

THE
ALPINE JOURNAL.

NOVEMBER 1881.

PLACIDUS A SPESCHA AND EARLY MOUNTAINEERING IN
THE BÜNDNER OBERLAND.* BY DOUGLAS W. FRESH-
FIELD.

Da mihi hominem animo et corpore mediocriter saltem constitutum, et ingenuè educatum, nec nimis deditum otio et luxui aut libidini, vellem et rerum naturæ studiosum ac admiratorem ut ex contemplatione etiam et admiratione tantorum summi opificis operum, ac tantæ varietatis in montibus tanquam uno in cumulo se ostendentis, animi voluptas concordis sensuum omnium voluptati accederet; quod queso aliud intra naturæ quidem limites, honestius, majus, et omnibus absolutius numeris oblectamenti genus (quam mortanas peregrinationes) invenies?—CONRAD GESNER, A.D. 1555.

SCIENCE and religion took it in turn to deal blows at the mediæval horror of the High Alps. The medical students and professors of the school of Zürich (amongst whom Conrad Gesner shines as the morning star of mountaineering) were the first to wander in an observant spirit over the Alpine heights. But the Church had already familiarised men with the mountains by teaching them that the solitudes they had looked on at first as the haunts of demons,† might serve also as retreats from the turmoil and wickedness of the world. She had set up her houses not only in the outskirts, but also in the heart of the Alps; not only at Novalesè and Varallo and St. Gall, but also at Chamonix, Disentis and Engelberg, on the St. Bernards, the Simplon and the St. Gothard. Fathers of

* The following chapter may be considered, with the paper on the Buet ('Alpine Journal,' vol. ix. p. 6), as a continuation of those contributed to the 8th volume of the Journal by the late Mr. W. Longman, although the plan laid down for himself by Mr. Longman has been considerably deviated from. I have to acknowledge the great help I have received from the Rev. J. Sowerby, whose personal knowledge of the Tödi district is unrivalled among English mountaineers, in the condensation and preparation of the material. To Mr. Coolidge I am, as usual, indebted for valuable references.

† See the picturesque legend of St. Gall, Milman's 'Latin Christianity,' vol. ii.

the Church became also fathers of mountaineering. Chamonix, it is true, boasts no climber among its monks. But the religious houses of the Great St. Bernard, the Simplon and Engelberg each produced the conqueror of their tutelary peaks, Mont Velan, Monte Leone, and the Titlis. Parish priests have been equally distinguished in our craft. The names of Carrel of Aosta, of Chamoin of Cogne, of Gnifetti of Alagna, of Imseng of Saas, of Senn of the Cetzthal, are household words to every well-read mountaineer.

Disentis can lay claim to the man who takes without question the first place among early clerical mountaineers—Pater Placidus a Spescha. De Saussure ranks higher as a man of science. With his advantages in education and environment he could hardly fail to do so. But, regarded as a climber and explorer, Pater Placidus deserves precedence among the mountaineers of the eighteenth century. Not that he was a 'mere climber' in the modern sense of the phrase. If he was made a monk by circumstances he was born a scientific student. But he never overcame the disadvantages attendant on the career of a peasant's son brought up in a remote canton, and still further cut off from the cultivated world by having for his native tongue a Romansch dialect, so that to the end of his life his German remained harsh and incorrect and his style rugged.

In these days, when mountaineering has become a recognised pursuit throughout Europe, no apology is needed for giving in some detail a sketch of the life of one of its founders. The following pages are in part based on the chapter which the late Professor Theobald, of Chur dedicated to his fellow-countryman in his work on the Bündner Oberland.*

Placidus a Spescha was born of a yeoman family in the Vorderrheinthal† in the year 1752. As a boy he aided to tend his father's flocks and herds on the neighbouring alps. At an early age he showed an exceptional passion for out-of-door mountain life. In his constant scrambles over rocks and hills his strength and agility were remarkable; so that, the boy's birthday falling under the sign Capricornus, it became a family joke in his home that he had been born a climber. He gave

* Chur, 1861. The upper valley of the Vorderrhein is named the Bündner Oberland, to distinguish it from the Bernese Oberland. It corresponds with the Oberer or Graue Bund of the Three Leagues, the territory of which forms the modern canton Graubünden.

† It would appear from his own note to a MS. work on the Urserenthal that his family came from Andest, and that he was presumably born there ('S. A. C.,' Jahrb., vii. 477).

early signs of mental as well as bodily activity. He came home from his excursions with his pockets stuffed with crystals, mineral specimens and natural curiosities of all sorts. These it was his pleasure to arrange as best he could on his shelves. This habit led the boy to speculate on the wonderful powers which had produced not only the shining facets of his crystals, but the mountains themselves. Unfortunately there was no one at hand to offer any intelligible explanation of the marvels which surrounded him, or to set the would-be student on the path of scientific research.

Spescha's motives for embracing the monastic profession and entering the house of Disentis are unknown to us; but we may assume with tolerable certainty that not the least influential among them was a thirst for knowledge—and for the means to it, books—of which to the young peasant of the Oberbund the Church must have seemed to hold the keys. In his twenty-fourth year (1776) he was sent to the great monastery at Einsiedeln to complete his studies. Here a new mental life opened before him. He found at his disposal a well-stored library, collections of antiquities, cabinets of minerals. Better than all these, he found among the brothers several active and learned men able and willing to direct his studies. Of one of them, Moritz Brodhagen, Spescha spoke afterwards as the best of all his teachers.

At the end of six years, in 1782, he returned to Disentis with the intention of prosecuting his studies and enlarging his collections. His strength of character at once showed itself. His unusual acquirements and sound judgment gained him such influence among the monks that the management of the convent fell almost completely into his hands. The too common sequel ensued. Some of his brethren could not endure his superiority, and had recourse to the habitual weapon of small minds. They took advantage of Spescha's scientific attainments and wide views to attempt to fix on him the reputation of a free-thinker. His researches in natural sciences were represented as not only unprofitable, but unorthodox. In this respect his enemies did him, in the eyes of reasonable men, singular injustice. He was doubtless opposed in his heart and intellect to the mass of prejudice, superstition and blind zeal for unintelligible dogmas which make up the religion of the average recluse; but he was fond of repeating that it was to his study of nature that he owed his highest conceptions of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. He was, moreover, conspicuously punctual and conscientious in the performance of all formal religious or monastic duties.

It was at this time—writes Professor Theobald—that the works of the Genevese *savants* De Luc and De Saussure, together with the pastoral poems of Haller, came into Spescha's hands, and gave a fresh spur to his studies by showing the importance attached by the keener intellects of the time to natural research and the illimitable importance of the results to be obtained from it in every branch of human knowledge. His disposition, however, was not one which could rest content in unbroken literary pursuits and a sedentary cloister life. At every opportunity he escaped from those who were only in name his brethren to his childhood's friends, the mountains. At this period—that is, before 1793—he made most of his principal ascents.

The eventful year 1799 rudely broke the peace of the Rhætian Highlands. Spescha, by birth a republican and at heart a democrat, had been well disposed to the principles of the Revolution; but, in common with its English sympathisers, he had recoiled from the results of the Terror in Paris, and he must have been roused to indignation by the deeds of the French troops in Unterwalden, where in 1798 they destroyed, with a cruelty which no Habsburg had ever approached, a republic compared to which their own was as a mushroom to a forest pine. His desire and aim was that by a strict neutrality the Graubünden might escape the tyranny and desolation which had overwhelmed the neighbouring republics. Such hopes, however, were speedily disappointed. In 1799 the whole of what is now Eastern Switzerland became the marching ground of armies, French, Austrian, and Russian. In March of that year the French laid the heavy fine of 100,000 francs on the convent of Disentis. Spescha gave up his valuable collection of minerals, with all his other curiosities, to aid in raising the sum.

When a further impost was laid on the convent Spescha was sent to Chur, to endeavour to obtain some reduction of the fine as well as the release of several of the monks, whom Massena proposed to send as hostages to France. He was completely successful, the impost being diminished by 20,000 francs. But, in place of thanks, he was met on his return to his brethren with the imputation that his success had been due to his Jacobin sympathies. When, early in May, a second rising against the French broke out in the Oberbund he was absent. After endeavouring in vain to prevent the advance of the patriots who were marching down the valley, he took refuge at Lugnetz. Thence he made his way across the mountains to Disentis, to find on his arrival that the French

had reduced the convent and village to a mass of smoking ruins, and that all he most valued—his books, writings, and remaining collections—had been plundered or destroyed. Spescha, with half a life's labour gone and nothing but his staff in his hand, wandered back to Lugnetz, and found for some months an asylum with the parish priests of Vrin and Rumein.

Meantime the Austrians recovered the upper hand in the mountains. One day Spescha, who had come down to Trons on business, was seized and delivered to the imperial authorities by some of the very men whom he had saved from being sent as hostages to France. He was sharply examined on a sermon he had lately preached on the text 'Put not your trust in princes,' which was supposed to have been directed specially against the Emperor. He was subsequently sent as a prisoner to Innsbruck, where he remained for eighteen months a guest in the Servite monastery. This period of captivity proved one of the happiest of his life. He made many valuable acquaintances, and was allowed sufficient liberty to explore the neighbouring parts of Tyrol.

On his return to his native valley and his own convent his troubles recommenced. The Roman Church having herself gone through the fires of persecution, holds it her duty, where she has the power, to see that those who wish to present any new truths to the world shall not miss this valuable portion of her experience. It is only when she has done her worst in vain against new knowledge, that she ceases to denounce it as heresy. Spescha had to bear trials similar to those which have befallen many greater, or more famous, men. He had returned to his scientific pursuits, was engaged in renewing his collections and in committing to writing his experiences and theories. The jealousy of his superiors was aroused. His books were taken from him, writing was prohibited to him, and even his mountain wanderings forbidden. This vexation cost Spescha a serious illness. He recovered, and sought for a refuge in the parochial duties of some distant hamlet. After several changes we meet him established in 1821 at his native place, Trons. There he found himself at leisure to compose most of the manuscripts which still remain to us. The remainder of his life was more peaceful. An old man of seventy, he returned to the assault of the mountains, which he professed to have given up a quarter of a century before, and made his two final attempts on the highest peak of the Tödi.

He died in his eighty-third year, in 1835. His last words were, 'Jetzt fällt die Barracke zusammen.'

The fragments of Placidus a Spescha's writings which have found their way into print, coupled with the testimony of Herr Theobald as to the mass of his manuscripts, are sufficient to enable us to form a just estimate of the character of the author. He had some touch of the true humour which is founded on a broad philosophical view of life.

The following passage, written at Trons when he was seventy years old, is characteristic of the man :—

'When I carefully consider the fortune and ill-fortune that have befallen me, I have difficulty in determining which of the two has been the most profitable, since a man without trials is a man without experience, and such a one is without insight. *Vexatio dat intellectum.* For my part, speaking honestly, I must acknowledge that my ill-luck has been more useful to me than my good, since by the first I have gained more knowledge of God, of my neighbours, and of myself. In my opinion the true fortune of man in this world lies in right thinking and acting, acquiring knowledge, and preserving a clear conscience.'

When the painter Herr Isenring turned tail on the Tödi Spescha writes: 'This was the most vexatious of all my expeditions; but it was not, perhaps, wholly unprofitable, since it taught me this lesson: that in the choice of companions for a mountain expedition one cannot be too particular.'*

As a mountaineer he was very much before his age. In the ascent of the Stockgron he used both rope and ice-axe. The difficulty of his life was that he could not get capable companions to carry out the expeditions he planned. Our materials for estimating his position as a man of science are inadequate. Professor Theobald sketches as follows his theory as to the origin of the Alps:—'He believed that the materials of the mountains had been originally put together or formed under water, that they had been raised by subterranean energies in huge masses, and that their present configuration is due to erosion.' His views on geology are said by the same writer to be expressed with clearness and originality. Even where the theory is no longer tenable the observations may still be found instructive. The same is said of his writings on glaciers, meteorology, and kindred topics. The qualities of the intelligent traveller—keen study of nature, accurate topographical observation, appreciation of the mountain people and the details of their lives—are never wanting in his writings. The

* Theobald, p. 70.

maps drawn by the eye alone are pronounced marvellously accurate.

His writings, could they have been brought together and published in his lifetime, would have doubtless formed a valuable contribution to science. But no such good fortune awaited them. The larger part of his manuscripts and curiosities perished, as I have already shown, in the burning of the Convent of Disentis in 1799. The fate of the collections made subsequently to this event it is not now possible to ascertain. Some of the crystals are probably in the collection at the Cantonal school at Chur.

It is stated as a fact that soon after his death part of his manuscripts were burnt at Trons by some ignorant bigot. The chief remaining manuscripts are in six volumes in the possession of the Historical Society of Graubünden, and in two others belonging to the late Caspar Latour, the contents of which are mostly a repetition of the former six. It was Spescha's custom to write duplicate copies.

A fragmentary manuscript in the possession of Herr F. von Salis at Chur was published in vol. x. pp. 33-42 of the 'Jahrbuch' of the Swiss Alpine Club. It enumerates and partly describes the passes in the Bündner Oberland. With it was given Spescha's portrait, as the pilgrim of nature, equipped for the mountains, with his staff in his hand and his wallet on his back. In the fifth 'Jahrbuch' of the Swiss Alpine Club a paper on the 'Climate of the Alps' has been reprinted; in the seventh extracts are given from a MS. 'Account of the Urserenthal;' and lastly, in the sixteenth, a wish I had expressed was promptly fulfilled by the publication by Pfarrer Herold of Spescha's original accounts of his ascent of Piz Valrhein and his fifth and sixth attacks on the Tödi. None of his MSS. were published during his life. He was a contributor, however, to the 'Isis: eine Wochenschrift von deutschen und schweizerischen Gelehrten,' Zürich, 1805.*

How comes it, the reader may ask, that the fruit of the lifelong labours of so energetic a spirit was wasted? The answer would appear to be that during his life Spescha (like many true students) shrank from publication from a fear of prematurely committing himself to conclusions which further research might modify. After his death there was no one to interest himself in the MSS., and few (except the friends to whom he had entrusted duplicate copies) knew of their existence. To edit them, moreover, demanded probably more scientific know-

* See 'Alpina,' vol. i. p. 386.

ledge than those who had them in their keeping possessed. Thus the time for making them public was allowed to pass. As far as facts, historical or natural, go, the MSS. are still valuable; but, as far as theories are concerned, the advance of knowledge in the present century has rendered obsolete many speculations or conclusions which at the time they were made were suggestive and interesting.

It is time to turn to the mountains which were the chief scene of Placidus a Spescha's exploits, and to relate his ascents in detail in their proper place in the history of early mountaineering in the Bündner Oberland.

The group now commonly known as the Tödi district embraces the two chains of mountains which form the northern limit of the Vorderrheinthal and enclose on the west the Maderaner Thal and its tributary glens, and on the east the upper portions of the Linththäler. It contains four summits between 11,000 and 12,000 feet high. Of these the Tödi alone approaches the superior limit. Up to the end of the last century the Sandgrat was probably the only *glacier* pass across the chain known to the people of the country, and the peaks were all unclimbed.*

The Tödi, the sovereign of the group, has two principal peaks. The highest (11,887 feet) lies on the watershed between Glarus and Graubünden, and is known by the Romansch name of Piz Russein; the second, only 72 feet lower, which in Spescha's time bore commonly the name of Tödi, projects northwards, and, from being the summit visible from the Linththal, is now distinguished as the Glarner Tödi.†

According to Ebel's 'Swiss Guide,' the editor of which warmly acknowledges his obligations to Spescha for his aid in its compilation (2nd ed., Zürich, 1804), Spescha ascended the Tödi about 1784. The following is the passage referring to the expedition:—

* The following list of Pater Placidus's exploits is taken from the sixteenth 'Jahrbuch' of the Swiss Club (p. 484):—Badus and Piz Cotschen (Oberalpstock), each three times; Piz Ault, Piz Giuf. In the Tödi group, Piz Avat (Piz Gliems), Stockgron, Piz Urlaun, Muot da Robi. In the Medelser Gebirge, Piz Muraun, Piz Cristallina, Scoopi: Serengia, near Cornera; Surcombras (Weissenstein), near Savien; Valolia (Piz Aul); Derlun (Piz Scherboden); Piz Terri and Piz Cavel, above the Vrin Thal; Piz Valrhein and the Gufershorn.

† I have throughout this paper spoken of the mountain by the name it usually bears in Swiss literature, the Tödi, distinguishing, when necessary, its two summits by their individual names.

'Pater Placidus a Spescha first reached the top of the Tödi from the south side. According to this observer the mountain overlooks all the summits of the Bündner Oberland, Uri, Glarus, and Unterwalden. The view is remarkable.'

Again, in the third edition of Ebel (Zürich, 1809), we read: 'To ascend the Tödi it is necessary to sleep at the Alp Ilems, in the Ruseinthal. From this the climber goes up Piz Urlaun and descends by the level ice valley to the southern spur of the Rusein, and over this and the Rusein to the Tödi. It is possible to return by nightfall to the Ilemshütte. In the ice valley the crevasses are so wide that they cannot be crossed without a ladder.' On another page we read: 'Placidus a Spescha ascended the Stockgron, in the Ruseinthal, in 1788. The view is fine, though limited by the higher and more projecting Rusein. To the east of this is a depression from which a glacier plain may be attained, and from this the southern ridge of the Rusein can be reached and ascended.'

Herr Ulrich, in his paper on the Tödi in the first series of 'Berg- und Gletscher-Fahrten,' considers these three notices, read together and regarded apart from other evidence, to be self-contradictory and to involve impossibilities. I cannot share his opinion. The depression east of the Stockgron, the existence of which Herr Ulrich denies, exactly answers to the Porta da Gliems, and the description of the route to be followed in the ascent is sufficiently exact. After ascending from Trons, and crossing by the summit of Piz Urlaun to the Gliems glacier, it was seriously debated by the writer's party in 1865 whether the Tödi should not at once be attacked, and weather rather than time led to the abandonment of the project. Even the practicability of the northern face of Piz Urlaun, positively denied by Herr Ulrich, has been proved of late years.*

The only difficulty of any weight in my opinion is the expression 'goes up Piz Urlaun.' But, considering the date of the narrative, and that the easiest pass from the southern side to the snows of the Biferten glacier lies on the shoulder of Piz Urlaun, I think the phrase may fairly be read as equivalent to 'up to' or 'close by' Piz Urlaun.

An advocate, anxious to establish Spescha's claim, might further argue that it is highly improbable that the conqueror of the Piz Urlaun, the Oberalpstock, and Piz Valrhein should have waited thirty years, and until he was over seventy years old, before seriously attacking the greatest of the mountains round his own home; and that it is almost incredible that a

* By Herr Hauser, in 1866, 'S. A. C.,' Jahrbuch, iv. 16.

mountaineer so experienced and of so much local knowledge, having discovered the Porta da Gliems and the access it afforded to the summit, should have failed to make use of it. He might further point out that Spescha was at this time a contributor to a Swiss magazine, the 'Isis,' in which no contradiction or correction of the passages in 'Ebel' seems to have appeared; and that the first volume of the 'Alpina,' published at Winterthur in 1806, contains an elaborate and minute criticism of the 'Ebel' of 1804, in which the Tödi article is passed by without remark of any kind, which would hardly have been the case had the ascent been falsely claimed.

If the passages in 'Ebel' stood by themselves, and no further evidence was forthcoming from Spescha's or other contemporary writings, I should be disposed to yield to these arguments, and, accepting Ebel's clear statements, to add the Tödi to the old monk's early exploits. But this opinion, plausible at first sight, has been rendered untenable by the MS. account of the 1824 ascent found by Professor Theobald amongst Spescha's papers, and recently printed in full by the Swiss Alpine Club. With this before us we can no longer doubt that all Placidus a Spescha did in his youth was to reconnoitre and lay down with absolute precision the easiest route up the mountain, and that some obstacle delayed his profiting by the discovery. This obstacle was, in all probability, the difficulty of finding companions who would face a crevassed *névé*. Where necessity compels, as at the foot of a great chain like the Pennine Alps or the Central Caucasus, peasants will adventure themselves, or even drive their flocks, over glaciers and snow-fields; but in ranges of the second order, where the glacier is an obstacle easily turned, its terrors remain intact until mountain-climbing has been first introduced as a sport and then turned into a science. It is very likely that no chamois hunter would follow Spescha through the yawning abysses of the upper snow-fields, and the fact that in the 1824 ascent the rocks of the Porta da Spescha were climbed, instead of the glacier of the Porta da Gliems (which we have ample evidence was well known to the monk), shows the desire on his companions' part to have as little as possible to do with snow and ice.

The blunt statement of Spescha's successful ascent, inserted in the second edition of 'Ebel,' remains to be explained. Its modification in the following edition is, I think, significant. I believe that Spescha, who at the time of the issue of 'Ebel' was offering rewards to any one who could open the way up Piz Russein he believed he had discovered,* seized the oppor-

* See the following passage, kindly extracted for me by Dr.

tunity of the publication of the guide-book to extend the invitation to climbers generally. Such an absence of personal ambition in a mountaineer will doubtless be inconceivable to some modern peak-hunters; but it was perfectly consistent with the old monk's character. The conversion of this invitation into an explicit assertion of Spescha's having made the first ascent was, in my opinion, probably due to a blunder, such as injudicious editors, when they alter MS., are apt to fall into. A case very much in point may be found in the treatment the original account of the first ascent of the Finsteraarhorn underwent at the hands of the editor of the 'Alpenrosen.*' According to this theory the alteration in the third edition would be due to Spescha's having taken care to have the passage restored to a proper form.

On August 19, 1823, when Spescha was over seventy, the hardy and persevering old mountaineer made his fifth attempt on the Tödi, in company with his servant and a painter, Herr Isenring, of Toggenburg. They slept at the Gliems Alp, and next morning climbed the glacier behind the Stockgron. When they had proceeded for three hours on the ice, the folly and incapacity of his companion, and the approach of bad weather, stopped their advance. Spescha's intention to try again on the next day was frustrated by the weather, and he was compelled to put off till the subsequent year any further attempt. The following is Spescha's own account of his next and final assault on the mountain †:—

Killias from 'Beschreibung der Alpen, vorzüglich der höchsten . . . aus den Schriften von 1782 bis zum Jahr 1822 gezogen.' (MSS. vol. in 4to, property of the Histor. Society, Chur.) The preface, under Spescha's signature, is dated '18. Mai 1822' (orthography unaltered):— 'Meine Reisen in die hohen Gebirge fingen im Jahr 1782 an. Ich erstieg erstlich die Poxata (*sic*) am Rande des Medelser Glötschers, gleich darauf den Scopi, höchsten Gipfel des Lokmanier, und den Stockgron im Russein-Thal. Gleich nach 1785 hatte ich das Glück in Gesellschaft dreier Medicinæ doctoren . . . den Valrhein zu ersteigen. . . Ich stellte hernach denen Belohnungen aus, welche den Weg auf den Cotschen und Rusein mir vorzeigen würden, allein Niemand nahm diese Bemüthung auf sich. Endlich erstieg ich den Urlaun im Jahr 1793 und beschloss damit meine Reisen auf die höchsten Alpgebirge. Diesser Gipfel war bis dahin unerstiegen und ist nach dem Russein und Tödi der höchste in der Gegend.'—Vol. ii. p. 7.

* See 'Alpine Journal,' vol. viii. 'History of Early Mountaineering,' p. 66.

† Translated from the Swiss 'Jahrbuch,' vol. xvi. In preparing this paper, prior to the publication of Spescha's MS., I had applied to our honorary member Herr Ivan von Tschudi, and by his kind inter-

Yet again my sixth attempt to climb the Russein remained fruitless; my goal, however, was reached, and I thank God for it.

I sent the two chamois-hunters, Placidus Curschellas, of Trons, and Augustin Bisquolm, of Dissentia, from the upper huts of the Russein Alp on September 1, 1824, and by eleven o'clock they had climbed the peak. According to what they say, it is possible to cross from it to the Tödi. Owing to the upper mists, the central chain of the Alps, with the exception of a few prominent peaks, was veiled in vapour. France (Elsass) and Baden were extremely clear. In Glarus they could see eight or nine villages, in one of them a conspicuous church, on the other side Medels and Lukmanier. More to the west a very lofty and snowy summit, probably Mont Blanc, raised itself. They placed it, however, in Piedmont. They marvelled at the enormous depth of the valleys immediately surrounding them, Sandalp and Russein, and at the neighbouring snow-fields and glaciers. They thought they made out part of the Lake of the Four Cantons, and this is very possible. They only remained 30 minutes on the peak. They complained much of difficulty in breathing, obscuration of the vision and dizziness, and their eyes were inflamed from the new snow, which was in many places too soft to bear. As they reached the top a soft southwest wind sprang up and blew the particles of snow into their faces. One sat on his cap, the other on his pick. In this position they ate up the smoked bacon they had brought with them. As a sign of their visit they left the skin, for they could not find, far or near, any stones for building a stoneman. They agreed in declaring that neither of them alone could have climbed the mountain; mutual help and encouragement were essential.

I, with my servant Carli Caguenard, of Trons, climbed up a considerable height on the right hand in order to witness the ascent and return of the hunters. At 4 P.M. we came together to the above-mentioned huts, where we refreshed ourselves and recounted the events of the day.

Piz Russein, also called Crap Glaruna, rises north-east above the heads of the Sandalp and Russein valleys. Its base descends into the bottom of the valleys. Two snow-ridges which meet at an angle form the summit. From this point the snow forms a roof-like mass which affords the way to the Tödiberg. It (Piz Russein) is the highest peak between the Rhine and Reuss. In the year 1811 a great mass broke off it.

The MS. quoted above, now the property of the Historical Society of Graubünden, is entitled 'Geographische Beschreibung aller Rheinquellen und der dahin angestellten Bergreisen in einem Auszug meiner Schriften vom J. 1782 bis 1823, und einer Gebirgskarte zur Erläuterung versehen

vention obtained, through the courtesy of Dr. Killias, of Chur, full confirmation of Professor Theobald's extracts, as well as further details used in subsequent paragraphs. Herr Ulrich, misled by some groundless remarks of Hegetschweiler, has disputed this ascent.

von Herrn Placidus a Spescha, Konventual in dem Kloster Dissentis.* The introduction bears the date February 12, 1823. The work contains a complete list of Spescha's successful and unsuccessful ascents up to date, and is followed by a supplement containing an account of his fifth and sixth attempts on the Tödi, that with Herr Isenring in 1822 and that of 1824. Beside the latter is pasted a cutting from the 'Churer Intelligenzblatt,' No. 48 of 1824, which must have been inserted by Spescha himself. It runs as follows:—

'Den 1. Sept. ist der Piz Rusein, eine der drei höchsten Bergspitzen unseres Kantons, von zwei Gemsjägern aus dem Hochgericht Dissentis, Placi Curschellas von Trons und Augustin Bisquolm von Dissentis, erstiegen worden. Zwei glaubwürdige Männer von Trons, welche die Reise mitmachen wollten, das Ziel derselben aber nicht gänzlich zu erreichen vermochten, waren Augenzeugen davon. Die benannte Bergspitze, die sich im Hintergrunde der Ruseinthales erhebt, lehnt sich südwestlich an den Glarnerischen Tödi, den sie an Höhe übertrifft und ist die Grenzscheide zwischen Glarus und Graubünden. Eine unermessliche Schneelage, die sich auf allen Seiten hinabstreckt, bedeckt dieselbe seit ewigen Zeiten. Zwar öfters versucht, aber stets misslungen, war diese Bergspitze bis dahin von keinem menschlichen Wesen erklommen worden.'

Dr. Killias adds that throughout the MSS. in the possession of the Historical Society there is no allusion of any sort to explain the entry in Ebel's guide. The explanation he proposes is that Ebel may have taken the ascent of the Stockgron made from Val Russein for one of the Tödi. I still, however, prefer my own suggestion offered above.

I now turn to the record of the attempts made by subsequent explorers to reach the summit of the Tödi. It is a long one, and is curious as exhibiting how good a defence could be made by a second-class mountain in those days. To all who examined the range it must have been plain that the proper way to the summit must be over the upper snows of the Biferten Glacier. Spescha had many years before pointed out the easiest approach to them; that by the Porta da Gliems; but it long remained unnoticed,† though one adven-

* Spescha spells 'Dissentis' and 'Dissentis,' 'Russein' and 'Rusein,' indifferently.

† Hegetschweiler. See 'Berg- und Gletscher-Fahrten,' vol. i. pp. 195, 207-208.

turer came near re-discovering it. For nearly forty years all the attempts to scale the mountain, and at a later date all the ascents effected, were made from the Ober Sand Alp by crossing the southern base of the mountain and trying to force a way beside the difficult Biferten Glacier.

Before Spescha's last attempt from the west, one of the most persevering of the unsuccessful assailants, the botanist Hegetschweiler, had commenced a series of attacks upon the mountain from the Glarus side, apparently without any knowledge of the route to the summit so plainly set forth in the pages of Ebel's Guide. In August 1819 he made an attempt by the Sandfirn and the glacier lying between the Tödi and Klein Tödi, but was forced to return without even reaching the base of the minor summit. On August 26 in the following year he ascended to the Sandgrat and reconnoitred the northern face of the mountain. The guides pronounced the rocks inaccessible, and their verdict long remained unquestioned. Next day he made another attempt. The party started at 6 A.M., August 27, from the Ober Sand Alp, and crossed the base of the Ochsenstock to the Biferten Grätli, whence they descended on to the Biferten Firn. The ice-fall which barred the way was turned by a gully (since known as the Schneerose or Schneerunse) on its right-hand side, and it was thus proved that the upper snow-fields could be reached from the Linththal. But time and unfavourable weather hindered any further advance, and the party reluctantly descended, led, we are told, by Galepp, the dog of one of the guides. Hegetschweiler observes in his account of this expedition that between the Biferten (Stock?) and Tödi it was possible to make a pass to Graubünden, and consequently that an ascent of the Tödi might be made from the south side.

On August 12, 1822, the climbers, following the same route and starting at an earlier hour, only succeeded in reaching a somewhat higher point (about 10,000 feet), since known as Hegetschweiler's Platte. On this occasion, in crossing the Schneerunse on the descent, the party was exposed to serious peril from the fall of an ice avalanche. This spot appears to be always dangerous from this cause, and, though no fatal accident has occurred, many climbers have been struck or had narrow escapes from injury.

In these two attempts Hegetschweiler had evidently learnt that the access from the Graubünden side might be found much easier, for on the following day he sent the guides across the Sandgrat on an exploring expedition. They returned on the evening of the 14th, and related that they had ascended

from the Sandgrat by the clefts and gullies of the Klein Tödi to the south side of the Russein, and had succeeded in reaching an adjoining crest. In their opinion the ascent of the Russein itself from this point was not impossible, but inadvisable without special preparation. They probably had no rope; and as they must have seen crevasses from the highest point they reached, they would consider the upper glacier impassable without a ladder. Hegetschweiler did not follow up their reconnaissance.

In July 1833 some Linththal peasants made the next attack on the mountain. In the following year, according to their own account, they gained the upper *névé* of the Biferten glacier from the Russeinthal by climbing the steep slopes near the Stockgron, and from this, without serious difficulty, reached the summit. This reported ascent took place July 17, 1834.

On July 30 Herr Ulrich and some friends engaged the peasants as guides to show them the route they had taken. In descending from the Sandgrat Herr Ulrich nearly disabled himself by a slip down a long snow-slope. Next morning bad weather prevented any attempt, and they returned by the Kisten Pass, where the guides displayed such incompetence as to throw doubts on their asserted success. Next month Hegetschweiler, with Escher von der Linth and another companion, appears on the scene with the same three peasants. Unfortunately the gully by which the peasants had ascended was now found full of ice, and the difficulties of the route, with the uncertainty of the weather, led to a fresh failure. It is difficult to determine whether the peasants had really reached the top. Their demeanour and replies did not satisfy Hegetschweiler. On the other hand, it is much more likely that three fair climbers should have got up the rocks of the Porta da Spescha than that they should have failed.

It is a relief to come at last to an unquestioned ascent. The various attempts on the Tödi had made it a famous mountain in the Linththal, and even the peasantry were stirred to seek after the honour of first planting a flag on the great rampart which overhung their homes. The first ascent of the Tödi from the north is one of the most plucky feats in Alpine climbing performed by a party of peasants of their own impulse.

On August 12, 1837, three peasants came to Stachelberg and declared that on the preceding Thursday (August 10) they had reached the summit. These were Bernhard Vögeli, an active man in spite of his threescore years, and bearing the reputation of a bold hunter and climber; Gabriel Vögeli, his son; and

Thomas Thut, a cousin of the guide of that name who had taken part in many previous attempts, both accounted skilful hunters and good cragsmen.

When their assertions were doubted, Bernhard Vögeli, in simple but earnest language, told the story of the ascent. From his earliest youth, he said, he had desired to ascend this mountain, which was touched first by the rising and last by the setting sun. His design had been put off year after year till, on hearing of the failures of Hegetschweiler and others, he could no longer hold back, and found two fitting comrades to join him. On July 31 they had made their way along the Biferten glacier till opposite the Piz Urlaun, when they were driven back by a mist. On August 4 they tried again, and after getting into many difficulties on the glacier they were obliged to bivouac, and spent a miserable night under some rocks. Next morning they crossed the Schneerunse at some risk, and gained the upper slopes, but were again forced to return by mists. Instructed by these failures as to the proper route and the appliances that were needful, they started at 12.30 A.M., August 10, for a third attempt. They followed the same route, and at midday found themselves, after long wading in soft snow, in a narrow ice-valley which led them round on the south side of the mountain to what seemed to be its summit plateau. Here a thick mist suddenly came on, and they advanced at random. To the terror of his companions, the elder Vögeli was seized with a violent shivering fit; but, gathering his strength together, he managed to shake it off, and they once more began to advance on the level surface, when the clouds suddenly broke, and with surprise and almost with terror they perceived that they had reached the summit. They set up two alpenstocks in the form of a cross, attached to them some handkerchiefs for a signal, and, leaving the crest at 2 P.M., accomplished the descent safely.

Their story was at first received with some doubt, and all eyes and glasses were turned on the summit in search of the signal. It was not until the elder Thut, Hegetschweiler's guide, came down from an alp and declared he had seen the signal with the unassisted eye, as well as with a telescope, that it was discovered at a spot rather to one side of that in which it had been looked for.*

On August 19 in the same year the three peasants, now the Tödi guides, conducted Herr von Dürler to the summit.

* Berg- und Gletscher-Fahrten, vol. i. p. 214.

Obstacles which they had not encountered on their first ascent were found on the upper part of the mountain in the shape of crevasses. On the descent the party was barely clear of the dreaded 'Schneerunse' before it was swept by a volley of ice and stones; but the expedition was safely and successfully accomplished. On July 31, 1846, Herr G. Hoffmann failed in an attempt, being stopped by a large crevasse near the top, which was estimated at 60 feet in width. Strange as it seems, we are assured that in neither of the ascents in 1837 was the peak either of Piz Russein or the Glarner Tödi reached. The climbers were content with attaining the uppermost ridge of the mountain at a point ten minutes distant from the latter summit.

In 1853 the Glarner Tödi, the northern and lower peak, was at last attained. Professor Ulrich, with Herr Siegfried and Herr G. Studer, accompanied by the guides Thomas Thut, Gabriel Vögeli (B. Vögeli had died in 1848), and Johann Madutz, starting from the Sand Alp, successfully overcame all the difficulties of the ascent, and in about eight hours reached the peak of the Glarner Tödi. The lateness of the hour prevented their ascending also the Piz Russein. This was not revisited till July 30, 1861, when Herren Simler and Sand found the distance between the two summits only 20 minutes.

Of late years the Tödi has been frequently climbed by Swiss tourists. In 1853 Herr Ulrich was convinced that there was only one point, a gap west of the Stockgron, apparently the Porta da Spescha, which could be reached from the west side! In 1863 Herr Simler, with some friends of the Swiss Alpine Club, reopened the Porta da Spescha and reached the Piz Russein by it in $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours from the Russein Alp.* In 1865 Messrs. A. W. Moore and H. Walker, having ascended the Tödi by the Biferten glacier, descended to the Russein Alp in three hours by the Porta da Gliems.† The ascent from the Glarus side had been much facilitated by the erection of a substantial hut, under the supervision of the Swiss Alpine Club, on the rocks of the Grünhorn, by the side of the upper icefall of the Biferten glacier. But until 1866 no way of avoiding the Schneerunse had been found, though few travellers passed it without a warning of its dangers. The icefall had been regarded as impassable by all who approached it until, on July 19 of that year, the writer and Mr. C. C. Tucker were led by François Devouassoud straight up the centre of it.‡ The pas-

* 'S. A. C.,' i. 52. † 'Alpine Journal,' vol. iii. p. 164.

‡ 'Alpine Journal,' vol. ii. p. 363.

sage proved a very simple piece of ice work, and only took an hour. On July 26 of the same year Herr Hauser, on his way to the Piz Urlaun, found another passage on the left-hand side of the glacier.* The English party last mentioned did not reach the top of the Tödi, owing to bad weather, but effected a new descent on the Graubünden side by a narrow and difficult gully falling from the gap between Piz Russein and the Bleissas Verdas to the small glacier immediately south of the Sandgrat. This pass is known as the Russein Lücke, and has been used since by a Swiss party. One more 'impossibility' of the early climbers, the direct ascent of the rocky face of the Tödi above the Sandgrat, had been proved possible a few days earlier. On July 14, 1866, Dr. Picard descended from the summit to the Sandgrat, led by two local guides, and the ascent has been made more than once since by that route.

We cannot afford to spend much time on the minor peaks of the group. Piz Urlaun (11,063), a near neighbour of the Tödi, was an early conquest of Placidus a Spescha, who climbed it in 1793 and considered it one of his most difficult ascents.† It was revisited on July 11, 1865, by Mr. Tuckett, the writer, and some friends.‡ They ascended from Trons and descended on to the Gliems glacier, and but for doubtful weather would have proceeded on the same day to ascend the Tödi, thus justifying one of the remarks of Spescha which has been most criticised by Swiss writers.§ The difficult ascent from the Biferten glacier, already referred to, was effected by Herr Hauser, of the Swiss Alpine Club, in 1866.||

The Scheerhorn (10,814), the loftiest of the snowy summits which face the pasturages of the Klausen and turn their backs on the great snow reservoir which feeds the Hüfi and Clariden glaciers, was conquered by Herr G. Hoffmann on August 9, 1842. He started from the Kampli Alp and ascended by the Gries glacier.

The guides, Joseph Maria and Melchior Trösch, made in 1848 the first ascent of the Grosse Windgelle (10,463), and a few days later (July 31) led Herr Hoffmann to the top. Hoffmann found the ascent decidedly difficult in parts, and under certain conditions considered that it would be impossible. The line of his ascent, which crossed the great southern face of the mountain, has never since been used. On the occasion

* 'S. A. C.,' iv. 16. † Theobald, 66.

‡ 'Alpine Journal,' vol. ii. p. 134.

§ See quotation from third edition of 'Ebel,' p. 297.

|| 'S. A. C.,' iv. 16.

of the next ascent, fifteen years later,* an easier route was found nearer the main ridge, which saved much time and trouble. In these, as in the many subsequent ascents, only the eastern peak of the mountain was reached. The western peak, of equal height, retained the name of inaccessible till, on August 12, 1876, Mr. Holzmann, a mountaineer accustomed to limestone in the eastern Alps, made the ascent † and passed without serious difficulty to this second peak, described even in the last edition of the 'Alpine Guide' as defended by a 'deep, impassable chasm' and seemingly 'inaccessible.'

Of the other peaks round the Maderaner Thal the Kleins Windgelle (in 1844), the Dussistock (in 1842), and the Bristenstock (in 1823) were all attained by Swiss climbers. The name of the latter peak has been rendered familiar to English readers by the account of a night adventure on it given by Mr. E. S. Kennedy in the first series of 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers.'

A nobler mountain than any of these is the Oberalpstock or Piz Cotschen (10,925), which rises in a sharp rocky crest, surrounded by glaciers, on the boundary line between Uri and Graubünden, south of the Maderaner Thal. Placidus a Spescha first reached the top about 1790. Accompanied by his servant, he slept at the Runs Alp (6,883 feet), north of Disentis. Early next morning they gained the ridge dividing the Cantons. Here they overlooked the great plateau of the Brunni glacier, and saw across it slopes of snow and ice leading up to the summit of the Oberalpstock. After crossing the plateau without difficulty, they fastened themselves together for security with a long rope, as the snow-slopes were full of wide crevasses. When they had ascended some distance they were obliged to bear to the left and gain the ridge of the mountain to turn an unusually wide crevasse. On the slopes above this they had a narrow escape. A layer of new snow lying on the surface broke loose, and rushed down in an avalanche upon them. Spescha sprang up to fix his feet and alpenstock as deeply as possible in the old snow, and succeeded in maintaining his position. His servant, being behind him, was hardly touched by the avalanche, but was so frightened that Spescha, in order to calm his nerves, had to hear his confession before proceeding. In an hour more they reached the top. Spescha estimates the time spent in ascending this slope at 2½ hours. It is about 2,000 feet in height.

* 'Alpine Journal,' vol. vi. p. 326.

† Ibid. vol. viii. p. 160.

In descending they came on the great crevasse at a point where it was narrower, and Spescha desired his servant to jump over whilst he held the rope. He jumped short through fright and fell in. Spescha had to pull him out and help him over.

They reached home without further misadventure. Spescha made two ascents subsequently from the Strimthal, which he left at the point where it forks. After gaining the ridge the route followed was the same as in the first ascent.* No other ascent was made till 1847, when Joseph Maria Trösch led Herr Hoffmann to the top. After sleeping at an alp in the Etlithal they crossed the Kreuzli pass, and keeping at a level along the slopes of the Weitenalpstock and the upper part of the Strim Glacier, gained the foot of a steep rock-chimney reaching nearly to the summit. The ascent from this point occupied four hours. The mountain again remained unvisited for seventeen years, when an ascent was made from Sedrun by the route of Spescha's later ascents. In the numerous ascents subsequently made from the Maderaner Thal the upper plateau of the Brunni glacier was almost invariably gained by the right bank, and a wide circuit made round its head to gain the base of the final peak. In late years, however, a route by the left bank has been followed with a great saving of time.

A way up the remarkable peak of the Brigelsler Horn or Piz Tumbif was discovered, says Prof. Theobald, by a priest of Schlans while in pursuit of chamois. After his death the path was lost, and had to be rediscovered in 1865 by some members of the Swiss Alpine Club.† In other parts of the group the Hausstock, a broad snowy summit east of the Bifertenstock, and the Gemsfayrenstock were climbed by Swiss mountaineers in 1832 and 1854 respectively. The outlying summits of the Glärnisch (9,584), so noble an object from the plain or the valleys at its foot, were all reached in early days. The highest, the Bächistock, is ascribed by Herr Studer to Professor Heer, of Zürich, the lower, but more difficult, Vreneliggärtli to Herr Siegfried in 1848.

South of the Vorderrheinthal and east of the Lukmanier we find two considerable glacier groups, the Medelser and Adula Gebirge. The former contains several peaks of between 10,000 and 10,500 feet, one of which, not the highest however, Piz Puzata, was among Placidus a Spescha's conquests. The peak

* Theobald, 83.

† 'S. A. C.,' iii. 148.

which overlooks the Lukmanier on the west, the Scopi, was also climbed by the monk. In 1819 Escher von der Linth repeated the ascent, of which he has left a description. This region was then almost entirely deserted by mountaineers until 1865, when Messrs. A. W. Moore and Walker visited it.* It has recently been completely explored by Swiss climbers.†

The Adula or Rheinwald group is more important. From early times it has had celebrity from the relation of its principal glacier to the great German river. The Roman road over the San Bernardino brought travellers into its immediate vicinity. A temple is said to have stood near the point where the young stream leaves its ice cradle. We may amuse ourselves by holding, despite the commentators, that the epithet in Horace's '*Rheni luteum caput*' (with Virgil's '*Sævis cautibus horrens*' for the Caucasian gorge of the Dariel) was a piece of local colour derived from the report of travellers.

The ascent of Piz Valrhein (11,148), the highest peak of the group, was first effected by Placidus a Spescha in 1789, and was one of the most remarkable feats of that worthy monk. The story of how he picked up his companions is a good illustration of the state of alpine knowledge a hundred years ago. Three doctors of medicine were found by Spescha seeking near Medels the cradle of the Rhine. But I must take advantage of the recent publication of Spescha's manuscript (see p. 295) to allow the leader of the expedition to tell his own story.

For my ascent of this important peak I have to thank the designs—and the blunders—of three doctors of medicine! These doctors, by name Rengger of Bern, Ackermann of Mainz, and Domner of Hannover, having set out for the *village* of Medels in the Rheinwald, came instead to the *valley* of Medels near Dissentis, and then back to me (at the Convent of Dissentis) to inquire the nearest way to the Rheinwald and the source of the Hinterrhein. They had already once gone wrong on their journey, and feared therefore they might go wrong again. They came on a singular errand, to ask for my services as guide, and my honourable Herr Abbot gave me leave for the purpose.

With morning we travelled down the valley to Surrhein, turned southwards into the side valley, Tenija (Sonvix), journeyed sideways through the Diesrut, and then bending eastward came with evening to Romein in Lugnetz.

At the end of Alp Tenija the doctors busied themselves with collecting plants, and were fortunate in their quest. Soon, however, we felt a rising wind from the south-western gorges of the Greina, and the horizon was obscured with gloomy mists. The wind grew stronger

* 'Alpine Journal,' vol. iii. p. 164.

† 'Jahrbuch,' ii. 3.

at every moment and twice threw my worthy Doctors down on their knees. They began to lose courage, and I too felt uneasy for them. We had only one more violent gust to endure, but that threw me on my knees and the worthy Physicians on the ground, scattering all their plant collection. What a misfortune! By myself I could do nothing to cheer up these worthy gentlemen except by pointing out to them the abatement of the wind (which at other times carries stones from their place, lifts and flings to a distance slates, men, even laden animals) and giving them hope that the gorge would soon be passed. Still weather and heavy rain followed, and in four or five hours without taking shelter we reached our hospice (in Romein), where we found dry things and provisions.

After it had rained the whole night the mountains were in the morning covered low down with snow, and we rested all day.

Next day we went in two hours to the chief village, Vals, in three hours to the Valserberg, and in two more down to Rhein (Hinterrhein). There Herr Landamman Hösali waited for us with a noble bottle of Veltliner, and provided us with everything we stood in need of.

On the following day the weather was unusually clear and pleasant. Provided with a guide we set off on the way to see the source of the Rhine and what lay beyond. On my own account I took a guide from the Zaport Alp, a shepherd named Antonio.

The Rhine bursts as a river from an ice-vault and rushes over the stones past the Alp. We crossed the long Rheinwald glacier without difficulty or danger, and in three hours reached the hollow which lies between the Cuver (Gufershorn) and Piz Valrhein. Our guide, when he saw the precipices of the Lentsathal with its and the other glaciers, and took account of the way up the Valrhein, refused to go a step further with us. No persuasion could bring him to it.

However, the courageous shepherd took the lead, I came next, and the doctors followed. Soon my next follower clutched my robe, and each of the others the coat of his fore-goer. After a time I found it a little too much to hold up and draw after me all the three doctors, who allowed themselves very perceptible backslidings. I therefore in turn grasped for security's sake the tail of the shepherd's coat. In this way we wandered in a line over the narrow snow-ridges. Care was needful to avoid slips and false steps, for a fall on our right would in some places have been certainly fatal.

From the depth of the hollow already spoken of up to the peak the ridge of the mountain is covered with snow and trends towards S. or S.W. For the first half it is steep, then becomes gentle for a short space, and is then again steeper than at first. Nothing rises above, nor is it broken by any ice or snow pinnacles. Only very long snow-slopes stretch down from it into the depths of the valleys. The view on to the Lenta glacier is awful and almost perpendicular. We followed always the ridge of the mountain, but at last it became so steep that we were not able to find footing on it, and we had no implement with us fit for cutting steps. We were obliged therefore to cross a somewhat less steep snowslope, so as to be able to climb the peak from the W. side. Rengger, who was next behind me, slipped. I sprang

to him, clutched him, and placed him on his feet again. Nothing serious could have happened to him; he might have damaged his skin or his clothes, but some level snow just under us would have stopped him. Yet this accident made such an impression on the gentlemen that they would not go on with the expedition, so we made them seats and footholes in the snow. They had before them a wide view to the N. and W., and with that they contented themselves.

We had scarcely gained the W. side, when the shepherd let fall his stick, which slid downwards and was lost to view in a crevasse. What my feelings were at this unlooked-for ill-luck may easily be imagined, since the worst bit of the ascent lay before us, where, unprovided with crampons, we must make our way over the hard ice, which was bare of fresh snow. Luckily, however, I was able to persuade the good man to search for his stick. He approached the crevasse with slow steps, at each he cried out *Jesu, Maria*, finally he knelt down and grasped the stick. The hazardous corner was crossed and we breathed freely. Now, however, a fresh dilemma met me. When I tried to encourage the guide to complete the ascent of the summit he replied *Mi no*, 'Not I,' and as often as I made appeal to him he kept answering me quite composedly with his *Mi no*. So I had to climb the last peak alone, and I found no difficulty in doing so, as it was all snow.

When one stands on the summit itself, one is on a cornice of snow that overhangs to the N.E. I only found this out on the descent, otherwise I should have thought twice before going on to the very crest. Perhaps the fear that it might give way was the shepherd's reason for not following me.

From the top I saw near at hand nothing but bare mountains, wild pasturages, ice and snow; further off little but the hollows of the valleys, but countless peaks. The only instrument I had with me was a compass; I had not even a telescope. At that time my long sight supplied the place of the latter, at least for a general view, and for a close examination I had no time.

To the east I gave my attention first. I saw clearly the depression of the Vintschgau. On either side of this valley rose two very lofty mountains, the Ortler to the south, and the Uri or Wildspitz to the north. Tyrolese geographers cannot agree which is the highest; according to my ocular measurement the latter surpasses the former.

My second glance I gave to the S. and S.W. Over the mountains of the Calancathal I saw a portion of the Apennines; in the far west I saw other mountain chains wrapped in vapour.* Then the horizon drew nearer to me in the high ridges which fall from Monte Rosa towards Italy. In the west followed the northern mountains of Wallis; after them the summits of Bern, Uri, Glarus, and St. Gallen, which join

* Herr Herold has probably suppressed some words here, as Professor Theobald tells us that Spescha identified these as the mountains of Corsica. I need hardly say a wild and impossible guess.

on to the Tyrolese and Vorarlberg ranges. The only cultivated land in sight was a portion of the plain of the Po.

Berühmt muss dieser Berg wohl sein
Im Mittelpunkt der Alpen :
Aus seinen Füßen fließt der Rhein,
Bekannt den Jungen und Alten.

In returning I took up the first piece of rock I came upon,* and it appeared to me to be a fine-grained granite, which others class as fine gneiss.

Neither the shepherd nor the doctors had meanwhile stirred from their places. What would have happened to the latter had we never returned to release them from their position? We came again to the saddle whence we had set out to ascend the peak.

Thence we bore to the right by another way. I went first, and traversed a tolerably steep snow slope, and found myself at the bottom just as the rest of the party began to cross the top. Rengger lost his footing and shot down towards me like an arrow. With all speed I sprang into the snow and caught and stopped him before he reached the rocks, which might have broken his neck and limbs. Hardly had I got him on his feet when Ackermann fell in exactly the same way. Being a very heavy man, his descent was more rapid and violent. However, I sprang upon him like a vulture; my joints cracked, but he escaped uninjured.

We then descended over the lower glacier, paid our trusty shepherd and at dusk reached Rhein. Already on the glacier we had felt, some more than others, our eyes inflamed and smarting. Ackermann and Domrér drank no wine for supper, and suffered less; we winebibbers could neither sleep nor rest for pain and heat in the eyes. This was nothing new to our host. He made up an ointment with pounded alum and white of egg, the application of which relieved the smart instantaneously. The next day I travelled to Thusis, and smeared my skin again: the skin peeled on the hands and face, the smart ceased, and the eyes and skin soon returned to their usual condition.

We had none of the necessaries for undertaking in security a mountain ascent: trustworthy guides, veils, proper shoes, sticks and crampons. In the middle of July, 1789, this journey was accomplished.

Traces of a stoneman built by Spescha were found on July 5, 1859, by Herr Weilenmann, who made the next authenticated ascent *alone*. As to expeditions without guides there may be much difference of opinion; solitary climbing over glaciers is suicidal folly, as those who have tried it would probably be the first to admit. These glaciers have twice borne witness to this fact. In 1834 two hunters found the corpse of a French cavalry officer on the ice. In the Napoleonic wars

* In 1864 the actual top of the mountain was bare rock.

deserters are known to have wandered over many of the Alpine passes. In 1854 a chamois hunter perished on the Zapport glacier under very distressing circumstances. After he had been absent two days his companions took alarm, and eighteen villagers set out to scour the mountains. After a whole day spent in fruitless search, on the second morning—the ninth since the hunter had left the chalet—they saw his stick beside a crevasse on the Rheinwald glacier. One of the peasants, the companion on the alp of the lost man, was let down into the crevasse. At a depth of 60 feet he found the frozen body of his friend, and beside him the chamois he had killed. From the position of the body it was evident that the hunter's legs had been caught as in a trap between the narrowing walls of the crevasse, and that he had in this position been frozen alive.

Herr Coaz, on September 13, 1861, like Herr Weilenmann, climbed the peak by the north-east ridge, crossing at the last the northern face and reaching the top from the north-west. In his case, as in Spescha's, some of the party failed to reach the summit. Since this time the Rheinwaldhorn has been run over from all sides. In 1864 the present writer, with Messrs. M. Beachcroft and Douglas Walker, climbed the peak for the first time from the Lenta glacier, striking the N.E. ridge of the mountain near the top.* In 1865 Messrs. Moore and Horace Walker reached the north-west ridge from Val Carassina, and crossing the top descended straight from it on to the Rheinwald glacier.†

Piz Terri, an outlier of the Adula group, rising south of Vrin in a bold pyramidal peak, was ascended by Placidus a Spescha in the last century, and never again until 1872, by Herr Calberla, of Dresden.‡ The final climb gave the hardy monk some trouble, and would, possibly, from the view-point of modern climbers, be considered as his best exploit. It is difficult in our generation, and particularly for those who have never wandered into remote mountain regions, to realise the horror and ignorance of snow and ice-work, to have overcome which constitutes, in our judgment, Pater Placidus's best title to a high place among the Founders of Mountaineering.

* 'Alpine Journal,' vol. i. p. 380. † *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 172.

‡ 'S. A. C.,' viii. 81.