

REVIEW.

HOLIDAYS IN TYROL.*

IN the pleasant little volume 'On Foot through Tyrol,' Mr. Walter White was one of the first to call attention to the byways of the Eastern Alps. He now invites us to return with him to the same region, though to different districts. Kufstein, Klobenstein, and Paneveggio appear on Mr. White's title-page. But the first occupies only nine out of 350 pages; the second less than thirty. Mr. White's real theme is the neighbourhood of Botzen, and the most frequented portion of the Dolomites (Cortina, Caprile, Agordo, Belluno, Primiero, Predazzo), to which may be added some excursions in the lower Val Fassa. His favourite halting-place is the solitary hospice of Paneveggio. 'Holidays in Tyrol' has not, of course, the advantage of Mr. White's earlier volume, 'On Foot through Tyrol,' in dealing with an almost vacant field. During the interval the explorers of our Club, led by Mr. Ball, have wandered over the lesser heights of the Dolomites as well as mastered the snowy giants of Switzerland. Messrs. Gilbert and Churchill, in a book which will not easily be superseded, have, as Mr. White puts it, uttered the 'Open Sesame' to the general public. Miss Edwards has watered their information for readers of feeble digestion. Messrs. L. Stephen and Freshfield have dealt with the peaks of Primiero, and the latter has recently suggested the charms of S. Martino and Paneveggio, and the walks between them, to others than Alpine Clubmen.

When, therefore, Mr. White's substantial book appeared on the table, our first impulse on looking over the Table of Contents was to cry 'Connu.' But it would be unfair to judge the volume by a geographical standard. It is not on his discoveries, though he has made one or two—for instance, Cavalonte, a rough bathing-establishment in Val Fassa—that Mr. White would claim attention for his book. He is not one of those who, having had the good fortune to fall upon some 'healing Paradise,' do their best, to the disgust of their wiser friends, to entice to it the 'polluting multitude.' It is as the advocate of quiet travelling, as opposed to the hurry of the tourist, the bodily exertions of the climber, or even the mental efforts of those who mix some study, historical, scientific or artistic, with their wanderings, that Mr. White comes forward. Regarded as a plea in support of this view, his volume has a 'raison d'être' which commands, to some extent, our sympathy. But the proposition that idle holidays are a good thing for many people has been too generally admitted to require further enforcement. We wish Mr. White every success in his effort to popularise his mode of holiday-making; but at the same time we hope his converts will not think it necessary to imitate him further by writing books. It is not desirable that every 'vacuus viator' should sing. Unless the writer

* *Holidays in Tyrol; Kufstein, Klobenstein, and Paneveggio.* By Walter White. London. Chapman and Hall: 1876.

is a genius, what Mr. White calls 'idle thinking' can hardly produce satisfactory literary fruit, and of this, as we shall show hereafter, his own volume affords sufficient proof.

It is the Tyrolese rather than Tyrol that the author desires to paint. He has been very often to most of the places he describes, and has found pleasure in mixing with the peasants, joining in with a church-choir, composing a song to the tune of Yankee Doodle in honour of his 'Wirth,' chatting with country-wives in the mail-coach, or kissing their children by the wayside. Such scraps of information or touches of character as meet him on the road he is quick to set down. Those who want to learn about the mountain-people and their country what hotel-books and tavern and roadside meetings can teach a traveller, will here have their wish gratified; but readers whose curiosity goes further will be disappointed. Mr. White is never incited to search out other sources of information; no subject interests him sufficiently to induce him to pursue it; if he alludes to history or legend, social or political topics, it is only to tantalise us by a few lines which would be meagre even in a local guide-book. In speaking of this volume as the outcome of a vague and discursive mood, we only repeat its author's own estimate, for he very candidly warns his readers in the preface that he means to be desultory and gossiping.

We have pointed out what appears to us to be the essential weakness in the book. But as a whole it is undoubtedly pleasant reading. There are many scraps of amusing information to be gleaned from its pages, and the descriptions of scenery are faithful and never tedious. Our author's habit of lingering long enough in one spot to learn the character of its scenery and something of the lives of the peasantry, gives his gossip a quality we should seek in vain in that of the ordinary tourist. Moreover, literary experience preserves him as a rule from the carelessnesses and commonnesses of style too frequent in travel-writers. It is only at Venice that he, for a moment, forgets himself so far as to write about 'the amphibious queen,' and 'the city of perennial inundation.' He soon returns to the mountains and his usual plain English.

Two miracle-plays, similar to that of Ammergau, are mentioned. The following is the playbill of the performance given during four months at Brixlegg in the summer of 1873:—'By permission of the Imperial and Royal Government at Innsbruck there is now represented at Brixlegg in the Unterinnthal in Tyrol, the Great Expiatory Sacrifice upon Golgotha, or the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the four Evangelists, with pictorial illustrations from the Old Testament, accompanied with music and singing, for meditation and edification.'

Predazzo prefers comedy:—'In February, 1875, a scriptural play, the History of Nebuchadnezzar, was acted in the Piazza. Snow lay on the ground, but the sun shone brightly, and in the clement temperature the people sat through the performance from noon till four o'clock on two successive days. Some of the incidents excited roars of laughter, particularly the representation of a little forest, in which the monarch was seen eating grass as an ox.' The female characters

were, according to ancient custom, taken by young men. Another popular amusement at Predazzo is the national Italian game known as the *Giuoco della Palla* (not *Pala*), a kind of tennis, which Mr. White seems to confuse with bowls.

The 'teatro sociale' of Primiero is wholly secular in its performances. It was built for 2,000 florins, and the subscribers have for eighteen years exclusive right to the boxes. The price of entrance to the pit is fifteen kreutzers; to the gallery ten. But the only performers are life-size marionettes.

The state of popular feeling which produces miracle-plays seems to be passing away. Faith in the priesthood is no longer implicit throughout Tyrol, and, to the dismay of the older inhabitants, liberal ideas are slowly penetrating even into the mountains.

Naturally, where Italians muster in numbers, the idea of Italian unity exists, and there is a party in the Trentino which would gladly accept the burdens of the new kingdom. But, for the present, national feeling does not run high. The Government generally sets a wise example of tolerance. 'Garibaldi's Hymn' was sung at Paneveggio in honour of Francis Joseph's birthday; the portrait of the fortunate patriot may be seen in country inns facing that of the unlucky Emperor. The recent dissolution, by official decree, of the Trentine Alpine Club is a proof, however, that some political tension still exists. We do not as yet know what were the grounds of this very unlooked-for proceeding. But we must assume that provocation was given to the authorities of a kind it was impossible for them to look over, otherwise they would scarcely have committed an act in some ways obviously impolitic. A local Trentine Society, while in existence, could hardly fail to foster an independent provincial feeling; dissolved, its members will go to swell the sections of Milan and Brescia of the Italian Club.

When Mr. White turns from description to reflection we feel that the lazy thinking which he recommends on a holiday ought not, after it is over, to be given to the world—witness such a sentiment as 'How is it that good fruit, pretty women, and honest men are only to be found in England?' or the, to anyone who recollects the origin of the Volunteer movement, very rash boast that Englishmen are not afraid of any other nation.

We find other expressions of opinion which seem hasty and ill-considered. In one respect Mr. White has not been influenced by the spirit of the age. He does not, as a rule, climb mountains, and he evidently imagines that he refrains from a disbelief in the beauty of the high Alps. We allude in particular to a paragraph twice indicated by the uncouth and not very intelligible heading 'Pulchritude better than Attitude' (*sic*). While penning this the writer forgot that whenever he has reached a height he has expressed enthusiastic delight in the scenery, and that when he once attained 9,000 feet he carefully put on record 'how much more glorious' the view was from this elevation than from the 'casera' half-way up the hill. It is clear, therefore, that our author's want of appreciation does not embrace all mountain climbs, but only such as fortune has not yet introduced him to. His is not the genuine mountain-hatred of older generations,

but a form of egotism far from uncommon, if seldom so naïvely expressed.

Again, Mr. White more than once charges other writers with over-praise in painting scenery. He puts in a plea for 'faithful description.' He surely forgets for the moment how changeable are the aspects under which Nature shows herself, how diverse the power of appreciation men bring to her. What has seemed 'faithful' to Mr. White on one day does not seem so to him on another, as he proves to us several times in these pages. So long as travellers *honestly* give their impressions there is no just cause for finding fault. The charge of exaggeration would be less frequently brought if it was remembered that it is very often only a confession of a smaller power of appreciation.

But Mr. White is singularly unfortunate in the chief occasion he chooses for calling in question his predecessors' language. He meets a gentleman from whom he 'gathers that the scenery around Auronzo falls far short of the beauty ascribed thereto by tourists and guide-books. The Reverend Doctor thought it good, but by no means equal to his expectations.' Whereupon our author bursts out, 'Whence comes it that the writers of guide-books strive to outdo nature, and make everything dreadful, admirable, or wonderful?'

A lady who had arrived but five minutes before from Mendrisio in a hazy noontide, and had not otherwise stirred out of Dr. Pasta's, was once heard publicly announcing to the resident guests that 'Monte Generoso was greatly overrated.' Her audacity struck some of her hearers at the time as considerable; but it is completely surpassed by Mr. White's. The lady at least was on the spot and fancied she knew what she was talking about; Mr. White, when he penned this passage, had never been near Auronzo, and it is on mere hearsay that he calls in question the accuracy of Mr. Ball.

We must venture, in conclusion, on a few queries or corrections in matters of detail. We do so with trembling, for Mr. White does not seem to be grateful for being put right. Having misunderstood the intention of a notice, which very likely was open to misunderstanding, in a visitors' book as to the first ascent of the Cimon della Pala, he was led to add Mr. Tuckett's name as one of the climbers. Mr. Tuckett kindly corrected the mistake; whereupon our author, with needless querulousness, defends himself from the 'accusation,' of disregarding a hyphen, and carps, in a way a moderate sense of humour should have prevented, at the word 'inglorious,' which Mr. Tuckett had used in describing his own occupation on the day of the Pala's fall. Since Mr. White must needs refer to such trifles, we would suggest that, if he really prizes highly his reputation for accuracy, he ought; both in this instance and in another (p. 292), where he has made an exactly similar mistake with regard to the Cima di Vezzana, to have referred to the printed records of the ascents in question. It is his practice of trusting solely to strangers' books that has got him into this trouble, which will, we may hope, teach him a useful lesson for the future.

Beyond the reach of his personal knowledge, Mr. White now and then slips as to facts. The tariff for the Antelao and Tofana has been

lately reduced, if it is three florins. The Cima d'Asta, a granite peak, only a few miles SW. of Paneveggio, is oddly mentioned (p. 283) as visible in 'the remote distance,' in company with the Adamello. The latter is said to resemble in form the Gross Glockner. Mr. White probably wrote 'd'Asta' for 'Tosa.' The peak he took for the Adamello was, doubtless, from his description, the Presanella. From Gares, he says, 'there are wild ways by which you may scramble over to Val Travnigolo to San Lucano or to San Martino.' To Val Travnigolo the way is wild indeed; but to Val di San Lucano there is an easy mule-path. The paths in Val di Zoldo are not more 'devious and difficult' than most in this region; the passes from it to Alleghe and Cadore are singularly easy, and there are few corners left in it which 'no Englishman has seen.'

It has been our business to point out Mr. White's failings, rather than to dwell on merits which have already received from the press full recognition. But we quite agree with the general verdict that 'Holidays in Tyrol' is a very readable volume, with which any lover of mountains may pleasantly fill an idle hour or two.

With great regret we have to record the death, at the early age of thirty-five, of Mr. R. S. MACDONALD. Unable of late to visit the Alps, Mr. MACDONALD had been in former years a most enterprising and energetic mountaineer. Besides a great number of the regular Alpine expeditions, he made, in company with other members of the Club, the first ascent of the Dent d'Hérens and of the Aiguille de Bionnassay, and the first passage of the Roth Thal Sattel and of the tremendous Col de la Tour Noire. He was the associate of Mr. WHYMPER in the ascent of Mont Pelvoux, and in an early attempt on the Matterhorn. He was also the first Englishman who ascended the summit of the Mönch. He performed on one occasion the remarkable feat of walking in a day from the Col de Voza to Courmayeur by the Col de Bonhomme, Col de la Seigne, and Allée Blanche.

Latterly his health had failed much, and for some time past there had been little hope of his regaining his strength. His death deprives the Club of an ardent supporter, and by many of its members his loss will be felt as that of a most kindly and genial friend.