

secondly, I must not omit to eulogise the conduct of my guides. As to the first, possibly some extracts from the foregoing pages may be held to sufficiently, if inadequately, discharge the obligation. To the second, in conclusion, I now address myself. But as, in the present case, the two are one, the companions and the guides—or, rather, let us say the four are two (which is absurd—the two are only two)—I trust that no confusion will arise. How Wicks started off that morning nineteen to the dozen I shall not very readily forget; nor how Carr shouted after him and asked why he wanted to go so fast; nor how, later on, when Wicks, after an arduous assault upon the ice, wished to admire the view, Carr mildly asked what we were waiting for, and suggested that we should never get to the top at that rate. How they cut steps in cliffs of ice, and pulled or pushed each other up and down, are matters which remain almost as vivid in my memory as how they jumped about upon my head and said, ‘Now duck,’ and, when I did, sent showers of ice chips down upon my neck, which rattled down my back inside my clothes. These and many other memories of the doings of my guides—such as a dreadful, unexpected jerk, which took my wind and interfered with my digestion, and landed me beside them on what the soldiers speak of as the ‘ground gained,’ now crowd upon my somewhat muddled brain. *How* all these things, and many others, happened, or did not happen, as the case may be, I do not know, nor is it perhaps needful to inquire. My guides behaved with valour and with intrepidity; to them my admiration and forgiveness are ungrudgingly conceded; and to them, in conclusion, I would say, ‘Let bygones be bygones; let’s cry quits; and may we live to have another climb as good all round as this.’

AT THE BACK OF THE TITLIS, AND OTHER PLACES.

By W. C. COMPTON.

II.

THE following pages are a belated continuation of an article in the February number * of this Journal, and are concerned with some other expeditions about Stein (of which it may be said that the rolling it has had in this year’s Journal ought to have kept it from gathering moss), and one

* Vol. xx. p. 20 *sqq.*

at the back of the St. Gotthard and Furka. The reader is promised that there shall be no further allusion to the Fünffingerstöcke, of which he may now fairly say, *Ohe! iam satis.*

A very easy and short expedition to begin upon is the ascent (or traverse rather) of the Vorder-Thierberg, which lies S. of the Steinlimmi. The morning of August 15 last year was not promising, and an attack intended for the Hinter-Thierberg was abandoned. Yet, as it was not hopelessly bad, something must be done. And so at 7.15 the party already named set out with a very open mind towards the Steinlimmi Glacier. To our left rises the Thierbergli, which supports the upper névé of the Stein Glacier, behind it the Gwächtenhorn, and further to the right the Thierberge and the Steinlimmi, which leads to the Trift Glacier. Quite to our right is the Giglistock. The first and last of these are voted out of court as uninteresting, and we proceed along the Steinlimmi Glacier, and soon form an idea of trying our fortune with the N.E. arête of the Vorder-Thierberg. On nearer inspection, however, we observe an ominous streak of detritus at the foot of this ridge, and decide to push on to the N.W. arête, which rises from the Steinlimmi. The weather was improving, and bearing upwards over fairly steep ice, with two *Bergschründe* to negotiate, we struck the arête some 300 to 400 ft. above the col. A halt of 35 min. sufficed for a second breakfast, and by 11.15 we were following the arête on tolerably sound rock, till it reaches a considerable eminence from which it bends to the E. This point we avoided by a traverse on the N. face, which is not sound, rejoining the arête for a short distance, till an *enjambée* forced us down again to the N. face. A short but fairly good scramble brought us on to the ridge again, and then we varied our route by a long traverse on the S. side. Here basking in sunshine were patches in some profusion of the lovely blue *Eritrichium nanum*, one of the sweetest of Alpine flowers, which is to be found high up on the most out of the way rocks of this part. In colour it vies with the gentian, and in growth it resembles a tiny forget-me-not. We found bright little patches of it even on the bare crags of the F—; but no, they shall not be named again. We were soon once more on the rock ridge and then on the snow arête which makes the corniced cap of the peak, as seen from near Stein, look like a slice of wedding-cake. We had reached the summit (3,091 m.) in 65 min. from our last halt. Here we lingered 45 min. prospecting and getting photographs. Below

us to the S. was the Zwischen-Thierbergenlimmi, behind which rises very precipitously the N. face of the Hinter-Thierberg. Descending by the E. arête over easy snow, we skirted some fine séracs from the Gwächtenhorn, and soon reached the Thierbergli, which 'rises out of a motionless sea (of ice), a level space and a friendly resting-place for sun-loving cormorants.' Plainly the Mantuan had hungry climbers in his mind when he thus speaks of the bird so famed for its appetite. This spot may be commended as a view-point to those who would study the topography of a certain group recently discussed in these pages. To another class it presents attractions also. For whence may such a glissade be made as that which leads from the plateau of the Thierbergli to the Steinlimmi Glacier, lying more than a thousand feet below, almost in one unbroken slide?

A careful perusal of the visitors' book at Stein enabled us to place this climb to the credit of Mr. and Mrs. Baker-Gabb.* The whole route can be followed easily on the photograph, by Mr. Hope, facing p. 30 of the present volume.

The expedition we had set our hearts on from the day we crossed the Susten pass from Wasen was an ascent of the Hinter-Sustenhorn (3,320 m.) from the Stein Glacier, of which we knew of no record. The peak is imposing as seen from the Meienthal (N.E.), and presents a rock face to the W., as shown in the photograph by Mr. Hope facing p. 118 of the last number, which invited a further acquaintance. We therefore took every opportunity to reconnoitre this W. face and the approaches thereto. And a bad day (August 16) had afforded a suitable occasion for a reconnaissance in force to the lower slopes of the Bockberg,† whence we could trace the route followed by Herr G. Studer, who made the first ascent of the Sustenhorn proper from this side, and one or two subsequent parties, the last of which (Mr. Kirkpatrick's) had left a record showing that a snow couloir facing the Bockberg had been used as an approach to the rocks which are marked higher up by three curved bands of snow, to be recognised in Mr. Hope's picture. These parties had crossed the snow bands and borne away to the right (S.) till they reached the dip in the ridge between Sustenhorn and Hinter Sustenhorn. Our route would lie to the left, straight up to the summit of the latter.

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xix. p. 252.

† This is the mass of rock near the left side of the picture, by Mr. Hope, facing p. 30.

The weather on Sunday (August 20) began to clear, and at 2 A.M. on Monday a bright moonlight showed us our goal sparkling with that exquisite shadowy grace which only the mountains can reveal at night. Soon after 3.30 we were on the march, accompanied by the St. Bernard dog who makes every ascent he is allowed to. This was to be a new venture ; so we thought he would be better at home, and homewards he had to trace his steps as we turned the corner leaving the Inn out of sight. Skirting the rocks of the Bockberg by the route we had made and marked by stone-men, we were on the glacier we had to cross to our couloir as daylight outshone the moon.

Encountering no difficulties in crossing the crevasses of this branch of the Stein Glacier, we soon reached the further (S.) of the two snow couloirs, up which steps had to be cut all the way, for the snow was hardened by the frosty night. At the top of the couloir a short rock chimney leads into the greater couloir on our left. This we traversed to its right bank, and ascended the easy rocks on that side, out of the way of possible stones, to a breakfast-place. Thence we recrossed the snow patch on the couloir and climbed over good rocks to the first and second snow band, still cutting steps whenever we came to snow. Crossing the second band straight up towards our goal, we took to a rib of rock to the left (N.) of the third snow patch. Here the rocks were interesting and very firm, affording pleasant alternations of climbing and walking on terraces where loose stones caused no inconvenience. Finally we took to the stone couloir leading to a gap just south of the peak. Here, and generally near the ridge, the rock is very loose. Everything we dislodged went bounding down into the great couloir we had ascended earlier in the morning. We kept close to the rocks on the N. side, to avoid the stones as far as possible. On gaining the gap (9 A.M.) our ascent was accomplished ; for the summit was reached over an easy slope from here at 9.10 A.M.

A capital climb of 3 hrs. was rewarded by an excellent view, the point standing out as a spur of a long range, and so commanding an extensive panorama, only limited towards the S. by the Sustenhorn, which rises 600 to 700 ft. higher. A bottle contained the two records mentioned in Studer, one by Dr. Gröbli, who climbed from the Voralpthal by the E. face, descending the same way (August 6, 1891), the other of an ascent (July 22, 1894) from the Sustenjoch by Herren Fynn and Eckengren.

Our intention was to return by the Sustenhorn (3,512 m.)

and the usual route thence to Stein. But how to reach the summit, which was separated from us by a very formidable arête bristling with teeth? To the left the E. face appeared impracticable, owing to the rotten nature of the rocks. To follow the edge of the arête would, even if possible, be a matter probably of several hours' hard work. We decided to retrace our steps to the gap and then traverse on the W. face. This we found feasible, though it involved a gradual descent over very bad rocks, quite devoid of attraction, and across several snow couloirs, where the axe had to be used again, till at last we reached the arête at its lowest point and thence followed the easy route to the highest peak, which had been taken first by Herr Studer, and followed quite recently by Mr. Kirkpatrick's party.* It was 1.30 when we reached our second peak, with its stack of bottles and other tokens of popularity. The snow storm of a few days previously had decorated the rocks near the summit with white lace in the most fantastic designs, and so gave us something to admire in the absence of view, which the mists now completely excluded.

It remains to mention the very interesting account in the S.A.C. 'Jahrbuch' † of a solitary climb by Herr Helbling, who had the year before, unknown to us, followed the ridge almost the whole way in the reverse direction, only turning a few of the last teeth near the Hinter Sustenhorn by a traverse to the W. He speaks of the climb as a very fine one, and made his descent to the Voralp by the E. slopes of the mountain.

It would probably make a very fine expedition to cross the Hinter Sustenhorn by the W. face and N.E. ridge; the latter is pronounced by Herren Fynn and Eckengren a climb to be strongly recommended.‡ The traverse of the W. face of the S. arête cannot be spoken of with very much enthusiasm.

We left Stein two days later by a traverse of the Stücklistock from the Sustenjoch, recorded as a new expedition on p. 599 of vol. xix. It is perhaps hardly worth repeating, though the position of the Stücklistock makes it even a better view-point than the Sustenhorn. The rocks, however, are very suggestive of the name, and of that kind of thing one finds it possible to know what a satiety may mean. When a mountain fires occasional volleys at its would-be conquerors it is only the fair fortune of war. But when the climber has to hold his mountain together as he climbs it, and knows that no one can climb the same mountain after

* Vol. xx. p. 82.

† Vol. xxxiv. pp. 114-119.

‡ *Alpina*, ii. 17.

him, because it will not be there, it is doubtful whether the form of sport is as exhilarating as that of dealing with really permanent works of nature.

It must be confessed that something of the same kind may be said of the climb with which this paper must close. But there is something specially attractive about the surroundings of the Pizzo Rotondo, which will not be altered by the fact that the Pizzo of 1900 cannot be that of 1899.

The Stücklistock led us to Göschenen by a lovely walk from the Voralp hut, where we partook of 'afternoon tea' and a welcome rest after weary moraines. The lower part of this valley and the Göschener Alp deserve a better acquaintance than has been accorded them by most English tourists, who, it may be added, are seldom found E. of the Grimsel.

From Göschenen it is now a very simple process to reach Airolo, to lay in there a stock of provisions, fruits, &c., to view the landslide and the operations still going on to render the village safe from a similar disaster, and to take the road that leads westward up the Val Bedretto to All' Acqua, one of the sweetest spots in the southern valleys of Switzerland. All' Acqua. Well may it be so named. Was there anywhere such an abundant supply of water, and water too of a purity rarely to be found in the Alps? The streams here are all as clear as crystal. No snow-fed whiteness laden with mineral from the glaciers sullies the matchless virginity of those waters. No icy chill forbids a bath in the pools the river forms as it winds down the valley. And then the little *albergo*—once the curé's house, now the headquarters of the *dogana* of the valley. If you would know how a really rustic inn can charm the wayfaring man, try All' Acqua.

Whilst waiting for our supper we descried a familiar figure coming up the valley alone, but evidently intending to spend the night at our *auberge*—our old friend of two years ago, Herr Gustav Euringer. He too was bound for the Pizzo Rotondo; so we should probably meet at the summit, as we had on the Herbetet, of which he has courteously left a record in the 'Jahrbuch' of the Swiss Alpine Club.

The simple hospitality of mine host of the *dogana* was followed by no disturbance to the sleep of the just, and renewed at a reasonable hour (3 A.M.) for breaking the short fast, and before it was light our two parties were ascending the wooded slopes above the chapel towards the S. buttress of the Pizzo Rotondo.

This mountain has attracted very little attention from

English climbers ; and not much information is to be gained from the visitors' book at All Acqua. Two or three Italians or Swiss have given some account of it ; a few others have recorded their intention of attacking it, but have not returned to report the result. For the most part what may be found is suggestive of reasons for leaving it alone. But though our experience points to the fact that the peak is perishing as rapidly as any, it may be climbed without either difficulty or danger.

After reaching the snows of the Passo Rotondo we may strike the S. arête by one or more of the couloirs at or near the gap separating the Pizzo from the Poncione di Ruino, and follow it without difficulty till the last tower presents a face which may be turned on the W. side, the actual summit being reached from the W. or N.W. This arête was first climbed by Mr. Coolidge, July 17, 1888, but he gained it by a couloir much further N. than the one now usually followed. Or the Rotondo glacier may be followed further N. until a rib is reached which runs straight up to the northern summit, which is separated from the highest point by a rather difficult ridge. This is the route followed in August 1869 on the occasion of the second ascent.* This party descended on the N.E. side, by a snow slope marked by falling stones, below the ridge connecting the two summits. This snow slope is clearly seen from the N., and was observed by our party as a possible route that would have saved a long *détour* round the N.W. foot of the peak in the descent towards the Furka. Herr Euringer and his local guide, the son of mine host of All' Acqua, made for a couloir running down from the S. ridge ; and as we watched them attack it we observed the mountain's resentment, indicated by showers of stones. We therefore determined to try further on where a snow couloir divides the W. face between the two summits. Being in the shade this appeared likely to be safe for an ascent ; and so it proved. Nothing came down, and we cut steps up to within 100 ft. or so of the gap without difficulty. The safest route would probably have been to follow the couloir all the way to the gap, and then climb the ridge as from the N. to the S. peak. Not knowing that this had been found practicable, nor being acquainted with the eccentricities of the mountain, we bore up a side chimney to the right, towards the highest point. The loose rocks were mostly large blocks, and the question was not one of falling

* S.A.C. *Jahrbuch*, vol. vii. pp. 173 *sqq.*

stones, but rather of falling masses or boulders. Every now and then Abraham Müller, who was leading, called to us to beware of this or that block ; and, when all the difficulties were surmounted without any mishap, he evinced a very well-marked determination to descend by a different route. As was expected, we found Herr Euringer regaling himself among the delights of the prospect from the top. As the Pizzo Rotondo enjoys the distinction of being the highest peak of the Gotthard group the panorama is naturally extensive—indeed, wonderfully so—though the great ranges are all fairly distant. The ascent, with all its faults, is a capital climb, and the excursion as a whole worthy of being better known.

We decided to descend by the usual route, along the S. ridge ; and though the couloir, whose manners we had objected to earlier, was not exactly fascinating, we found no serious difficulty about leaving most of it as we found it. Herr Euringer had kept on the arête to a point lower down, whence it is easy to descend on the E. side to the Pesciora Glacier, and so down to the Val Bedretto, without revisiting All' Acqua. Our route to the Furka lay in the opposite direction, and crossing the Passo Rotondo, and descending a few hundred feet to turn the great rocky N.W. spur of the northern peak, we found ourselves on the curious semi-circular shelf of snow which lies high above the Geren Glacier, and round which rise the craggy summits of the highest points of the Gotthard Group. Passing under these nearly on a level we gained the Muttén Pass in an hour and a half after leaving the Rotondo Pass. The descent of the Muttén Glacier is easy enough ; but, unfortunately for those who are bound for the Furka, nature has decreed that its outlet should flow down to Realp and the Reuss, so on reaching the foot of the ice we had to reascend to a third pass lying between the Blauberg and the Thierberg. A wearisome climb was rewarded by the sight of some wondrous clumps of gentian, and a fine view of the Galenstock with its great cornice ; but what was the dismay of the party to find themselves still separated from the Furka by a steep descent more than 1,000 ft. over villainous slopes of boulders and scree, only broken by occasional low precipices. At this point I fear the organiser of the expedition did not meet with the gratitude he might have expected ; but even stone slopes have an end, and in due course the party, which had split up in the attempt to find the best (or least exasperating) route, reunited on a grassy sward, and by four o'clock descended to the civilisation, crowds, and dust which appertain to the Furka Pass.