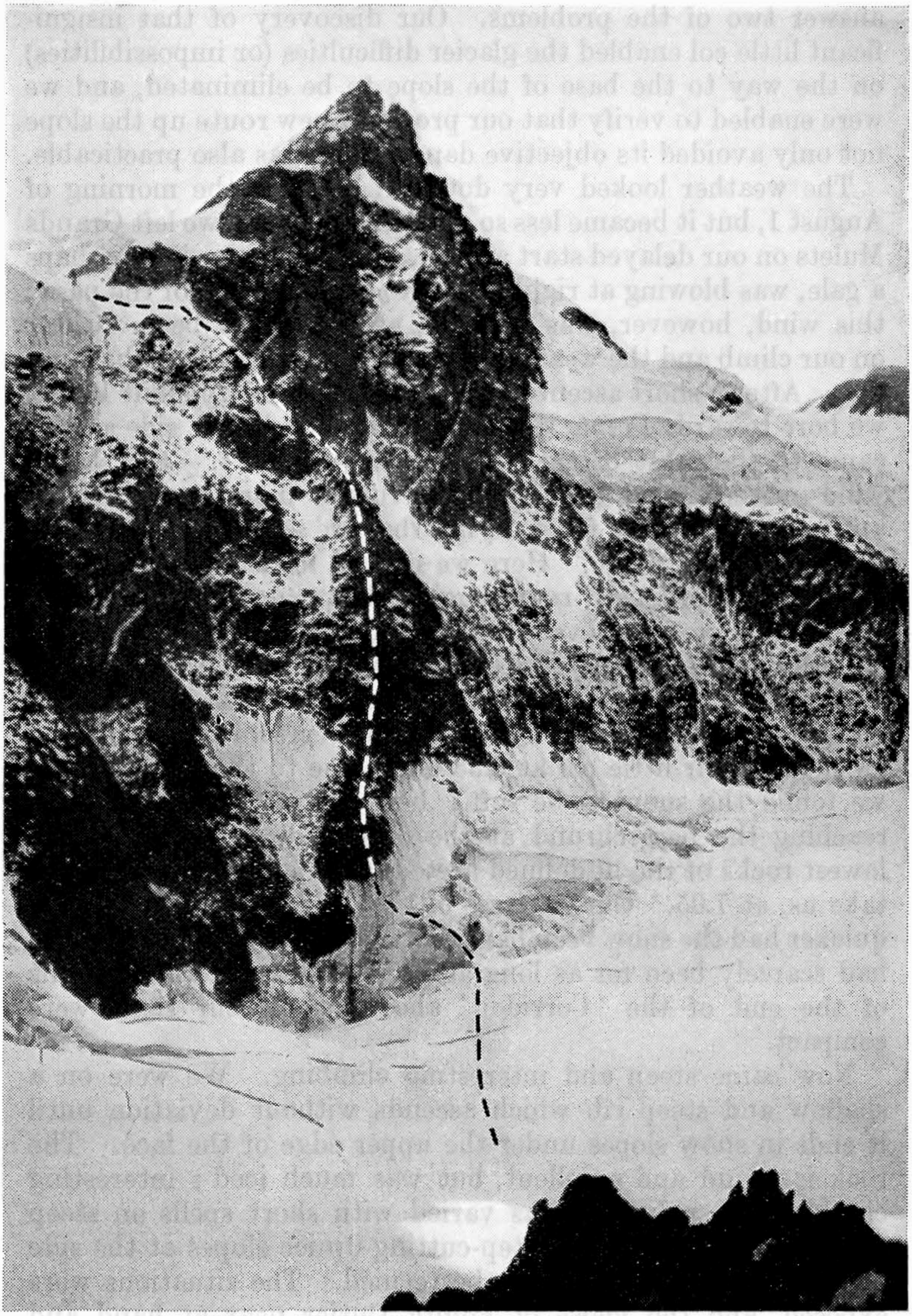
COL MAUDIT, E. SIDE.

From a point on the Fourche de la Brenva.

did not set foot on the W. slope of the pass, had yet let us answer two of the problems. Our discovery of that insignificant little col enabled the glacier difficulties (or impossibilities) on the way to the base of the slope to be eliminated, and we were enabled to verify that our proposed new route up the slope not only avoided its objective dangers but was also practicable.

The weather looked very doubtful early in the morning of August 1, but it became less so at dawn and when we left Grands Mulets on our delayed start at 5.43, a very strong wind, perhaps a gale, was blowing at right angles to the direction of the pass ; this wind, however, was friendly, as we should be in shelter on our climb and the weather would hold up as long as the wind did. After a short ascent in the ordinary track up Mont Blanc, we bore towards *Pointe Wilson*, ascended on its W. side and so came to the crest of the 'Col des XIV Points'—the strong wind overhead and a feeling that truth is more precious than aptness, prevent me from saying that we arrived there in the calm of a great peace. Here we paused for a few minutes to examine the proposed route again ; but there was little need for reconsideration—even had the upper part of Migot and Savard's route looked practicable this season, as it did not, we had seen ice fall across its lower part on two occasions yesterday afternoon. When we had crossed the bergschrund below the E. slope of our little col at 6.33 and come to the level glacier, we found the snow to be soft ; but we traversed it quickly, reaching the bergschrund at the other side at 6.55 and the lowest rocks of the ill-defined arête, up which our route was to take us, at 7.05. Our traverse of the glacier would have gone quicker had the snow been hard, but even as it was the exposure had scarcely been for as long as 10 minutes, and the ice cliffs of the end of the 'Corridor' above us on our right were compact.

Now came steep and interesting climbing. We were on a shallow and steep rib which ascends without deviation until it ends in snow slopes under the upper edge of the face. The rock is sound and excellent, but was much iced ; interesting climbing up such rock was varied with short spells on steep snow ridges and bouts of step-cutting up ice slopes at the side of the 'arête'—if so it may be termed. The situations were exposed, and the views of Pointe Durier near at hand and into the Grand Plateau were interesting. Shadows raced across the snow ; once or twice we came into very brief but strong gusts of wind, when we had to stand and hold on. But we were in dead calm for most of the time, despite the high



*Photo, T. Graham Brown.*]

MONT MAUDIT AND W. SIDE (PART) OF COL MAUDIT.
From Pointe Wilson. Broken line - - - - - 1932 route of ascent.

wind overhead, and at 8.22 reached a small but prominent gendarme near the top of the route. Beyond this we gained a short arête of snow, and then a last step of abrupt rocks landed us on the snow slope below the upper edge of the face. Here we donned our crampons and then gained the plateau of the col by an almost horizontal traverse to the left, N., across steep snow interrupted by one small crevasse. We arrived on the top at 9.10 and rested.

Starting off again at 9.42, we walked up the gentle slope to the top of the E. side of the pass, which we reached at 10.11—having paused for photography on the way, for the shadows of the clouds on the great snow-fields had been fascinating. Our ascent had been a rapid one (despite the fact that I was carrying the kit used at the Gamba hut and for the Péteret arête—sleeping bag and all), and hopes, even expectations, were expressed that we should eat our luncheon in the Torino hut.

The edge of the E. side of Col Maudit is a crescent of ice (the top of the ice wall) bulging forward and separated from the more solid ice behind by a snow-filled semi-circular moat. The ice is bounded to the N. by a sharp leaf or rib of rock running down at right angles to the axis of the pass, as if to cross the diameter of the curved ice wall; between this and the end of the ice wall is a steep couloir of ice. The rib itself plunges down more steeply than the couloir, so that the two meet below, but there is a short level on the crest at about the same height as the col. Hereabouts are some piled stones on the arête, which at that point could be attained from the couloir. I proposed that we should go to the arête there and attempt to find a route on the other side; but the couloir seemed to offer as good a line of descent, and this was favoured by the majority of the party. We therefore decided to take it.

We left the col at 10.30 and descended the ice couloir. From its base we reached a platform on the rock rib below an abrupt step, and thenceforward our way led down rock—more or less in the line which the Guglierminas took on their ascent. The view of the ice wall from this platform was impressive, and indeed this is the 'moment' of Col Maudit, for you see for the first time clearly, not only the face of the ice, but the glen into which you are about to descend. The walls of that glen rise for about 2000 ft. above the flat glacier forming its floor—fine ribs or slopes of steep rock and ice on the S.; splendid arêtes and buttresses on the N. The glen itself forms a deep pit, and we looked into it down dark rock, the detail of which

was hidden by its steepness. The clouds had thickened and the gleams of sunlight had become more rare. The wind blew strongly in a gale overhead. All these things combined to make the view into the depths on this side of the col great with portent and magnificent beyond description. It is a rare type of view, perhaps such as would be seen from the top of Col Dolent; but it is difficult to believe that the view from the E. side of Col Maudit can be excelled, or even matched, elsewhere. And Col Maudit adds to that the view of its own ice wall; a real wall of ice, beautiful and fringed with icicles, formed in a large crescent. This was solid enough at our end, but more broken near the middle, and, as we looked, two falls of ice occurred from it.

We descended the rib, keeping always as much as possible on the side away from the ice wall. Some very steep rock, difficult but for the excellent holds, took us to a more broken part of the arête. More than once we found ourselves getting too near the ice wall and had to return. So the arête went on, but soon a feeling of anxiety came into the climb, and that not only because the clouds were darkening. About 11.25, after we had been descending for an hour (having lost time in several places) and had just come down some steep rock, we were stopped.

On our left as we faced outwards, the side of the rib descended very steeply to a narrow couloir filled with a waterfall of ice. On the other side of this a fine buttress seemed to offer a possible line of descent, but the conditions in the couloir forbade any attempt to cross, although we might have reached its near edge down 100 ft. or so of rock, which would have been very difficult because of the ice on it. The lower part of our own arête being hidden from here, we went forward to a shoulder and then saw that the further line of descent was obviously easy. But that line led by the side of the ice wall and into the centre of the couloir below it, which must have been swept by the ice falls we had seen. Had we continued, we should probably have come actually beneath the overhang of the ice wall. That route was not to be thought of, and we turned back—for there was no third way. We had been descending with some abortive digressions for about an hour, but half that time of rapid and uninterrupted climbing found us back again in the ice couloir by which we had commenced the descent.

Here I proposed that we should try my first suggestion. Accordingly we made our way on to the crest of the rib near

the piled stones mentioned above. We at once saw that the couloir which had stopped us below could be crossed at this higher level and that the arête on its other side not only might offer a possible line of descent, but could be gained. The way to the couloir led across steep ice-glazed rocks, but Knubel led off, jumping down on to a ledge with a shout.

Our second attempt to descend was successful, although we were kept in suspense until the end. The arête or buttress was complicated, falling too steeply for us ever to see very much of the way below. We had left the pass for the second time at midday, and the route at first led down rock mixed with snow and occasional short arêtes of pure snow, all interrupted by more abrupt steps. As we came towards each corner or view-point it was always with some anxiety, but in each case we then saw a possible route for yet a further part of the descent. Some loose patches of rock had to be treated with care ; in other places the rock was firm and excellent.

After about an hour's descent, we came to some sloping chimneys. The way below these was a little more open, so that we could see further and began to feel more confident that the glacier could be reached. But after descending for another half-hour, the result again seemed to be in question. The ridge here became a fine mass of scarcely broken rock the front of which plunged a little further on into a smooth and almost perpendicular face. We went down as much as we could on the right of this, seeking to turn the step by thus reaching the foot of the face, but were brought to the right edge of the face some distance above its base. Here we stood on the top of a smaller supporting buttress and could look across the face itself. The buttress on which we stood was equally steep, but we found a chimney facing to our left across the face. The left wall of the chimney was formed by the rock of the face, its right wall by that of the small buttress. We could see down only as far as a stance about 30 ft. below, for the lower part of the chimney was very steep and actually overhung a little at the foot. We roped down the chimney, to find that its lower section was about 50 ft. high, steep, but capable of being climbed. When this obstacle was passed we stood on ledges at the foot of the face, and our further route was seen to be plain sailing. The angle of the arête eased out on to the top of a little shoulder projecting into the glacier some distance still below us. I had unroped at the foot of the chimney and went along some ledges on the face below it in order to photograph the descent of the others. On their

rejoining me, we all scrambled down the broken arête, and so came to the top of the final small shoulder at 2.10.

Here we rested, for there was now no question that we could reach level glacier, nor much more than 20 minutes' further work. Under good conditions, the *whole* descent might be expected to take less than 1½ hours ; but to-day, as far as this point, we had been moving for 2 hours as rapidly as the difficulties permitted. Two hours is not a long period in itself —even on a climb ; but time may go slowly or quickly irrespective of the ticking of a watch, and the hours may be stretched when they are crowded with incident and you are more than usually tense. Here the detail of the climbing had supplied incident enough, and the constant uncertainty sufficient tension. The time had seemed to me to be much longer than it actually was ; the others must have felt the same. When I looked at my watch at the top of that last chimney, I said in surprise—' It's only 1.45.' Knubel (whose watch was out of action) replied, ' Your watch must have stopped ; it's past 4 P.M. at least.' But my watch was correct, for Graven's told the same time. Yet Knubel's estimate was more true to our feelings.

We left again at 2.38, went down a little, found a way off on the left of the shoulder, and then descended to the bergschrund along the edge of the rocks. The bergschrund itself presented no difficulty, and when we at last reached level glacier it was not yet 3 o'clock. We had again, of course, to make another halt in the centre of the glacier in order to take a last look at the pass, and then turned our backs upon it, reaching the Torino hut across the Col des Flambeaux at 4.59. There we had some tea, and then left again at 6.15 for the Requin hut, which we attained at 7.47 P.M. The wind had ceased at last —having done its duty by us—and sleet and rain came down, so that we arrived wet to the skin again.

That was my last climb with Knubel and Graven in 1932, for snow was falling heavily next morning. But my own climbing was still to include (amongst other things) a delightful ascent of the Dent du Midi with Montagnier and Strutt ; some pleasant explorations with Strutt, during one of which we found an uncairned summit which we pretended to each other must have been unclimbed, but the name of which escapes me.[3] Also an attack on Mont Blanc which we two

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[3] One of the Fontanabran peaks, N.W. of the Col de Fenestrale. The difficulties did *not* exceed the 'limits of human possibility' ! —*E.L.S.*

made from Tête Rousse on a bitter day, when the wind at the Vallot hut deterred us from ascending the Bosses arête. But let me end the story rather with Col Maudit.

The temptation to exaggerate the difficulties of any new route are so great that there is a natural tendency to err in the other direction and to underrate them unduly. The events of Col Maudit, however, and their variety, give an unusual feeling towards the climb, tempting one to depart from the usual practice and perhaps to exaggerate. But the incidents and circumstances of our earlier repulses, the disappointment of our first failure to descend, the constant anxiety lest a second occur, the gallant way in which the pass fought us to the very end, the difficulties of the iced rocks, the gloom of the afternoon increasing possibly the effect of the depths and steepnesses into which we descended—all these may tempt one to attribute to the climb itself a grandeur and difficulty not really belonging to it. But when all allowances have been made for sentiment, it may yet be claimed that Col Maudit is a great pass, one worthy to be ranked with the finest in the Alps. It possesses, as has been said before, the rare merit that *both* its slopes are difficult—perhaps equally so. If you can choose, take our route. A fine ascent will lead to a wonderful snow valley, along which you will walk to the other brink. There you will come suddenly to the top of the splendid ice wall, and there or thereabouts you will look down into that great and superb pit, the source of the Géant Glacier. As you go down into it, the grandeur and magnificence will grow upon you until they invest the climb itself. You will have gained a new experience of the majesty of mountains—an experience differing from, yet complementary to, that impression won when, standing on the summit of the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret, you gaze at the higher steps above.

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## Climbing in Scotland.

By H. MacROBERT.

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 7, 1933.)

I SHOULD like first of all to say how much we in Scotland, and in particular the Scottish Mountaineering Club, appreciate the compliment implied by a request from the Alpine Club for a paper on Climbing in Scotland. I must confess that I accepted Mr. Spencer's ' demand ' for a paper with considerable