

ASCENT OF PIZ ROSEG. By HORACE WALKER.

THE snow dome which forms the northern and lower, but, as seen from the Roseg Thal, most conspicuous, peak of Piz Roseg, was first ascended by Mr. Bircham in 1863, and in the following year two more ascents were made by Herr Weilenmann and Herr Specht, of Vienna. None of these gentlemen, however, crossed the narrow arête which leads from the northern to the southern or highest peak, and Piz Roseg proper consequently remained unclimbed. The knowledge of this fact was sufficient to induce my friend Mr. Moore and myself to visit Pontresina again, in the hope of being able to finish the piece of work which had been left incomplete by our predecessors.

As we had both paid fruitless visits to Pontresina in former years, we were particularly anxious to accomplish something on the present occasion, and, as a man likely to assist us, had brought with us as guide Jakob Anderegg, a cousin of Melchior. Jakob was at that time comparatively unknown to the Alpine world, having only made his first appearance the previous season, but we had had some experience of his powers, and felt sure that, if success were possible, he would achieve it for us. Indeed, so great was our confidence in him that we determined to dispense entirely with assistance from the local guides, hoping that our success might teach them to set a less preposterous value on their aid than has been their wont, and thereby benefit future comers.

We arrived at Pontresina about midnight on the 26th June, 1865, after a long day from Andeer by the Avers Thal, Forcellina Pass, and a short cut from the top of the Septimer over the ridge connecting Piz Lunghino with the Monte di Gravasalvas—a route I can recommend to any one going from the Splügen road to the Engadine, as the scenery of the lower part of the Avers Thal is not surpassed in beauty by any of a similar kind in Switzerland. I wished to stop at Maria, the inn at which place seemed comfortable, and supplied us with some capital trout; but as Moore, anxious about the weather, would not consent, we drove on that night to Pontresina. I was very glad next day that we had done so, as the weather, which I had considered hopeless, suddenly cleared, enabling us to stroll up the Roseg Thal in the afternoon to the Misaua Alp, where we were to pass the night, with a reasonable prospect of fine weather for the morrow.

After supper we made a careful examination of the arête connecting the two peaks, which affords the only means of access to the summit. The ridge, which appeared to be of ice or snow, with rocks cropping out here and there along it, though not particularly steep, was evidently very narrow, and promised to be a tough bit of work; but, as there was no insurmountable difficulty that we could discover from below, we retired to the hay-loft in a tolerably hopeful frame of mind. As the accommodation at the Misauna chalet is particularly good, Moore and I passed an unusually comfortable night, but Jakob was less fortunate, his slumbers being disturbed by an ominous dream, which he afterwards related to us.

We started next morning at 3.10, and in about half an hour got on to the glacier, after picking our way across the numerous streams which intersect the flat plain lying between it and the chalet. We made at once for the moraine near the left bank, which we followed till past the end of the rocks called Agagliouls, when we took to the ice. The glacier was here perfectly easy, but, being covered in many places with little hummocks like ant-hills, the walking was disagreeable. Proceeding up the main branch of the glacier with Piz Roseg on our left, we had a glorious sunrise on the Capütschin and neighbouring peaks, and our walk was further enlivened by a cuckoo who was singing away most lustily below in the Roseg Thal. As we neared the Sella Pass we made the mistake of keeping too much to the left under Piz Roseg, and in consequence got entangled in some awkward crevasses in the névé; but as at that hour the bridges were firm, we got through them without a great deal of trouble.

At 7 we halted for breakfast near the top of the Sella Pass, at the foot of a small hanging glacier running up in a north-easterly direction to the crest of the great spur of Piz Roseg, which separates the Tschierva and Roseg glaciers. Up this glacier—which, though steep, offered no difficulty—would have been, as we afterwards found out, our best way, but we decided against it for two reasons. In the first place, not being aware how much we had risen, we feared that by taking it we should strike the ridge below the rocks which stopped Moore in an attempt which he made with Mr. George and Almer in 1863 from the Tschierva side, and which would doubtless stop us; and secondly, we understood, from Mr. Bircham's account of his ascent in the Strangers' Book at Pontresina, that it was principally by rocks that he had reached the northern peak.

Owing to the strong north wind the cold was so intense that sitting still, even to eat and drink, was misery, and we

were very glad, after a quarter of an hour's halt, to get into motion again. Crossing a small 'schrund' at the base of the above-mentioned lateral glacier, we made for the rocks on its left bank, which we reached by a few awkward steps. These rocks at first were not difficult, though everywhere steep, and had we gone straight up them we should perhaps have got on better, but almost imperceptibly we bore away to the right, until we were nearly under the lower peak. As we rose the work got gradually more difficult, the rocks becoming smooth and coated with ice, until at last, when about 150 feet from the ridge, we found ourselves at the foot of a tower of rock which effectually barred our further advance. On either side there was a gully; that on the right was inaccessible from our position, while that on the left was little more promising in appearance, but we managed to creep round the base of the tower and descend into it. We turned up it, but were soon stopped by smooth rocks which might perhaps, under ordinary circumstances, have been climbed, but they were now quite impassable, owing to the ice with which they were glazed. We tried all we knew, but the thing could not be done, so we crept cautiously back to the base of the tower, and, after a spirited but unsuccessful attempt by Jakob to climb straight up it, sat down to deliberate.

Our reflections were not of a cheerful nature. Here we were, comparatively close to the top of the northern peak, yet cut off from it by apparently insuperable obstacles, while, to increase our despondency, the wind, which had been steadily rising since morning—so much so that we had more than once discussed the propriety of turning back—was now blowing quite a gale. Though we were sheltered from it, we could hear it howling above our heads, and feel its effects in the snow blown off the ridge, which fell in showers about us, conclusively showing that, even if we could get on to the ridge, there would be no chance of our being able to cross a narrow arête in such a hurricane. Had we at this moment been on the lower peak, as we probably should have been but for our mistake as to the proper line of march, we should certainly have come down unsuccessful.

Jakob selected this moment of gloom to unfold his dream of the previous night, which was to the following effect:—Having with incredible pains and sagacity stalked a magnificent chamois, he had succeeded in getting a very favourable opportunity for a shot, and was about to pull the trigger, when his rifle dropped from his hand down a precipice at his feet. This, if it did not portend disaster to one of the party, so evidently

signified that we should not get up Piz Roseg that he was not at all surprised at our failure. I may take this opportunity of mentioning that, among other patriarchal habits, Jakob is blessed in an eminent degree with that of dreaming. Upon a subsequent occasion, when we were bivouacking at the Kastenstein with designs on the Schreckhorn, which were frustrated by rain, he was again disturbed by a vision of so appalling a character that he woke with a howl, to the utter disturbance of the slumbers of his companions.

Moore and I, not having the same profound faith in omens as our sturdy leader, intensely disgusted at not getting at least as far as other people, and by no means inclined to make our entrance into Pontresina amidst the jeers of the populace, resolved to make another effort to reach the lower peak; we had given up all thought of the higher one, owing to the wind. We therefore descended a little and then turned to the right with the intention of keeping along the face of the mountain as much as possible at the same level, until we should strike the ridge. This operation involved some of the nastiest work I have done in the Alps, the rocks being everywhere smooth and covered with ice, affording "weder Stand noch Griff," as Jakob observed in impressing on us the necessity for the greatest care. I do not believe that any other guide would have gone alone with two 'Herren' in such a place—not that I think him braver or more skilful than one or two others, but at that time, not having been brought up to the profession, he was not hampered by any of its traditions. He went first, Moore and I holding on as hard as we could, and when he was comparatively firm Moore followed, and as soon as he was anchored I moved on. As it frequently happened that we got into places where advance was impossible and retreat consequently necessary, in which cases I had to lead for a few steps, our progress was slow, so that when in the course of our manœuvres we came upon a gully which appeared to lead up to the ridge and looked decently practicable, our satisfaction was considerable. We once more turned upwards, and found the work easier and very much more agreeable than creeping along the face of the mountain, where a substantial icicle to hold on by had been considered quite a godsend. A good scramble landed us at 11 on the wished-for ridge, at a point about midway between the top of the northern peak and the head of the lateral glacier. Our thoughts had latterly been concentrated on the preservation of our footing to the exclusion of all other matters: it was therefore with equal surprise and delight that we now found that the wind, which had so disquieted us, had lulled consider-

ably, and that we might still hope to pocket the actual bonâ fide top of Piz Roseg.

After a short halt we turned up the steep snow slopes to the right and reached at 12 the northern peak to which we had been so close three hours before. There is no denying that, seen from the valley, the beautiful snow dome upon which we were now standing appears to be the real top of Piz Roseg, and it requires a very experienced eye to detect the superior height of the insignificant looking tooth behind it, which would hardly attract the attention of any one unaware of its real claims; but from the top of the dome the relative importance of the two peaks is plain enough. From the northern one, after a trifling descent, an arête of exceeding sharpness rises, at first gradually, then more rapidly, to an apparently acute point, which masks the real 'Höchste Spitze.' The relative heights of the two peaks are, according to the map, 12,885 and 12,938 feet; but we were unanimous in thinking the actual difference to be considerably more than the 53 feet indicated by these figures.

Not knowing how long the formidable looking ridge which separated us from our goal might take us, we went straight on without stopping. A short descent brought us to the commencement of the arête, which proved to be of ice, with some snow clinging to its sides, while here and there some shattered rocks cropped out along the crest. On either hand the precipices were tremendous. On the side of the Roseg Glacier there was no possibility of passing, but above the Tschierva Glacier things were not quite so bad, there was more snow, and keeping generally just below the crest of the ridge, we were able to find footing. Sometimes we were driven to the actual top, and in more than one place straddling, though not absolutely necessary, was considered the most advisable mode of progression. The low towers of rock, which we here and there encountered, were in a most dilapidated condition, and several of them had to be partially levelled before we could trust to them; but on the whole the rocks helped us, giving hold where there would have been otherwise none. For the most part there was just snow enough over the ice to render step-cutting unnecessary, but there was none to spare, and its condition was rather ticklish. The acute point which we had supposed to be the summit, proved to be merely the end of a short and almost level ridge, beyond which was the actual top. There was a cornice to this ridge, and the slopes on the Tschierva side ceased to be practicable, so we were driven over to the Roseg side, and passing with our feet dug firmly into the snow and our left arms over the top of the arête, reached the summit at 1.15 P.M.

The top of Piz Roseg is formed by two principal snow ridges and a minor one, which unite to make a small platform where there is just room for three. Though the view is unquestionably a very fine one, and on that day at all events of extraordinary extent, still, having seen views I prefer, I cannot honestly employ the orthodox formula, and declare that probably no peak in the Alps commands such an admirable panorama as Piz Roseg. I have no note of the particular mountains we saw, but as Mr. Tuckett that same day from the Pizzo del Mare distinctly made out Monte Viso with the naked eye at the extraordinary distance of 210 miles, we must have been able to see almost every peak in the Alps. Our eyes were principally directed to the Monte della Disgrazia, which we hoped to ascend in a day or two, and though we were unable to carry out that plan, we did not regret the attention bestowed on this, certainly the finest near object in the view.

After 15 minutes we turned to go down, having previously deposited a bottle containing our cards on a patch of rocks, a little beyond and below the summit. We reached the northern peak in 40 minutes, with less difficulty than the state of the snow had led us to expect, and instead of following our morning's route, kept down the ridge till we reached the head of the hanging glacier. The snow on this was in a rather dangerous condition, suggesting avalanches, and a few stones, falling from the rocks above, crossed our path; but we got down without any mishap, and at 3.15 reached once more the spot on the Roseg Glacier where we had breakfasted. The ascent of the northern peak by our line of descent would be quite easy, though it might at times necessitate much step-cutting.

In descending the main glacier we kept more in the middle, thus avoiding the crevasses we had encountered in the morning, and also shirked the moraine, keeping to the ice to the very end of the glacier. We got back to the Misauna chalet at 6, and near it found a char waiting for us, in which we jolted down to Pontresina, where we arrived in a state of dislocation at 7.30.

Next morning, before leaving, we paid a visit to Fleury. He was sulky, but civil, and informed us that he had great respect for us—a statement which may perhaps have been true, as he and the other local celebrities assembled in council, after our departure for the Misauna Alp had, as the result of their deliberations, told an English gentleman, who was enquiring as to our chance of success, that if we spent two days in reconnoitring we might perhaps on the third day reach the lower peak, but ‘as for the actual summit—bah!’