

thence, by descending on the west side of the Krönlet into the Gurtzellen, or Gorneren, Thal, to return to the St. Gothard road. And this must be the way by which Mr. Sowerby got home, after his successful ascent of the Great Spannort.

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A WEEK IN THE GRAIANS IN 1867. By C. C. TUCKER.  
Read before the Alpine Club, June 4, 1872.

THE limits of the central Graians are well defined. Bounded on one side by the broad valley of Aosta, and on the other by the deep trench of Val d'Orca, they are cut off from the district of the Ruitor by the Val Savaranche and the comparatively low Col de la Croix de Nivolet, while on the south-east they gradually sink into the plain which stretches without a break from their lower slopes to the Adriatic.

This cluster of mountains has long been known to contain valleys of exquisite beauty, and peaks the highest points of which exceed in height the Eiger and the Wetterhorn. It has not been neglected by the English Alpine Club, the names of some members of which are as household words in the valleys which lie around the Grivola and the Grand Paradis. Our countrymen are not, however, the only persons who have taken an interest in this group. The Graians of Cogne form one of the most noticeable features in the grand panorama of peaks visible from Turin; and as soon as the mountaineering spirit awoke in Piedmont, it was natural that they should be among the first to receive attention, both from their geographical position, and from the fact that Victor Emmanuel had adopted them as his favourite hunting-grounds. It is not surprising, therefore, that the one considerable peak of the district which had escaped the ravages of earlier travellers should become the object of careful study and serious effort on the part of the Italian Alpine Club. Four times at least was the Grand Tour St. Pierre assailed by members of that body, and four times did they encounter a series of mishaps and bad weather combined sufficient to damp their ardour. On the last of these occasions the explorers went so far as to bivouac on the Col di Telleccio, on the eastern side of the peak, and less than (as will be seen) 3 hours' climb from the actual summit; but on reaching the arête, and essaying to scale the formidable-looking bastion which forms the final peak, they were met by a hurlyburly of thunder and lightning, snow, and vapour, which made it impossible to advance, and difficult even to retreat. I need

hardly say they adopted the least hopeless alternative, and the Grand Tour survived till 1867.

In that year Messrs. Mathews and Morshead crossed the Col di Telleccio, and cast a longing glance at the peak, then fully, as they thought, within their reach. With such talent in the neighbourhood the Grand Tour was again in a parlous state, but time pressed and the enemy passed on. On their arrival at Zermatt these gentlemen found a party consisting of Messrs. Freshfield, Carson, and myself, with Balley of St. Pierre as guide, just smarting under a repulse inflicted upon us by the Dent Blanche, and not half consoled by the Lys Jochs and the Weiss Thors, with which we strove to soothe our wounded self-esteem. With the unselfishness so characteristic of mountaineers our friends descanted eloquently to us on the desirable nature of the mountains of Cogne in general and of the Grand Tour St. Pierre in particular, with the result that within twenty-four hours our party, reinforced by the late Mr. J. M. W. Backhouse and his guide Michel Payod, disappeared from the eyes of the Zermatt world by the Matter-Joch.

We found the Gouffre de Buserailles not less deliciously cool and the lower Val Tournanche not less Texan than usual, nor did we escape from the hotel beside the bridge at Châtillon without experiencing the difficulties always thrown in the way of those who prefer Jean Tairraz's well-known establishment at Aosta to the doubtful attractions of his Italian rival.

I never knew anyone who started from Zermatt in the morning, and slept at Tairraz's inn at night, who succeeded in getting off at an early hour the next day; and we were all, I rejoice to say, free from the dangerous modern conceit of wishing to prove a good rule by becoming exceptions to it. It was mid-day, therefore, before we tore ourselves away from the too pleasant balcony and the late prolonged breakfast, and in the full blaze of an Italian afternoon sun addressed ourselves to the task of mounting the long and toilsome valley that leads up to Cogne.

We had heard evil reports of the resources of that village, and the same mule which bore our little all was also charged with some of the luxuries which even in less habitable regions than a Graian valley proverbially place men beyond the reach of destiny. In spite, however, of the fact that we bore our burdens vicariously, and had practically secured ourselves against starvation, it was not till the shadows began to stretch across the valley, and some keenness to mingle with the sleepy softness of the air, that we ceased to be depressed and contra-

dictory, and became in a fit mood to do justice to the upland basin, which at last almost suddenly opened out before us.

The position of the village of Cogne is indeed one of singular beauty. At first sight little meets the eye but a stretch of sunny meadowland set about with bold and heavily-wooded spurs, between which, like fingers radiating from a central hand, lie the shadowy valleys which lead to the cold and quiet world above. But the influence of such a scene is not to be measured entirely by that which meets the eye. The mind is affected by the knowledge of what lies beyond, and the foreground, however cheerful, cannot banish for an instant the thought of those high summits of which, though far withdrawn, the presence is felt here and now. It may be admitted, however, that the influence exercised by the mountains in such a case is, though real, somewhat less direct; and it is for this reason that some of us, at any rate for a prolonged sojourn, would prefer an Alpine village where the merest glimpses of the upper world are visible, to places where the majesty of the mountains is revealed from base to cope. Grindelwald and (as regards the Matterhorn) Zermatt are too overpowering, because too much is disclosed. It is in the sense of grand beauty, half hidden, yet constantly suggested, that the spell must be sought alike of the Tyrolese Pinzolo and of the Graian Cogne.

As we approached the village some excitement was visible. Groups of peasants clad in their best clustered round every door, and we began to think that the fame of the Alpine Club had preceded us, and that an ovation might be in preparation for even some of its most unworthy members. It was not so, however; it was merely the expected visit of an Italian Count, who was coming to inspect the condition of the royal hunting-paths, that created such a furore; and, somewhat humbled, we marched up the street to a sort of tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff establishment (we had been warned against the most obvious public-house at Cogne), where, in spite of an unpromising outside, we found civil and clean people, a snug upper room, and a plentiful supply of fresh meat. Whether the latter had been provided in the expectation that the Count would prove carnivorous I know not, but in any case we felt it our duty to discourage his savage propensities, and I have reason to believe that on his arrival he found the cupboard bare. The only feature of the house worth a passing notice was a huge genealogical tree sprouting from a gentleman lying upon his back, who, though evidently a great man, seemed somewhat scared at

the prospect of the tremendous family of which he was to become successively founder, patron, and hero.

We then discussed our plans. The Grand Tour is, as has been said, not visible from Cogné, and none of us, indeed, had the slightest idea where it was, except that it lay somewhere behind the massive promontory which divides the Combe di Valeiglia from the Combe di Val Nontè. As we had therefore first to find our peak and then to get up it, we concluded that it would be advisable to sleep as near as possible to its base, and a bivouac in the Combe di Valeiglia suggested itself as not less romantic than necessary. Not quite sure that our guides took the same view, we were relieved to find them firm believers in the existence of a *châlet* at the head of the valley, and we had too much consideration for their peace of mind to disturb the blissful ignorance which was also advantageous to our plans. As soon, therefore, as we had sufficiently defeated the carnal expectations of the Italian Count, we marched off. In mounting the main valley we kept somewhat too much to the left. We did not, however, regret the slight *détour*, as it gave us the opportunity of seeing that which can never be beheld without emotion—the glow of a perfect sunset on Mont Blanc, lifted to an immeasurable height of calm above the tumults and distresses of a sombre earth. When at length we turned our backs on the splendid vision, and plunged into the wild and darkening glen which was to be our abode for the night, it was not without feeling the momentary depression which attends the act of leaving light and the homes of men for solitude and growing gloom.

For some time we plodded solemnly on; the guides at first good-tempered enough in the prospect of a hay *châlet*, then dubious and discouraging, and at last—when reach after reach in the interminable valley was passed without revealing the wished-for haven—positively sepulchral. Two-and-a-half hours from Cogné, at a spot where a small rivulet crossed the path, a halt was called, and it was arranged that the men should employ themselves in collecting fire-wood and making preparations for a bivouac, while I made a last effort to discover the whereabouts of the mythical *châlet*. As I had never been a believer in its existence originally, it did not require a lengthened search to convince me that it was not there; and in ten minutes I returned with the report that within a few hundred yards of the place where we had halted, the path, hitherto our companion, vanished into nothingness, and that I had little reason in this instance to doubt the truth of the phrase which associates the act of going farther with faring worse. My conclusion was

accepted as probable, and with various energy we set about making the best of our situation.

My recollections of the hours which followed are none of the clearest. I look back upon our quiet night in the Combe di Valeiglia through a mist of Eastern experiences—bivouacs on the flanks of Ararat—encampments in the still wilder recesses of the Caucasus, which somewhat dim the glory of what we then doubtless considered a highly romantic situation. There was a moon, of course; but I think it was quite of the ordinary character. Our feelings, I fancy, were cheerful; we had gained much ground by our resolute start; we had successfully cheated the guides into an uncomfortable position (always a satisfactory performance), food was plenty, the fire good, and the sense of utter ignorance of even the whereabouts of a peak which had been assailed with deliberation at least four times without success, gave a feeling of uncertainty to our adventure which was not otherwise than pleasurable. Seated on a soft path, with our backs planted against an undeniably solid hill-side, and our eyes amply filled with accommodating smoke, we occupied a position in which little was left to be desired; and I think, though I speak with diffidence, that I must have slept. A slight feeling of monotony, perhaps unavoidable, induced us to rouse ourselves at about 2 o'clock, and we were quickly again on the war trail. The night had not agreed with all of us, and the appearance of Freshfield in particular was indescribable; indeed, had I not known that his afternoon powers are generally in direct proportion to his morning melancholy, I should certainly have predicted for him the fate of our Italian predecessors.

Before we quit the comfortable path which had served us so well during the hours of darkness, it may be as well to say something of the agency by which these valleys are, in point of commodiousness at least, lifted high above their fellows in the Alpine chain. I am told, and therefore I believe, that there is no royal road to mountaineering. The next best thing is to have royal roads to the mountains. The district of Cogne is undoubtedly that in which mountaineering is divested of its most objectionable features. The peaks themselves are scrupulously left alone; no ladders, no stanchions, no ropes are there to banish the element of difficulty or to smooth the path of the incompetent mountaineer; but the preliminary—that horrid preliminary stage which ordinarily consists of slopes of *débris* and boulders by the mile, unbridged torrents and insidious stumps of ancient trees—is a thing of the past. In the Graians we get an approach to that Walhalla of mountaineering

where the best sort of work remains, where the excitement is left unimpaired, where the moments of triumph are not less frequent or less ecstatic than before, which was doubtless in the mind of my old friend François when he spoke in the spirit of prophecy of the expeditions he and I should take together 'sur l'autre côté,' where porters should cease from troubling and even moraines be at rest.

But I must not forget that we have by this time left the path and are scrambling up the tail end of a considerable glacier. When one sleeps high, a little time, even with slow-going (and we had gone slowly), seems to take one a surprisingly long way, and it was still early when we first caught sight of the upper world we desired to explore. Again my recollections are vague, but the impression left on my mind is that of a largish snow-field, pretty flat and round, set about with various peaks, very black and very sharp. The only thing we did *not* see was the Tour St. Pierre; for though some one suggested that an unpromising-looking brute just opposite was the peak we sought, not one of us at heart believed that so truculent, and yet so ordinary a rock, could be the summit with which the country-side had connected the name and dignity of the great apostle of the Roman Church.

A huge bastion of rock and a smooth cataract of névé to our right concealed the view in that direction; and after some hesitation we decided upon surmounting the latter before we plumped for any of the unprepossessing candidates that had already presented themselves. This decision was judicious, and a very brief space of time revealed to us the broad gap of the Col di Telleccio quite away to the right, on the further side of a higher snow-plain, and the grand mass of what was indisputably the Tour St. Pierre, breaking steeply down upon it. As we drew near the level of the pass the sharp peaks of the Cottians cut the curving lines of the snow-ridge, and we rejoiced in the thought that for to-day at least the Italian side was clear. But we were not going to cross the pass, and our work was still before us. Freshfield, still sad and wishing to be slow, suggested a division of the party. Backhouse and I, with Payod, were to push on and secure the peak; the rest would follow at their own pace.

The nature of the work before us was abundantly clear. We had first to strike the arête that runs in a northerly direction from the peak towards Cogne, as near as possible to the base of the final tower, and then, turning to the left, to deal with that on its merits. The first part of the business was soon accomplished. Working our way upwards, now by couloirs of

hard snow, now by ribs of rock, which we courted as long as they proved accommodating, and as soon as they showed temper threw over for the most attractive rival within reach, an hour's climb landed us on the crest of alternate snow-links and rock-teeth which separates the Glacier de Monei from that of Telleccio. A moment's breathing space, and we turned to the final peak with a will. A steep snow-bank led up to smooth slabs, or rather (so solid was the mass) to a smooth slab, of granite, tilted up at an excessive angle, and curving steeply over to great precipices on this side and that. The climbing here might have beaten us after all had it not been for the minute fissures, so kindly provided by most granite mountains in critical places, and which, though not so deep as a well or as wide as a church door, suffice for a party who are running a new peak to its last available earth. We climbed fast, but still the bare ribs of rock rose above us and in front, cutting off the view we chiefly wished to see, till at last, the slope sensibly lessening, and the native granite giving place to heaps of huge boulders, we felt the top to be close at hand. In a few moments Italy lay at our feet. Not a cloud! only tiny fragments of blue haze sleeping here and there in the hollows till some little gust would waft them from their resting-place to die in the pitiless sunlight of the open plain. And so away to the far Apennines cut clear against the sky which vaults the Mediterranean.

The second party had speedily joined us, and we sat for more than an hour dreaming the time away in the pleasant nooks we had discovered for ourselves—perfectly happy, had it not been for the dread ever growing in force of the inevitable suggestion that it was time to go. It came at last, and we turned to descend. We cut our parting short, rendered a brief homage to the snowy head and flowing outlines of the Paradis, grandly seen across the glacier basin of the Grancrou, briefly settled that the Pennines were everything that the most captious could desire, bemoaned somewhat the discovery that the beautiful Grivola was from this side little less than hideous, and immediately addressed ourselves to our work. That there was some real difficulty may be judged from the fact that we were far longer in effecting our descent than in ascending, and that we took the precaution (as far as my experience goes, very rarely necessary) of letting each man down separately. Here we all agreed that it was, to say the least, advisable, the smoothness of the rock and the distances of the landing-places from each other, combined with that unlucky force of gravity which exerts itself so energetically

during a descent, making a slip too irrevocable to be indulged in without serious consideration beforehand. From the foot of the final tower it was obviously possible, by turning down to the left, to reach the névé of the Monei glacier, and to return to Cogne by the Combe di Val Nontè. We had, however, left some of our effects in the Combe di Valeiglia, and were reluctant to divide our party. Besides, we should in all probability have ample opportunity of studying the Val Nontè in crossing the Grancrou. In a word, we decided to return by the way we came. We descended the snow-slopes rapidly, and soon reached the belt of *débris* and terminal moraine which it was necessary to cross to regain the pleasant path of the morning. Racing across this bit of rough ground, Freshfield, who was a little ahead, suddenly found himself face to face with a majestic bouquetin. Most fortunately for my friend's sporting reputation, he had no more deadly weapon in his hand than an ice-axe. On the other hand, confident as are the wild animals in these parts, a 'wild goat' may be excused for not wishing to be 'caught by the hair' by an excited man armed with an instrument bearing a strong family resemblance to a poleaxe. Before, therefore, my friend could perform the feat described in the Laureate's early ballad, the bouquetin turned and fled. It was still early when we reached Cogne, where our account of the happy dispatch of the Tour St. Pierre was received by our hostess with an air of pleased surprise, which she explained by saying that all the earlier explorers who had started with a similar object in view had been absent for several days at a time. How in a shorter time we could have achieved a more decided success was a problem too difficult for the good lady to solve. Our night beneath the stars, followed by the long day's walk, had produced the usual result, and when M. Chamoin arrived to congratulate us on our victory, he found but one of the party awake, and prepared to 'reciprocate his felicitations.'

(*To be continued.*)

## NEW EXPEDITIONS IN 1872.

### WESTERN ALPS.

MONT BLANC, July 1.—Mr. T. S. Kennedy, with Johann Fischer, of Meiringen, and J. A. Carrel, of Val Tournanche, bivouacked on the rocks on the right bank of the most southerly tributary of the Miage Glacier, which descends between the Aiguille Grise and the Mont Brouillard, at about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hrs. from Courmayeur. Starting at 8.0 A.M.