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THE JÄGERHORN AND THE LYSKAMM FROM GRESSONAY.

By C. E. MATHEWS. Read before the Alpine Club, March 31, 1868.

IN the 'Cornhill Magazine' for the month of November, 1867, there is a paper of very considerable interest and merit, called 'The Regrets of a Mountaineer.'

It is evidently written by a melancholy mountaineering Jaques—by a man who, in the prime of life and with physical powers as yet untouched by time, is debarred by some great cause from following his favourite pursuit. He gazes up longingly at the great summits, but they are divided from him by an impassable gulf; and he draws a pathetic moral from the Paradise of the South Sea Islanders, where, he tells us, the good are for ever sitting at banquet with insatiable appetites in a house with open wickerwork sides, whilst the damned are doomed to look in at the chinks, crawling round the outside, suffering under pangs of hunger equally insatiable. The excited reader devours the pages of the story, anxious to discover what crime the miserable man has committed, what unhappy fate has interposed to cut him off from the sports and pleasures of his youth.

He has, however, committed no crime which demands expiation, has perpetrated no enormity to avenge which a just Nemesis has overtaken him. He has, by an act of voluntary martyrdom, and for reasons which, 'even in his wildest moods, he admits to be more than amply sufficient,' cut himself off from his favourite pastime. *He has been married!*

The writer's views may be sound. Should it be so, my

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protest against them will be of little avail. But I cannot but hope that the time will come when the writer in the 'Cornhill Magazine' will admit that he has misconceived the necessities of matrimony, and will rejoin that band of active mountaineers, whose companionship he still seems to desire so earnestly, and from whose ranks he has given so insufficient a reason for seceding.

Are all the other great sports in which Englishmen indulge to be continued even to a green old age, whilst the noblest of them all—noblest because combining the excitement and spirit of the chase with pleasures purely of an intellectual kind—is to be given up because a man has entered into the holy estate of matrimony?

I protest against this preposterous assumption, and trust that no member of the Club will be led away by the sophistries of the writer in the 'Cornhill Magazine.' The true mountaineer will realise a still greater pleasure in the Alps, when some of their minor glories can be shared by those who have the greatest interest in his welfare. The mountain spirit knows nothing of celibacy. He reveals himself to his true worshippers, regardless of condition, sex, or age. That the inevitable struggle for existence, or the increasing cares and anxieties of life, or the passionate haste for money-getting—that such causes as these should prevent a man, married or unmarried, from continuing the pursuit which I have called the noblest, and which certainly is the least dangerous of English sports—these are the reflections which ought to put the modern Jaques into a melancholy vein, and should form the only true basis for the regrets of a mountaineer.

On Sunday, the 13th of July, 1867, my friend, Mr. F. Morshead, and myself—both of us long debarred from mountaineering, if the views of the writer in the 'Cornhill Magazine' are sound—found ourselves at Zermatt. We had been spending some days in the lovely, but somewhat inhospitable district of the Graian Alps, with an inefficient guide, named Alexander Maurer, and had arrived in the valley of St. Nicholas by the Matterjoch, in the hope of replacing Maurer by a more able guide. We had been disappointed in obtaining the services of Jakob Anderegg, who appeared to have laboured under the impression that the names Moore and Morshead were identical, and had consequently bound himself by a series of promises which he was utterly unable to perform.

We were fortunate in meeting with Messrs. Thursfield, Esson, and Sidgwick, attended by Christian Almer and Melchior Anderegg. Our friends did not meditate very serious exer-

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tion, and we suggested to them that it was highly unnecessary for them to retain the services of two such leaders as Christian and Melchior. They were good enough to fall in with our views, and placed Almer at our disposal.

As our friends were going up Monte Rosa the following day, we all left for the Riffel together, and at 2.25 on the morning of the 15th, we left the inn with Almer and Maurer, under a splendid starlight sky, and in less than four hours we were on the top of the Cima de Jazzi.

As we were plodding towards the summit, I noticed a high conical rock jutting out of the ridge between the Cima and the Nord-end, which I had never noticed before, and which Almer told me was the Jägerhorn. It was a very interesting summit, lying considerably to the right of the old Weissthor; in fact, seeming almost to form part of the Nord-end of Monte Rosa. We thought no more about it, and descending from the Cima to the Weissthor, we arrived at Macugnaga to breakfast, after a delightful excursion of only 8½ hours. The object we had in view was the examination of the eastern face of Monte Rosa, and we desired, if possible, to accomplish the most charming novelty yet left in the Alps, by making a pass from Macugnaga to the Riffel over the summit of the Hochste-spitze of Monte Rosa. Lochmatter (the landlord of the inn) had expressed an opinion that the excursion was practicable, and that the only danger was from avalanches.

We hoped to have made a careful inspection as we crossed the Weissthor, but the basin of the Macugnaga Glacier was so full of clouds that we were disappointed; and so on the morning of the 16th we went up the Pizzo Bianco with our guides, Lochmatter, and a good telescope, and the weather being very fine, we carefully examined the face of the mountain from the Belvidere to the Hochste-spitze. We examined it for upwards of two hours. It was choked up with seracs, and there was an immense cornice adjoining the summit and hanging over the Italian side. Lochmatter's fears were well founded, for during the two hours we were on the Pizzo Bianco six or seven great avalanches fell from the cornice, and raked the only route by which, as far as we could see, the summit could be attained. The wonderful slopes of ice and rock on this side of Monte Rosa, unequalled, as far as I know, for majestic beauty in any part of the Alps, are certainly not inclined at so steep an angle as they appear to be, and I have great hopes that the ascent will yet be made from Macugnaga. But it must, I think, be as late in the year as the end of August or the beginning of September. It was with somewhat heavy hearts that Morshead and myself agreed

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that there was no chance for us, and while, like Dean Close's Bible and Prayer Book, we were mutually counteracting and sustaining one another, Lochmatter pointed out to us a rocky pinnacle north of the Nord-end, to which he begged our particular attention. It was the Jägerhorn. From this side the Jägerhorn bears the same relationship to the Nord-end as the Silberhorn to the Jungfrau, except that it appears still more than the Silberhorn does to form part of the main range.

Lochmatter told us that he thought a pass could be made between the Jägerhorn and the Nord-end; that he had climbed nearly to the summit of the former peak in search of chamois; and that if the actual col could be reached from the Italian side, the route to the Riffel would be found perfectly easy, for a little arm of the Gorner Glacier stretched direct to the summit of the col on the western or Swiss side. We instantly determined to try the passage the next day, and Almer made careful notes of the probable route, about which he seemed quite as sanguine as Lochmatter.

A little before 2 on the morning of the 17th, the weather being everything that could be desired, we walked through the fields from Macugnaga up to the top of the Belvidere, and reached some stone châlets by the waterfall at the foot of the old Weissthor, in 2½ hours. Our route then lay over some troublesome débris on the right of the Fillar Glacier, till we came to a small rocky col overlooking it, and here we made a short halt at 5.20. On the left of the Fillar Glacier is a long and steep ridge of rocks which culminates in the Jägerhorn; so we crossed the glacier in an oblique direction, and gained this rocky ridge, by which the shortest way to the summit appeared to lie. Still keeping to the rocks, and rapidly mounting, we reached the seracs at the head of the Fillar Glacier at 7.20; and after some really difficult rock-work halted for a second breakfast at 9.35. We left again at 10, and climbed steadily, always on the ridge, the work being in some places quite severe enough to engross all our care and attention. At half-past 12 Almer, who had led us with his well-known sagacity, landed us safely upon the summit of the Jägerhorn. The ascent took nearly 11 hours, including 1 hour and 10 minutes of halts. There were too many clouds about the higher summits to enable us to get as accurate an idea of height as we desired, but the top of the Jägerhorn appeared to me to be almost the same height as the Alphubel, or 13,800 ft. The Cima de Jazzi was far below us. There is a col about 150 ft. below the horn, and readily accessible from it; to this we descended, and, walking easily, reached the Riffel at half-past 4.

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This expedition would be found difficult if made from the Swiss side. The descent of the rocks would be very troublesome, and in some places even dangerous; but if taken from Macugnaga on a fine day, the expedition presents no special features of difficulty, and is one of unusual interest and variety. The ascent from Macugnaga to the summit of the col would take from 10 to 11 hours, under favourable circumstances; and those who may desire to shorten the excursion may do so by sleeping at the châlets at the foot of the Fillar Glacier.

The next day, leaving the Riffel at 4, we crossed the Schwartz Thor easily to St. Giacomo D'Ayas in 8 hours; and the same evening we took coverlets and other luxuries, and crossed the Betta Furka, intending to sleep somewhere on the rocks at the foot of the Lys Glacier, preparatory to trying an ascent on which we had set our hearts, the Lyskamm, from the side of Gressonay. It is a somewhat melancholy fact that the last and greatest of Alpine peaks has at last been brought into subjection. The exertions of the Alpine Club in Switzerland during the last few years have proved too much for the genius loci. The charm of absolute novelty is gone. Shall we disband our little army of climbers in the absence of other peaks to conquer? Has the time yet arrived for us to kindle again the old enthusiasm upon new altars? Surely those of us who, like the men of Athens, are always in search of some new thing, may yet console ourselves with the reflection that there is one phase of novelty which will find occupation for us for many a year to come—I mean the siege of old mountains from new sides.

Just as we reached the ridge of the Betta Furka, the glorious appearance of the head of the Val de Lys, with the shining walls of the Lyskamm and Monte Rosa towering up into the sky and clothed with the glow of sunset, raised our spirits to the highest pitch, and we felt almost certain of the success of our expedition. We were looking about for a convenient gîte, when Almer thought that by descending a little towards the glacier we might find a châlet, and consequently more comfortable quarters for the night. He was not disappointed: about 15 minutes below the Betta Furka, descending a gorge to the left, we found a first-rate châlet, where we were soon holding high festival.

We had brought a porter with us from St. Giacomo d'Ayas, so that our party consisted of five persons. At the châlet were one berger, and his son and daughter. Our hosts could speak no language but a most remarkable patois, which none of us could understand. Even Maurer, whose only qualification as

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a guide consists in his being able to speak very badly most European languages, could make nothing of them; Almer could talk nothing but German; and the porter was deaf and dumb. Notwithstanding these minor difficulties, we agreed upon the necessity of starting very early in the morning, and so, on the promise that we should be roused at 1 A.M., we went to our excellent hay-bed, and notwithstanding the whistling of a marmot, which appeared to live somewhere inside the châlet, we were soon fast asleep. We were roused at half-past 2, an hour and a half later than we had intended, and hurriedly breakfasting, stepped out of the châlet at a quarter before 3, two hours later than we ought to have started. I suppose it is an obvious truism, but I insist upon it here, because it is so often disregarded—that there is nothing, after a good guide, which tends so much to ensure a successful expedition as an early start. How many instances are there in the recollection of all of us, where expeditions have failed to be marked with a white stone, because this one of the first necessities of mountaineering has not been complied with! What cloudy views instead of clear skies; what involuntary bivouacs supperless under the stars; what needless discomfitures; what avoidable misfortunes! Rely upon it, that every half hour's delay after 1 o'clock A.M. adds another and an important possibility to the chances of the failure of any Alpine expedition.

We were in good training, and tried to make up for lost time. We mounted the rocky ridge not far from the Betta Furka, and at first keeping to the left we then turned a little to the right, and after two hours of very easy rock-climbing, we found ourselves on a ridge of rock overlooking the glacier of Felik.

It will be seen on reference to Mr. Reilly's map, that the Felik Glacier is to a great extent parallel with the Lys Glacier; we had not as yet touched the latter, but had climbed by the ridge of rocks which forms the southern boundary of the Felik Glacier, and part of the western boundary of that of the Lys. Here we descended a good many feet and crossed the basin of the Felik Glacier, and gaining the rocks on its eastern side, we halted to breakfast at 5.45, left at 6.10, and soon reached the open basin at the head of the glacier of the Lys. Rapidly crossing the basin and keeping to the right, we halted again at half-past 8, close to the seracs at the foot of the peak of the Lyskamm. Here we met with a serious disappointment. The morning had been magnificent, but very cold; on reaching the head of the glacier we found clouds drifting along the range between the Felik-joch and the Lyskamm, and just as

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we halted, a heavy mantle was thrown over the peak itself, on which we had been so long gazing. We waited nearly half an hour, but the weather became worse, and Almer said that any attempt to reach the summit that day would be out of the question. What was to be done? We determined to climb up on to the well-known western arête, and then descend to Zermatt by the Felik-joch. We reached this arête, with a good deal of difficulty, were convinced by the fierce wind that was blowing on the ridge that the ascent was out of the question, and descending to the col, threaded our way through the seracs till we reached the Gorner Glacier, and arrived at Zermatt at half-past 4.

Here we met with our old friends Mr. Stephen and Mr. Hinchliff, giants of former days, whose armour has been laid aside, and who, in the luxurious capital of the Pennine Alps, and in the midst of a charming society, were vainly indulging in 'the regrets of a mountaineer.'

We were a little tired with our five days' excursion, and spent Saturday and Sunday in idleness at Zermatt. Our friends endeavoured to comfort us concerning our failure,

'Looking ancient kindness on our pain.'

But we had no intention of giving up the Lyskamm without another struggle, and on Sunday evening, the 21st of July, we walked quietly up to the Riffel again, having determined upon another plan of attack. It had seemed to us that by leaving the Riffel very early in the morning we could cross the chain on to the Lys Glacier, ascend the mountain from the south side, descend to the Lys-joch, and get back to Zermatt in a single day.

At a few minutes after midnight on the morning of the 22nd of July we left the Riffel Inn, the sky utterly cloudless, and the moon nearly full. We were determined that in this excursion, at any rate, we would run no risk of failure from want of an early start. We stayed a minute or two on the ridge overlooking the glacier before descending, to admire a scene which beggars all description. There seemed not a particle of vapour in the atmosphere; the ground was white and hard with frost; the majestic glacier rolled solemnly below us, and the stupendous mountain summits from Monte Rosa to the Matterhorn lay like sleeping giants wrapped in glistening folds. We had a long day before us; not knowing how much we had to do, and fearful of losing time, we almost ran across the glacier to the base of the Felik-joch, where we arrived at 2.45. At 5.10, after a magnificent walk through the seracs, we gained the

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summit of the col, and looked down on to the Lys Glacier. Our object was to gain in the shortest possible time the spot where we were discomfited on the former expedition. A steep snow wall was between us and the basin of the Lys Glacier. Down this wall Christian Almer cut 307 steps, by which we descended carefully on to the open snow-fields below us. At half-past 7 we halted on our foot-tracks of the previous Friday. A few rather difficult seracs had to be crossed, and then we ascended for an hour or more up a steep snow-slope that seemed to lead to the real summit of the mountain; we then went to the right, and took to the rocks which form part of the southern or Gressonay arête of the Lyskamm. At no part of the ascent had we any real difficulty; the rocks were rather dangerous from being ice-coated, but otherwise were perfectly easy, and at 10.5 we reaped the natural and just reward of our labours. The weather was superb, and the sight of the vast and partially cloud-covered plain of Italy, out of which at an enormous distance the beautiful cone of the Viso towered up in the sunlight, will not be easily effaced from our memory. There was not a breath of air stirring. A friend of ours had intended to ascend Monte Rosa that morning with Peter Perren. We looked across to see if they could be seen, and soon found them toiling up the last snow-slope, where they were soon lost to view amongst the rocks. We stood upright on the summit and shouted wildly to our compatriots on the Hochste-spitze. The distance, as the crow flies, from summit to summit is about two miles. They heard us distinctly, and shouted in return, and we could distinctly recognise Peter Perren's shrill cry, which came faintly borne over the great gulf that separated us from them. We remained on the summit for one hour in a state of absolute enjoyment, and then set out for the Lys-joch. The arête on this side was not in good order, and Maurer, who was sent to the front, was a miserable step-cutter; so it was 2 o'clock before we got on to the upper ridge of the Gorner Glacier, between the Lyskamm and the Ludwigs-Hohe.

From that time (except in one little bit of glacier work, which gave Almer an opportunity of exhibiting to perfection his almost unrivalled powers,) it was all plain sailing. We reached the Riffel without the slightest fatigue soon after 6, and were at dinner at Zermatt between 7 and 8, after a superb excursion, of between 19 and 20 hours.

Now, of course, I cannot recommend climbers to make the ascent of the Lyskamm from the south side, starting from the Riffel. Melchior Anderegg, to whom I had suggested the ex-

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cursion I have described, told me it was a *miserable dumm-heit*, and not to be thought of. Moreover, the many satisfactory circumstances under which our ascent was made would rarely be found in combination. But this is certain, the Lyskamm can be ascended from Gressonay, and Gressonay is the most natural and easy place from which the ascent can be made.

I feel certain that even a second-rate mountaineer, starting from the Cour de Lys, would reach the summit easily in 8 hours; and our party was unanimous in the opinion that the upper basin of the Lys Glacier can be most readily attained by its western lateral moraine.

The ascent from Gressonay combines all the elements of variety, interest, and natural beauty; and I cannot doubt that it will in future form the leading object of ambition to the many tourists who now visit one of the most picturesque and lovely of Italian valleys.

Trips in the Himālayas. By J. R. Oliver, Captain Royal Artillery. (*With Plate.*)

On reading the interesting papers of Messrs. Cheetham and Clement Smith which lately appeared in the Alpine Journal, it occurred to me to supplement them by some account of my own experiences in the Himālayas, dwelling more particularly on points regarding which little information has been hitherto afforded in these pages, such as the natural history and physical geography of the country. As it has fallen to my lot to walk, in all, at different times, more than a thousand miles through these mountains, I will commence by giving a sketch of my travels, proceeding more to details afterwards.

Ever since a certain morning in the Mutiny campaigns, when, after a weary night's march, the sunrise disclosed, for the first time, a long line of icy pinnacles, rising above the horizon of the dead-level plain of the north of India, I had felt an insatiable longing for a closer acquaintance with those mysterious-looking peaks. The opportunity came at last. Eighteen months of almost incessant marching and countermarching, varied only by an occasional engagement, ended in sending me on sick leave to 'the Hills.' I had a tedious journey up country in the height of the hot weather, and a vexatious delay at Umbāla, owing to an informality in the way I had obtained leave. I succeeded, however, in getting

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