

THE STUBAI ALPS, TYROL.

BY J. W. WYATT.

HAVING spent over two and a half months this summer at Mieders in the Stubai Thal, and having done a little mild climbing and scrambling in these Alps, a few notes on the district and the climbing to be had there may be of interest to members of the Club. The Stubai Alps do not appear to be much visited by English climbers, and I can find very little mention of them in the JOURNAL, nor of the adjoining Alps of the Oetzthal and Zillerthal.

Three main valleys run south from the river Inn in the neighbourhood of Innsbruck, the Oetzthal, the Stubai Thal,¹ and the Zillerthal. The head of each valley is closed by a range of snow-clad peaks, culminating in the Wildspitze (12,379 ft.) in the Oetzthal, the Zuckerhütl (11,516 ft.) in the Stubai Thal, and the Hochfeiler (11,554 ft.) in the Zillerthal. The Oetzthal Alps are the more massive and extensive of the three groups, but although the highest peaks of the Oetzthal overtop those of the Stubai Thal by about 800 ft. and the snow and glacier fields are larger, from what I am told, the best climbing, both on snow and rock, of the three districts is to be found in the Stubai Alps.

These Alps consist, roughly, of an elevated backbone 9000 ft. high and upwards, in the shape of an inverted interrogation sign *?*, with the leg running north and thinning off in the direction of the Inn valley. The range may be said to begin with the Habicht on the east, a very fine isolated peak of 10,760 ft., and continues westward in a big bend with the two Feuersteiner peaks, the Wilder Freiger, Zuckerhütl, Schaufelspitze, Windacher Daunkogel, Wilde Leck, Ruderhofspitze, and Schrankogel; from here the range runs almost due north and finishes in the neighbourhood of Kühtai, above the Ober Innthal, at a height of just under 10,000 ft. A feature of the main part of the range is that there is no pass or col across it under 3000 m., and except in one case, the Mutterberger Joch (3018 m.), all are snow or glacier cols at all seasons.

The main chain of these Alps consists almost entirely of

¹ The Stubai Thal proper drains into the Sill, a tributary of the Inn.

primary rocks, mostly gneiss and mica-schists, but two spurs of limestone peaks, of the Trias period, branch off from the Alps proper and enclose the Stubaithal on both sides: the Kalkkögel on the west, and the Serleskamm on the east side. There is also another spur of limestone peaks running due east from the two Feuersteiner and culminating in the Pferscher Tribulaun.

As regards climbing centres, Mieders (3125 ft.) is perhaps altogether the most convenient; it is only three-quarters of an hour from Innsbruck by a daily service of autobuses, and the hotel is good, comfortable, quiet, and very moderate. Fulpmes and Neustift, further up the valley, are also good, but both are apt to be overcrowded in the season. On the other side of the valley, from Mieders, a mountain railway runs from Innsbruck to Fulpmes, which is the principal village of the district.

On July 15 my son and I, with a friend, Dr. Catford, engaged a local guide, Bartlmä Ribis of Neustift, and drove up to Ranalt (4133 ft.), a small and picturesquely situated hamlet at the foot of the Maierspitze, where the valley branches in two, the east branch called the Langenthal, and the west branch the Mutterbergerthal. We walked up the Langenthal to the Nürnberger hut (7535 ft.), near the foot of the Gröblferner glacier under the two Feuerstein peaks. Those of us who have climbed the Austrian Alps or the Dolomites will know and appreciate the excellent system of mountain huts, really small hotels, well equipped and provisioned, at elevations of from 7000 to 10,000 ft.; they are constructed and managed by the German and Austrian Alpine Club, and, in one or two cases, by the Austrian Touring Clubs; in S. Tyrol, now, by the Italian Alpine Club.

The following morning we made an early start and traversed the Wilder Freiger (11,242 ft.), a 3 hours' climb; there is a clearly marked track the whole way and the climb presents no difficulty whatever. After crossing the snowfield of the Gröblferner we reached the N. arête, where we breakfasted, and then crossed a steepish snow slope to the summit. The weather was perfect and the view very fine and extensive, embracing practically all the Alps from the Gross Glockner to the Piz Bernina; we saw the whole of the Dolomites from the Sextener Dolomites, across the Adige valley, to the Brenta group, nearly all the principal peaks being visible.

The Wilder Freiger is now on the frontier between Austria and Italy, so we descended the Italian side, down a steep

snow slope, across a small bergschrund and then along the upper névé of the extensive Uebelthal Glacier to the old Müller hut on the Pfaffenjoch, now known as the Rifugio Cima Libera, and taken over and run by the Italian Alpine Club. The height of this hut is 10,295 ft., and close by it, at the foot of the S. arête of the Wilder Freiger, is another hut, at a slightly higher elevation, the old Becher Haus, now the Rifugio Regina Elena, also run by the C.A.I. We were able to get good bedroom accommodation and all we wanted in the way of meals. We spent the afternoon sun-bathing and flower-hunting on the rocks.

Next morning we had first about an hour's easy climbing up the E. arête of the Wilder Pfaff (11,386 ft.), from where we had a good view of the cone-shaped peak of the Zuckerhütl (11,516 ft.), the highest summit of the Stubai Alps. Between the Wilder Freiger and Wilder Pfaff we were on or across the Italian frontier, but at the latter peak it turns abruptly S. and follows the watershed between the Inn and the Adige, the rest of the range westward being entirely in Austrian territory. We had passports with us, but had no difficulties or trouble; we were told that it is forbidden to cross the range and descend into the Italian valleys, but that it is permitted to cross over to use the Alpine huts situated on the Italian side.

From the Wilder Pfaff we had a short descent of about 350 ft. over loose rocks and snow to the Pfaffen Sattel, and then climbed up the steep E. ridge of the Zuckerhütl; we kept on the snow for about halfway up and then took to the rocks on the left, leaving ice-axes at the foot of the rocks. It is only about 500 ft. up from the Sattel and, although very steep, is not difficult; it is also possible to keep to the snow arête all the way, but, with unfavourable conditions, this might be difficult or entail step-cutting. It is a short but bold peak and, of course, a fine viewpoint, especially of the Oetzthaler Alps.

We came down again to the Pfaffen Sattel and retrieved our axes. There is a fine icefall on the N. face of the Zuckerhütl, under which we went and across the névé of the Sulzenau glacier to the Pfaffenjoch, a pass between the Zuckerhütl and the Aplerer Pfaff, and then down the Pfaffen Glacier to the Hildesheimer hut (9543 ft.). We got here about midday and found the hut packed to overflowing, inside and out, with tourists and climbers of all sorts, and it was a regular scramble to get something to eat.

After lunch we had a stiffish climb of some 1500 ft. up rocks and the Geisskar Ferner to the Isidor Nieder, and then up a well-marked but steep track over rocks and loose slabs to the top of the Schaufelspitze (10,932 ft.), from which we got a good view of the more northern part of the range. We came down again to the Isidor Nieder Joch, but the N. side was a steep ice-slope, requiring much step-cutting and, moreover, seemed to be raked by falling stones, so we crossed a small rock ridge to the adjoining Bildstöckl Joch and had a tedious descent down soft afternoon snow on the Schaufel Glacier to the Dresdner hut (7570 ft.), at the head of the Mutterbergerthal. This is a large and well-equipped hut, containing no fewer than 25 beds and 75 mattress bunks; it was also packed to overflowing and we could only get mattress accommodation. It commands a good view of the Schaufelspitze and the much-crevassed icefall of the Fernau Glacier.

The following day we walked comfortably down to Ranalt and drove back to Mieders. In passing along the Mutterberg Alp I was surprised to see the Parsley Fern (*Allosorus crispus*) growing in quantity on the screes—it reminded one of N. Wales. We had altogether a fine but somewhat strenuous four days' tour, with perfect weather throughout. We liked our guide Ribis; he is not only a good guide, but a cheerful and amusing companion.

The only other climb on the main range I was able to do was the Habicht (10,760 ft.); this is a fine and massive peak, rising steeply and abruptly on all sides. My son and I, without a guide, left Mieders on August 27 and walked up the Pinnisthal in $3\frac{3}{4}$ hours to the Innsbrucker hut (7768 ft.), on the Pinnisjoch. The Pinnisthal is a wild and secluded valley, and the scenery impressive; the Habicht towers up, blocking the head of the valley, and on the left rise the huge precipices and rock gullies of the Serleskamm peaks. On breasting the Joch, one has a good view of the Pflerscher Tribulaun, the finest and most imposing rock peak in the district.

The next morning we had an arduous and very steep climb of 3000 ft. up the E. face and arête of the Habicht to a small hollow filled with snow and ice, and from which the final peak rises. The route up is marked the whole way, and the climb, although steep and fatiguing, is not difficult; the worst parts are protected by wire ropes, iron rings and stanchions. We took a rope with us, but did not use it.

We thought of making a traverse by descending a short

distance along the S.W. arête and then down a steep gulley on to the small Glätteferner and working back to the hut round the south of the peak ; having no guide, however, and being uncertain as to what difficulties we might meet with, we deemed it wiser to return by the way we had come up. The snow on the ice-slope ² just below the summit was now softened by the sun and some step-cutting was necessary ; we saw one man slip and shoot down about 30 ft., cutting himself rather badly on the ice and rocks. One woman, also, frequently upset stones, and we gave her a wide berth when descending the steep slabs and chimneys on many parts of the descent. It took us $2\frac{3}{4}$ hours from the hut to the top, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours down. We walked on down the Pinnisthal to Neustift and motored back to Mieders—a long descent of some 7600 ft. and both hot and tiring.

The Habicht is a fine mountain and a good climb. It can also be ascended up the N.W. face from the hamlet of Krössbach over the Mischbach Alp and glacier ; it is a difficult ice and rock climb, but said to be one of the finest of the Stubaital.

My son and I had the intention of again taking Ribis for two or three days and exploiting another part of the range ; a bad spell of weather, however, and other circumstances prevented our doing so. I mention this because I think it would make another fine expedition.

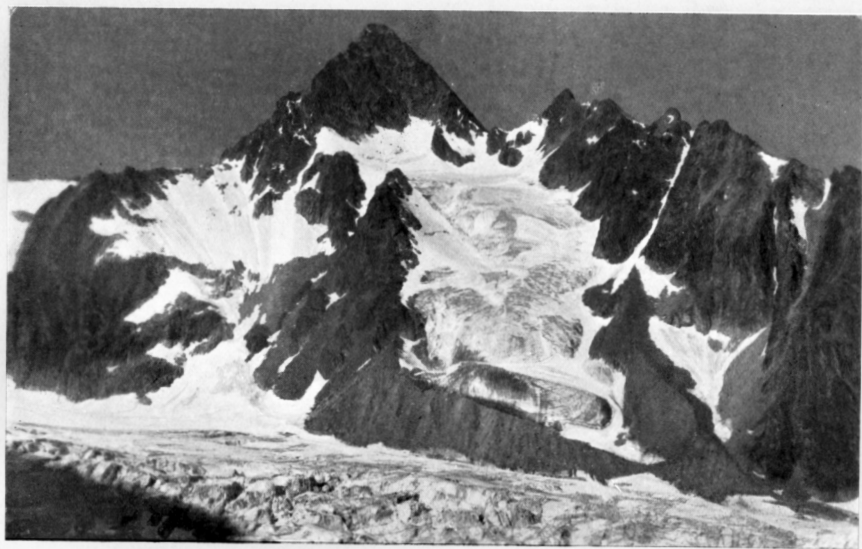
We were going to walk the first day up the Oberbergthal from Neustift to the Franz Senn hut (7128 ft.) on the Alpeiner Alp and close to the foot of the Alpeiner Glacier, one of the largest of the district. The next day we were to traverse the East and West Seespitzen, respectively 11,218 ft. and 11,110 ft., and then by the Hochmoos Scharte climb the Ruderhofspitze (11,388 ft.) ; from there cross the head of the Alpeiner Glacier, over the Wildgratscharte and up the E. arête of the Schrankogel (11,480 ft.), the second highest peak of the range, and sleep that night at the Amberger hut (7056 ft.) at the head of the Sulzthal. The third day we intended to go up the Sulzthaler Glacier and climb the east arête of the Wilde Leck or Atterspitze (11,010 ft.), which is a fine-looking rock pyramid, said to be rather difficult but to be one of the best arête climbs in the district ; we would have returned over the Daun Joch to the Dresdner hut and so back home.

² I have vivid recollections of the danger from avalanches incurred on the descent of this very fine peak in early June 1892.—E. L. S.



Photo, R. Müller.

The HABICHT.



Photo, M. Heiss.

The WILDE LECK.



Photo, M. Heiss.

APERER FREIGER, WILDER PFAFF, ZUCKERHÜTL
from MAIER SPITZE.



Photo, R. Müller.

KALKÖGEL from KEMATER ALM.

There are, of course, many other peaks affording good or interesting climbing, the principal perhaps being the Sonklar-spitze (11,400 ft.), the Stubai Wildspitze (10,962 ft.), the Windacher Daunkogel (11,031 ft.), Hohe Villerspitze³ (10,182 ft.), etc.

I did not expect to find such large expanses of névé fields and glaciers in these Alps, considering their comparatively low altitude; I fancy the snowfall during the year must be considerable. The glaciers themselves are not much crevassed and do not come down far into the valleys, but they have generally fine icefalls as the valleys themselves are deeply cut.

As to the pure rock climbs of the district, they may be divided into three groups:

(1) THE TRIBULAUN KAMM.—The rock climb, *par excellence*, of this group is the Pflerscher Tribulaun (10,175 ft.), a fine rock mass, rising abruptly and precipitously for about 1500 ft. to 2000 ft.; it is a difficult climb, requiring in one place 40 metres of rope,⁴ and is, moreover, liable to falling stones. The other peaks on this spur, Gschnitzer Tribulaun (9700 ft.), etc., are not so difficult.

(2) THE KALKKÖGEL.—This range of peaks is quite distinct from the others; they are called the Stubai Dolomites and are dolomitic both in character and appearance. They extend from the Hoher Burgstall in the south to the Marchreissen Spitze in the north, and consist of a chain of abrupt and sharply defined rock masses, interspersed with needles and towers, somewhat, in miniature, like the Drei Zinnen and Vajolet Thürme in S. Tyrol. The highest peak is the Schlicker-seespitze (9248 ft.) at the south end and they vary between that and 8350 ft.

Early in August I went up to the Starkenburger hut

³ In 1892 this peak, of which I believe the first ascent was made by Karl Gsaller in 1878, and by the S. arête by Emil Zsigmondy in 1882, was considered erroneously as the most difficult in the Stubai range. The Pflerscher Tribulaun unquestionably merits (or merited) the distinction.—E. L. S.

⁴ My recollections of an ascent made in 1892 from Inner-Pflersch *via* the Sandesjoch do not include any place necessitating such an amount of rope. Possibly a different and more difficult route is taken now so as to avoid danger from the numerous falling stones. [Mr. Wyatt informs me that a more difficult route is, in fact, taken now from the Sandesjoch, *i.e.* by the W. arête and that there *is* one place where 40 m. of rope are necessary.]—E. L. S.

(7310 ft.), at the foot of the Hoher Burgstall (8571 ft.), which I traversed; it is an easy ascent with a steep descent on the other side to the Schlickerthal, a narrow and picturesque valley which skirts the foot of the range. A fortnight later I went up from Mieders by the Schlickerthal to a col in the centre of the chain, called the Alpenclubscharte, about 8000 ft. high, to climb the Marchreissen Spitze (8605 ft.). From just below the col on the Stubai side, a narrow and somewhat breakneck track skirts under and across the spurs of the various peaks and needles to the foot of the Marchreissen Spitze; it is known as the Gsaller Weg, named after Gsaller who made the first climb of this peak in 1879. It took $1\frac{1}{4}$ hours to traverse it, and, although not really difficult, requires surefootedness and a steady head.

The Marchreissen Spitze is a fine peak, and from it there is an extensive view up and down the Inn valley, backed by the Karwendel range and the Bavarian highlands to the Zugspitze. It is worth doing. The ascent of the N. face looked a good climb of about 1500 ft., but distinctly difficult—it is said to be one of the best rock climbs in this group. Also, on September 3, I climbed the Schlickerseespitze by the Schlickerscharte, the See-jöchl and the N.W. face. The ascent is steep but not difficult, over rather rotten rocks and scree, with a little rock scrambling at the top. It took an hour from the See-jöchl.

The ascents are all more or less short, not more than 500 ft. to 1000 ft., and of various degrees of difficulty. They include the Schlicker Nadeln, Thürme, and Zinnen, and are perhaps easiest taken from the Adolph Pichler hut on the western side.

(3) THE SERLESKAMM.—This chain of peaks is of a different nature again and mostly of what is known as the writing-desk formation, sloping more or less gradually on the eastern side and falling in imposing precipices to the Stubaithal and the Pinnisthal.⁵ They present no undue difficulty. The highest point in the chain is the Kirchedachspitze (9315 ft.), and it extends from the Serles or Waldrastspitze—the peak so

⁵ In 1892 several of these peaks were still unclimbed, notably a double-headed rock peak, then known locally as the Ilmerspitze or (?) Pinniser Schroffen. We attempted the ascent early in June from Gschnitz by an extraordinary snowy gully or ravine in the N. face, but having attained a great height, failed to reach the summit, largely owing to inexperience of steep snow and professional want of enterprise.—E. L. S.

conspicuous from Innsbruck—(8919 ft.) in the north to the Pinnisjoch.

The only climbs I made in this group were the traverse of the Peilspitze (7813 ft.), a sharp spur off the main chain, and the Kesselspitze (8962 ft.), the second highest point.

These Alps generally form an excellent and safe playground for guideless climbing—the ordinary routes up the peaks, except in the case of the Pflerscher Tribulaun, present no undue difficulties to well-equipped and experienced climbers.

It is a distinct advantage to become a member of the German and Austrian Alpine Club (D. & Ö.A.V.); not only is there a considerable reduction in fares on some of the mountain railways, but the cost of accommodation in the huts is half the charge to non-members. In the huts on the Italian side, there is an exchange of amenities between the C.A.I. and members of the Swiss or French clubs, but not in the others. The cost of provisions is the same for everyone. The general charge for members is Sch. 3 per night for a bed in Austria, and L. 7 in Italy; half-price for mattresses, and double these charges for non-members.

The huts are open from the beginning or middle of June (according to season) till the end of September, and are 'bewirtschaftet' and provisioned. When they are closed, the keys can be obtained at one of the local centres, and a store of wood is provided which has to be paid for, as in the Swiss huts.

In the height of the season, from about middle July to end of August, the more favoured huts are unpleasantly overcrowded, and seem to be much used by whole German families, including wives and even young children, who spend a pleasant and cheap holiday in going from hut to hut without any real climbing at all. The end of June or early July and September would be the pleasantest time to avoid crowds, both in the huts and on the mountains.

I read a short time back in a German paper of an amusing situation which arose in the case of the Landshuter hut, a hut about 9000 ft. high above the Brenner Pass at the foot of the Kraxentrager, and through the middle of which the Austro-Italian frontier now passes. The Italians got the better portion of the hut, but the water supply is on the Austrian side; in exchange for a supply of water the Austrians bargained that climbers might pass across Italian territory to two passes leading to the Zillerthal Alps. This was granted, but an Italian gendarme or frontier guard has to conduct each

party, a payment being of course demanded and which serves to augment the somewhat meagre salary earned by these officials! The same paper stated that about 5000 Italian gendarmes and customs officials line the frontier, while the Austrians altogether have only three custom-house officers and two gendarmes stationed on the Brenner Pass; notwithstanding this far more smuggling takes place from Austria into Italy than *vice versa*.

It has been said that since the Italians took over the Alpine huts in S. Tyrol, they are not looked after nearly as well as heretofore.⁶ I cannot speak from much experience, but last year I was at the Schlernhaus on the Schlern and the Vajolet hut in the Rosengarten group, where I had stayed before the war; I can only say that I found them well run, clean and comfortable, and the same applies to the Rifugio Cima Libera, where we spent a night this summer.

I was much struck by the very elaborate system of marked and made paths and tracks, not only between the huts but up the principal peaks—in many cases even staircases made with large blocks of stone—and the more exposed places protected by iron ropes, rings and stanchions. It must be an item of considerable expense to the D. & Ö.E.A.V., but their membership is large, and it is an example of the thoroughness and method for which the Germans are noted.

As regards the flora of this district, although I do not think there is so much variety of species in N. Tyrol as in the Dolomites, those that are found here grow profusely. When I arrived in the middle of June the meadows were sheets of purple and blue with the dusky geranium (*Geranium Phœum*) and *Campanula Patula*; at the end of June or early July, besides the usual gentians, anemones, etc., the lower slopes are carpeted with *Dryas octopetala*, *Daphne striata*, *Geum montanum*, *Primula auricula*, *Ranunculus alpestris*, *Loiseleuria procumbens*, *Linaria petraea*, etc. At the Hildesheimer hut on July 17 I came across a garden of *Primula glutinosa*, interspersed with *Gentiana brachyphylla* and *Ranunculus glacialis*. On the high peaks I was fortunate to come across the rare and local *Gentiana nana*, *Valeriana supina*, *Campanula Morettiana*, *Primula minima*, *Androsace Wulfenia*, and *Saxifraga Seguieri*.

⁶ In the Brenta and Presanella-Adamello groups *secondary* paths are certainly neglected; the huts are, however, excellent in the first-mentioned group, although mostly in (war) ruins in the latter, 1927.—*Editor*.

An excellent and complete pocket guide for these Alps is Vol. IV. of a series called 'Wagner's Alpine *Spezialführer*,' and entitled 'Die Stubaier Alpen' by Dr. Siegfried Hohenleitner, published by the Wagner'sche Universitäts Buchhandlung, Museumstrasse 4, Innsbruck; it is furnished with good contoured maps to a scale of 1/50,000. The D. & Æ.A.V. also publish good maps to the same scale, contoured at 50 metre intervals.

In conclusion, I hope these notes may prove of some use to any climbers wishing to become acquainted with an interesting and beautiful district, inhabited by a simple and delightful race, and where one is received more as a visitor and guest than as an ordinary tourist. I hope to go there again another year.

THE SOUTHERN ALPS REVISITED.

By H. E. L. PORTER.

MY fourth season in the Southern Alps was not favoured by the good fortune which had befriended me on former occasions. My programme was limited to six major expeditions and such other tempting trifles as might present themselves in the intervals almost certain to occur between bouts of high endeavour. This time I had no Marcel Kurz always with me and ready to start for any climb at any moment, but had to rely on the company of various amateurs and guides, and fit them in according to the holidays of the former and the previous engagements of the latter, an arrangement bound to lead even in a good season to a waste of opportunity, which, if one's luck is out, may prove little less than heartbreaking. As it happened, the season 1928-29 was incredibly bad. In all I spent fifty days at the Hermitage in three separate visits. During the first there was one fine day, on which I achieved one of my objectives, the Minarets. During the second, a period of twenty-two days, the allotment was one fine day per week, each of which we spent in toiling up the Hooker valley to the bivouac on the Pudding Rock, only to be driven down on each occasion at dawn the following day, before the obviously impending nor'-wester could develop sufficient force to render descent hazardous or even keep the four of us prisoners in my frail tent, holding two at ease, three at a pinch, and four at a stretch. The party then consisted of Messrs. Chambers