discomfort, we would drop off to sleep for a few minutes; but whenever a dead silence showed this to be the case, Almer would jump up and begin jodelling in the most aggravating manner, or else he would circulate the hateful little cask, addressing us in the liveliest manner, and thus to our disgust effectually rousing us up from our slumbers, which the cold rendered very dangerous.

Before daylight the wind ceased and snow began to fall. We were not able to leave the hospitable hole till nearly 5 A.M., after a stay of 6 hrs. We then followed our previous day's route down the rocks, amid the falling snow, and regained the tent at 6.30 A.M. Siegen came to meet us with a bottle of champagne, provided by our philanthropic host, for which we heartily blessed him. The thoughtful man had sent up two porters to the tent, to find out what had become of us; and seeing us afar, they lit a great fire, the very sight of which was cheering on that wintry-looking morning. Tschingel, who had threatened to devour poor Siegen when he first tried to enter the tent on his return the day before, and was only pacified by the most abject advances from him, gave us an uproarious welcome. The kettle soon boiled, and we had some hot tea and coffee, after which we took a good rest in the tent, and descended to Ried in rain later on in the day. Our host received us with the choicest hospitality in his power—a dish of brains for dinner.

Thus ended an adventure which was not far from having a serious end, since, in all probability, had we spent the night on the ice, this paper would never have been written.

The Col Vicentino, Bosco del Consiglio, and Monte Cavallo. By F. F. Tuckett.

MOST mountaineers of any considerable experience will, I think, at least in their hearts, join in the confession of one whose triumphs in the Alps are as numerous, as his pluck and skill and hearty enjoyment of a good scramble are undoubted, and his 'regrets' short-lived—that there comes sooner or later a period in their existence, even whilst spirits are still high and muscles vigorous as ever, when they welcome an occasional variation in the bill of fare; not because the appetite is cloyed or needs coaxing, but because their palate has gradually become educated to appreciate a well-arranged *ménu*, and to prefer it to the mere process of devouring space and height, which, during an earlier stage of their passion, assumed in

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their eyes, when out for a holiday, the character of the whole duty of man. Let me, at any rate, admit that, after a few weeks 'roughing it' in châlets, I no longer—if ever I did—turn up my nose at good quarters, and even—*horresco referens*—have been known to endure philosophically the life of a temporary idler at Bellagio or Venice, when the Pennines or the Dolomites have turned sulky, and, like their betters under similar circumstances, are just as well left to themselves till they return to 'the even tenor of their way.'

It does not, however, follow that a man should be idle even at Capua; and it has long been my practice and delight to attempt to explore Lilliput when kicked out of Brobdignag, and to devote such occasions of temporary exile from the world of ice and snow to cultivating the acquaintance of minor sub-alpine summits, upon which some of the happiest moments of my life have been passed.

How few of us have, after all, really spent in a *leisurely* manner any considerable number of hours above 10,000 ft.; not, indeed, for lack of the will, but because want of time, threatened change of weather, cold, wind, failure to light the meditated pipe, sudden theories as to being able to compress three days' work into two if one only gets back by a certain hour, and could have a pleasant drive down a valley in the cool of the evening—a real luxury after a frizzling day on snow—an indisposition on somebody's part to feed at that particular time, the discovery that the food, and, still worse, the wine, have been left at the foot of the final peak, exposed to the tender attentions of an omnivorous porter;—these, and fifty other reasons, generally limit the occupation of the perhaps hardly-won goal to an hour or less. Should everything be favourable to a longer stay, how long is it before the guides are asleep? how much longer ere their employers follow their example, or become morose, monosyllabic, or misanthropical, as they

'Look down on the hate of those below!'

Now, on those minor peaks that I have alluded to you may spend half-a-day if you please—there is no compulsion, remember—and drink your fill of the glories of the view, and watch the varying play of light and shade as the sun works round, and the crystal clearness of early morning is followed by flocking clouds, which so often double the charm of mountain scenery; and, finally, carry away no fleeting image of the scene, but a carefully composed picture, around which those numerous little incidents cling which suggest the 'I say, old

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fellow, do you remember how?' &c. in the long winter evenings, calling up a host of pleasant memories and details which—empty nothings to the uninitiated—are, to a quondam comrade, stamped with a Mint-mark that will always give them currency. Amidst the more sensational reminiscences of the higher Alps such days stand out with peculiar distinctness and charm, as the eye dwells restfully on the soft sheen of pearls amidst the flash and glitter of more brilliant jewels; and as I look back to many a pleasant leisurely lounge on such points as the Buet, Dent de Midi de Bex, Cramont, Mettelhorn, Piz Languard, Monte Confinale, Pilatus, Becca di Nona, Monte Monterone, Monte Generoso, Monte Salvatore, Monte Genaro, Monte Cavo, Vesuvius, Monte Epomeo, the Apennine behind Vallombrosa, the Superga, and some still smaller fry, I often congratulate myself that whenever the time shall arrive for me to hang up axe and rope there will still remain a practically boundless field—a sort of old hunter's paddock—in which my aged limbs may continue for a while to toddle uphill.

Let me not be misunderstood, however. One must first have wrestled with the giants thoroughly to enjoy the luxury of bowling over the dwarfs like ninepins; and let none who have no nearer acquaintance with the glories and the charms of the *haut-monde*, the 'over ten thousand,' of the High Alps, than that Frenchman who confessed that though he had 'fait l'ascension du Mont Blanc,' he had mounted 'pas tout-à-fait sur la cime, mais jusqu'au Montanvert'—let none such, I say, suppose that they are capable of appreciating to the full the noble prospect which a lower panoramic summit affords to the initiated. Half the charm consists in the recognition—as the eye glances along or across a hundred leagues of snowy range or billowy sea of peaks—of details which intimate near association has rendered almost as familiar and dear as the features of some old and beloved friend. There, in that defile yonder, you were stopped by an avalanche of snow in the dead of night, and had to turn out from the diligence and run the gauntlet of the falling stones; that peak just behind is where your Almer, or Lauener, or Anderegg, immortalised himself in the eyes of all right-thinking folk by cutting 1,579 steps in four hours fifty-seven minutes; to the left, again, just below that patch of snow, is the exquisite Alp where we had such a jolly picnic; and so on—every fresh recognition bringing up some green spot in the past, till the whole scene is instinct with happy memories. Therefore, sneer not at my confession, nor contemptuously remark that there is a chance even of a

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mountaineer coming to his senses at last, and being compelled to admit that all his past achievements have been merely a straining after that which might have been purchased of better quality, and at a more reasonable figure, still nearer to earth.

Some years ago—when enjoying, from the campanile of St. Mark's, an exceptionally grand and clear morning view of the

'Alpine height
Of blue Friuli's mountains—'

that noble barrier which fills the northern horizon, sweeping round from Trieste on the E., to where the lovely outline of the Euganean hills glows purple and roseate with the tints of sunrise—a longing seized me to reverse the point of view and gaze upon Venice, and the sea, and the town-studded plain, from some favourably situated peak of the Dolomites or their outliers. Many a time did I stand upon one or other of these summits, but only to find this particular desire baulked by cloud or the intervening haze which so constantly conceals all details of the lower country to the S. of the Alps. In planning, however, a campaign in the Dolomites with Mr. E. R. Whitwell, for the summer of 1870, I proposed to include, if possible, a visit to the Bosco del Consiglio, above Serravalle, as to which my friend Mr. Gilbert's beautiful and, at that time, recently published volume, 'Cadore, or Titian's Country,' had excited in me a lively interest and curiosity, and to combine with it, on our way to Barcis, Cimolais, and Pieve di Cadore, an ascent of Monte Cavallo, whence, if the weather were but favourable, I promised myself that my hopes of an extensive panoramic view over land, sea, mountain, plain, and city would be realised. It is, however, always well to have a second string to one's bow; and as my eye carefully scanned sheet F 3 of the great map of Lombardo-Venetia, I perceived a point named 'Col Vicentino' ('Col' being derived from 'collis,' and having no connection with 'col,' a pass), the highest summit of the long outlying ridge forming the southern boundary of the noble Val di Mel, where stand pleasant Feltre and fair Belluno, and over which our route might probably most conveniently lie, as it is nearly in a line between Belluno and Serravalle, through both which places we proposed to pass. Its height (5,859 ft. Ball, 5,788 ft. Trinker) far overtopping anything to the south, and its position—at a sufficient distance from the chief peaks of the Dolomites to give to the northern view quite a panoramic character—were alike full of promise, whilst the intervening deep, broad trench of the Val di Mel not only ensured a beautiful middle-distance, but could

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not fail, by contrast, to render more impressive the wild, fantastic ranges beyond it. In short, everything indicated that it possessed all the special requisites for which I had so long been in search.

We had entered the mountains almost immediately after quitting Verona, on May 19, and had devoted the second half of that month and the first week of June to the Baths of Recoaro, the Sette Communi, Bassano, Feltre, Primiero, and the neighbourhood of the Vals Fassa and Livinallongo; but, owing to the variable weather, our bag—with the exception of Whitwell's great achievement, the ascent of the redoubtable Cimon della Pala—had as yet been confined to rather a mild order of game, such as the Cima di Posta, Monte Pavione (Colle di Luna), Monte Fradusta, Monte Boche, the Sasso dei Mugoni, and the Cima di Mezzodi above the Lago d'Alleghe.

It was nearly midnight on June 9, after a hard day's grind through soft snow beneath the mighty western cliffs of the Civita, and a dark and rather chilly drive from Agordo, that we reached the comfortable Albergo del Cappello at Belluno (1,256 ft.), fully prepared to appreciate the luxury of spacious apartments, clean beds, good cookery, and excellent baths—not to mention a charming outlook from one of the old towers of the city-wall—all of which the house and its garden afford. To get up late and to spend a pleasant lounging morning partly in visiting my excellent friend, Signor Sperti, formerly of Pieve di Cadore, but now holding a judgeship at Belluno—whose acquaintance I owe to the thoughtful kindness, so often experienced, of Messrs. Gilbert and Churchill—and partly in seeing something of the town; to enjoy to the full that greatest of luxuries after a few weeks of a rough mountain life, a prolonged overhauling of one's unkempt locks by a skilful Italian barber; and, finally, to lay hands on and devour the fresh fruit for which we had been thirsting for some days past—such was our programme for the morrow. We hoped to get such information about the Col Vicentino as would supplement the general indications of the map, and supposed that by starting very early on the 10th we should reach the summit in comfortable time to ensure a clear view, if the weather should prove fine. Signor Sperti, however, strongly advised us to take advantage of a certain upland farm-house high up on the flank of the mountain, to which his introduction would procure us admittance.

Accordingly, at four in the afternoon, bidding adieu to our kind and polite friend, Whitwell and I, with Christian Lauener and Santo Siorpaes, of Cortina d'Ampezzo, started in a carriage-

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and-pair; and, rattling across the bridge which spans the Piave, commenced the ascent of the gently undulating ground beyond. Winding up by country lanes embosomed in greenery, through which, as we looked back, we obtained from time to time charming views of the picturesque city, perched on the promontory occupying the angle between the ravines of the Ardo and Piave, and crowned with its noble diadem of Dolomite peaks, and passing through the village of Faverga, we reached in less than an hour-and-a-half the still higher hamlet of Cervoi. It was interesting to note in both of them, as well as amongst the scattered houses passed on the road, numerous specimens of those old thatched, moss-grown buildings which, as Mr. Gilbert has remarked, Titian was so fond of introducing into his pictures, and which are so rarely met with elsewhere in Italy, for this Val di Mel was one of the great painter's favourite sketching-grounds. 'The valley is soft with rural beauty, a beauty half Italian and half English. White buildings, country-houses of the pleasantest sort, partly villa and partly farmstead, sparkle on every side, surrounded by trim-cut alleys of beech and hornbeam. Bowery lanes wander amongst careless orchards (where the friendly folks insist upon filling your hands and pockets with apricots or walnuts), and lose themselves in a network of green fields, or enter upon bits of open common; and there are considerable tracts of woodland. On the S. the valley is shut in by a long range of downlike hills, open and tempting to the foot; but upon these the eye will seldom rest, by reason of the excelling grandeur of the N. side, where the broad valley is fenced in by romantic forms, chiefly Dolomite, towering peak behind peak, crag on crag, in grand array, and fading into distance both E. and W. . . . . Now, though Titian might owe much of this feeling (for nature) to his native Cadore, and the lower Ceneda country is not without the charm, yet to this Belluno scenery he was, I think, most indebted for his genuine farmstead life. Cadore is too Alpine; Ceneda too near the level, sultry, and perhaps unsafe plains. The Val di Mel, on the contrary, midway, lapped among the hills, sheltered from war, sweetly open to the sun and breeze, verdant, broken, bright with orchards and with glossy bluffs, was the very scene for all that loving intercourse with nature which makes the bliss of country life.'*

At Cervoi we quitted our carriage and set out on foot for Valdart, an easy stroll of 1¼ hour, by a path mounting gently

* Gilbert's 'Cadore.'

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upwards, or zigzagging round a succession of narrow but deep ravines, affording some striking examples of the erosive action of water. A heavy storm of rain caught us when about half the distance had been accomplished; but though the prospects of the weather were not altogether encouraging, it was really a most fortunate circumstance for us, as the air was thus thoroughly cleared, and a much finer view by this means ensured for the following morning than we should otherwise have obtained.

The good man and his wife who occupied the finely situated farm-house of Valdart, were somewhat taken aback at the sudden appearance in the dusk of the evening of four strangers, armed with ice-axes; but on learning our object, and whence we came, they received us hospitably, and prepared for Whitwell and me a comfortable bedroom, whilst apologising to our guides for being compelled to lodge them in a loft, where, however, they had little need of pity, as there was a good supply of hay. After the rain, the air was fresh and sharp, and we gladly gathered round the bright, crackling fire in the small smoke-encrusted kitchen, and ate our supper and smoked the evening pipe before retiring to rest at an early hour.

Next morning we were up at two, and off at three for the Col Vicentino, just as the bright moonlight began to fade before the early dawn. The air was keen and invigorating; and though here and there light fleecy clouds that seemed to have lost their way and to have been walking in their sleep, hung motionless above the valley of the Piave,—

> 'With wings folded they rest on their airy nest,
> As still as a brooding dove,'

there was every indication of a magnificent day. The cows and sheep were still dozing around the 'casera' Costa—a châlet or *malga*, on the spur of the mountain within half an hour of the summit—as we passed it at 3.40, and, pushing rapidly on, we gained the highest point at 4.10, just before the sun emerged from behind the Friuli mountains with the greatest splendour, and lit up with rosy tints of exquisite beauty the mighty array of Dolomite peaks, and the more distant giants of the central snowy chain. In the opposite direction a light mist at first obscured the atmosphere, and interrupted the view of the vast expanse of plain and of the open sea; but in less than a quarter of an hour it gradually yielded to the increasing power of the sun's rays, and one after another the great cities, with Venice as their queen, lay spread out before us as on a map, shining like opals in the glowing morning light.

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It would be tedious, if not impossible, to name all the well-known spots which we recognized; and I will merely say that Serravalle, Ceneda, Conegliano, Treviso, Cittadella, Castelfranco, Venice and the sea, Padua, Vicenza with the church of Sta. Maria del Monte—each arch of the arcade leading up the side of Monte Berico clearly to be distinguished, though distant about 47 miles as the crow flies—and many another town and village far beyond towards Verona, which was itself hidden by intervening hills,—all were so distinctly visible, that at Venice, for instance, 40 miles off, every building, the ships in the port, the railway causeway, &c., could be clearly made out with a small telescope. Between us and Treviso lay the great 'Bosco del Montello' (which Santo told us that he had, when a soldier, helped to clear of supposed brigands or *mauvais sujets*), stretching dark and fungus-like over the plain for many a league, its sombre surface forming a striking contrast with the brilliant sunlight-flooded houses and *campanili*, and great breadths of golden grain, amid which wound many a silvery thread of water.

Turning once more, in the opposite quarter, to the glorious valley of the Piave, which forms the middle distance of the picture, with Belluno shining like a gem in its bosom, the eye ranged over such an array of peaks, clear, sharp, and cloudless, as might stir the heart of even the most *blasé* mountaineer. First to the left or west came, as an outpost, the great plateau of the Sette Communi, which we had visited with great interest two or three weeks before, with the Cime delle Dodici and delle Undici. Next followed the ridge of the Monte Pavione (Colle di Luna), the highest point of which I had twice ascended (the second time with Whitwell a fortnight previously), the Cima d'Asta, the Orteler group, the Sasso Maggiore, Palle di S. Martino, Cima di Fradusta, Cimon della Pala, Cima della Vezzana, Monte Agner, the Marmolata, Picco Serra, Monte Pramper, Monte Pelfs, the wonderful obelisk aiguille of the Gusella di Vescova, the Civita, Pelmo, Sorapis, Antelao, Marmarole, the peaks of Cimolais, and Monte Cavallo —to name only some of the principal summits—and finally, the bounding ridge of the 'Bosco del Consiglio,' which we hoped to pass ere nightfall. It was a rarely beautiful view—one of the finest I ever beheld—combining almost every element of loveliness, variety, and grandeur, and I longed that some of the worthy citizens of Belluno might be stirred up to follow in our steps, and those of our probably not very numerous predecessors.

We were naturally in no haste to quit such a scene; but at

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length, about 7.30, after three-and-a-half hours of keen enjoyment, and careful study with map and telescope, we collected our things, and following the ridge for a short distance in a S.S.W. direction, till a sort of col was reached, traversed by a track of some sort, dropped down some 5,000 feet by the S.E. flank of the mountain, upon Serravalle, which we reached at 9.50, after a very warm walk, during which all attempts to discover water fit to drink proved futile, though the ravines and dry torrent-beds gave evidence enough of its destructive force at certain periods. To those who, like ourselves, had been breathing the fresher air of the mountains, the heat at Serravalle (512 feet above the sea) was most oppressive; but the hospitable roof of 'La Giraffa' proved a very refreshing refuge; and the excellent host and hostess, who are models of courtesy, made us so comfortable that we at once decided to defer our departure for the Bosco del Consiglio until the afternoon, and to devote the interval to rest, dinner, and a visit to the local objects of interest, prominent amongst which is Titian's grand picture of the Madonna and Child in glory, with SS. Peter and Andrew beneath—the gem of the so-called Duomo.

This last is indeed a noble work of art, and would alone amply repay a visit to Serravalle, even from Venice. A curious interest attaches to it, which is thus referred to by Mr. Gilbert*: 'Upon at least one occasion Titian visited Serravalle when on his way to Cadore. He went to take instructions for a large picture of the Virgin with St. Andrew and St. Vincent. This was in November of 1542, and it was not finished till five years afterwards, when he wrote requesting that it should be sent for; and, on the ground of having substituted St. Peter for St. Vincent, demanded an addition of 25 ducats to the payment. The Serravallians, failing to appreciate so highly the Prince of the Apostles, declined the extra charge, and moreover insisted that the picture should be forwarded at the painter's own expense. Much litigation ensued, and six more years elapsed before a compromise was effected. The incident amusingly illustrates the very business-like character of Titian, while it is by no means a solitary instance of the contemporary haggling over a work that posterity deems priceless.'† I will not

* 'Cadore,' pp. 42, 43.

† This statement reminds me, especially in one point, of a story of Turner which I heard the late Mr. B. G. Windus, of Tottenham, tell when, as a boy, now nearly twenty years ago, I went with my father

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attempt to repeat in other words what Mr. Gilbert has already so well expressed; but referring my readers to his charming volume for a multitude of details, and some of the most felicitous descriptions of scenery with which I am acquainted, I may venture to mention one or two points which are either unnamed or barely alluded to by him. In the landscape beneath the Virgin, and between the figures of St. Peter and St. Andrew—the latter of whom carries a square cross instead of the usual diagonal one—is introduced the ship tossed by the waves of the sea of Galilee, the mountains surrounding which are certainly not dolomitic in character. On a sculptured fragment introduced in the foreground is painted in capital letters TITIAN. The picture is gorgeously framed, and admirably hung, and I should guess its dimensions at 12 feet in height by 8 in width. On either side are paintings by Carpaccio—locally assigned to Pordenone—an Annunciation, and SS. Peter, Bartholomew, Agatha, Catherine, and, I think, a third female saint. These are interesting, but suffer by comparison with the Titian, and have been much restored, I fancy.

The small Gothic chapel of S. Lorenzo is completely covered internally with frescoes, possibly of the fifteenth century, but mostly in so ruinous a condition that, being no expert, I do not venture to pronounce an opinion; especially as Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle have, with their usual indefatigable diligence,

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to see his magnificent collection of works by our great colourist. Halting before a very fine landscape, he said, nearly in the following words, as far as my memory serves me: 'Thereby hangs a tale which is curiously illustrative of the eccentricities of genius in general and of Turner in particular. That picture was a commission for which I agreed to give him so many hundred pounds. In due time, I received a note informing me that it was finished, and asking how I would have it sent; to which I replied, "Come and dine with me, and bring it yourself." To this he assented; and, knowing his business-like appreciation of prompt payment, I drew a cheque beforehand for the sum agreed upon, and, after dinner as we sat over our wine, handed it to him. He looked at it; folded it up; put it in his pocket; and, at last, thanked me; but with a certain effort, and a reserve of manner which satisfied me that something must be wrong, though what it could be I could not at first guess. I was certain that the cheque had been drawn for the right amount, but suddenly it flashed across my mind that he possibly at the moment *imagined* he had stated the price in guineas whilst I had paid it in pounds. Wishing at once to clear up the doubt, I said, "I think, Turner, that *was* the sum; I can't surely have been so stupid as to mistake guineas for pounds?" "Oh no, it's right enough; *but I paid 5s. for the fly.*"' I have never seen this in print, but it certainly deserves to be recorded.

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routed out almost everything worthy of note in this district, and carefully catalogued and described it in their admirable 'History of Painting in North Italy'—at least as respects those painters who lived during the period embraced in the two volumes already published. One picture in S. Lorenzo is pronounced by them to be possibly a youthful work of Basaiti; and they note, though with little praise, another over an altar, representing SS. Jerome, Agatha, and Lucy, with a hill-city and landscape in the background, which I rather took a fancy to, partly perhaps because the head of St. Agatha reminded me of some old favourites by Sandro Botticelli. There are two or three handsome Palazzi in the town, some of which, I believe, date from the fifteenth century, and are claimed by Dario of Treviso as his own work. Altogether there is a good deal to repay the visitor, in addition to the romantic situation, and I was surprised to find a place of so much importance. Under the Italian rule, Serravalle has been united to its neighbour Ceneda, under the name of Vittoria, and we were told that the combined population amounts to 17,000; but I suspect that this number is not far from double the correct one.

At 3.15 we started in a carriage for Fregona, calling on the way at Ceneda to see the 'Annunciation' by Previtali, the early associate of Titian—'Andrea Bergomensis, Johannis Bellini Discipulus,' as he signs himself—in the church of Santa Maria del Mesco. Ridolfi relates that Titian frequently stopped at Ceneda on his way to Cadore, in order to visit this picture, and that he always looked at it with rapture. However much truth there may be in Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcasselle's remark that the artist is 'at best a second-rate painter, who copied from Bellini, Carpaccio, and Cima,' there is great tenderness and grace in the composition and colouring of this picture, which deserves a passing visit.

There are at least five or six ways of reaching the 'Bosco' from the N., W., and S. Mr. Gilbert describes,* with his accustomed felicity and accuracy, what may perhaps be considered the principal one, as it follows the course of the natural outlet of the drainage of the plateau. In the '*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Alpenvereins*,' Vol. I. Part 4, will be found a paper by Dr. Wellenthal, who, starting from Serravalle, mounted in a N.E. direction by way of Monte Augusta, Lanigo, (Sonago?), and Monte Pizzoc, and thence followed the ridge overlooking the Lago Morto as far as Monte Prese. Here the

* 'Cadore,' pp. 45–8.

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path turned nearly due E. and descended to the central meadow of the Bosco. In returning, they struck the ridge to the north of the Monte Prese, and reached the Lago di Santa Croce by a short cut on a sledge down steep slopes of débris.

We selected another of the southern approaches—the next, in fact, to the east of that followed by Dr. Wellenthal—by way of Fregona and Piai, to which place the carriage-road extends, and then by the 'casera' Cadolten, our object being to enjoy to the utmost the marvellous view over the Venetian plain, which is obtained throughout the ascent, and resembles in character, though its extent is greater, that from the fine new road to the somewhat similar plateau of the Sette Communi, which zigzags up from Cogolo in the valley of the Astico.

Fregona was reached, viâ Ceneda and Anzano, in little more than an hour. The road traverses a most charmingly undulating country, richly wooded and cultivated, and with a wealth and luxuriance of vegetation I have rarely seen equalled. Devonshire-like lanes, worn deep in the fat loamy soil, were bordered by hedgerows of hazel and other bushes half smothered and strangled in the embrace of perfect tangles of 'travellers' joy' and rampant vines, which, after climbing to the top of the nearest trees—often fifty to sixty feet high—were not satisfied until they had also covered the banks on either hand with their trailing greenery.

At Piai we engaged a porter to carry a portion of our traps as far as the 'casera' Cadolten, near the rim of the central plateau or basin, and at 5.15 set out, not without some fears of a ducking, as several sharp drenching storms of rain had already overtaken us, and the sky to the S. and S. W. looked very threatening. At every foot of ascent the view behind us and on our right increased in extent and beauty, and if the storms that were now chasing each other in quick succession across the plain did not allow of our seeing it in anything like the same perfection as in the morning, they at least treated us to some most extraordinary atmospheric effects, the more interesting as they seem to be peculiarly characteristic of this neighbourhood, and to have been frequently represented by Titian, especially in his drawings. Mr. Gilbert * has so admirably said all that is needful on this subject that I will not attempt to repeat the same thing in a less satisfactory manner: suffice it here to say that I allude to those sharply defined, blue-black, torrential discharges of rain moving in solid blocks

* 'Cadore,' pp. 35–9.

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over the face of the country, and blotting out for a time every feature of land and sky during their passage, like so many waterspouts. As the vivid lightning flashes from their murky bosoms, and rival peals of thunder crash amongst the hills, one could almost fancy them to be the ghosts of those lumbering old galleons of ancient days engaged in a running fight with some buccaneering rascal who little thought at the time that he was founding the British navy. For a quarter of an hour or so, one would lose sight of some dozen quiet little '*paesi*' here, there, and further away, that had been simmering in the sunshine, as the various isolated deluges enshrouded them, each sharply circumscribed, but coming down, not as the poet remarks,

> 'As if the lid were off
> The universal teapot,'

but as though nature in those parts were indulging in several local 'kettledrums'—it was a little after five o'clock—and something was wrong in each separate brewing.

Watching this atmospheric display, and loath to turn our backs upon it, we made slow progress up the outer barrier, which, barren, rocky, and in itself uninteresting, forms the setting to such a paradise of greenery within its circling rim. At every turn we met peasants, mostly charcoal-burners, hastening down, before night should overtake them, from their work in the forest above to the lower villages cozily resting in the folds of the hills, each individual almost invariably trailing a log of wood, which, by some mysterious means, he contrived to keep from perpetually hitting his heels as it came sliding down behind him over the rough stony track.

Suddenly mists swept over us, the wind moaned dismally, it grew instantly chilly, and we began to speculate whether we should get that night to the 'Palazzo,' as the central establishment on the 'Pian del Bosco' is called.

> 'Noi andavam per lo vespero attenti
> Oltre, quanto potèn gli occhi allungarsi,
> Contra i raggi serotini e lucenti :
> Ed ecco a poco a poco un fumo farsi
> Verso di noi, come la notte, oscuro,
> Nè da quello era loco da cansarsi ;
> Questo ne tolse gli occhi e l' aer puro.'
>
> *Purg.* xv. 140–5.

The track now bore away to the left, and, turning from the plain, struck inwards along the side of a dry ravine till it emerged upon a sort of open upland, where, as far as the mist would permit us to see anything, there appeared to be a

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fair amount of pasture. Here are the 'casera' of Cadolten and some smaller dwellings, whose occupants supplied us with water—a scarce article in these parts—and gave us some directions as to our further course, our porter having to return in order to get home before darkness set in. It was now 7.45, so that we had occupied two-and-a-half hours in ascending from Piai, a distance which might very easily be accomplished in two-thirds of the time.

Soon lashing rain came tearing through the mist as we pushed rapidly on, and suddenly we found ourselves face to face with some vague but monstrous forms towering up against the grey background which, on a nearer approach, proved to be grand old beeches, the outliers or advanced picket of the mighty forest which stretches away over hill and dale for many a league beyond. We were speedily in the thick of them, though still mounting gently; but presently a sort of col appeared, the rim of the happy valley was reached, and the path sloped downwards to the N. Amidst the deepening gloom, but with occasional glimpses of the moon between the cloud-rifts, we threaded our way along muddy, rain-soaked paths over a gently undulating surface densely wooded—here, I think entirely with beech, which, we were afterwards told, attain their greatest dimensions in this section of the forest. Always descending on the whole, sometimes puzzled by diverging tracks, once getting a hint from a woodcutter, we finally, at 8.30, three-quarters of an hour after leaving the 'casera,' emerged upon the central plain or meadow after about two-and-a-half miles of wood-walk. At 8.45 we reached the substantial building, of hospice-like exterior, called the 'Palazzo,' situated on a knoll a little S. of the centre, where reside the head inspector or 'Guardia Generale,' Signor d'Oro (or Doro) with fourteen subordinate 'guardia-boschi,' and a sort of innkeeper who does the cooking, &c., and entertains such travellers as chance to come here—for the most part confined to wood contractors and charcoal merchants, I should imagine. The fare and accommodation are homely, but quite sufficient for the requirements of mountaineers; and as the air was rather chilly after the heat of the morning, and the only fire in the place seemed to be the one in the great kitchen chimney, around which the household was assembled on our arrival, we were not long in retiring to our room upstairs, one of several opening out of a corridor, and very similar in character to those of an ordinary hospice, though more deficient in the furniture and washing department.

The day had been a long one, and as we proposed to spend

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the greater part, if not the whole, of the following one (Sunday) quietly at the 'Palazzo,' or in its immediate neighbourhood, the sun was already high when we were at length roused by the hum of many voices; and, on looking out, found the house surrounded by an orderly and well-dressed but very talkative crowd, consisting mostly of shepherds, woodcutters, carbonari, and so forth, with a sprinkling of women, lads, and girls, who had assembled from many a hidden nook in the ample folds of the great forest to attend mass, which is celebrated in a chapel at one end of the 'Palazzo' by a priest who, I believe, comes up for that purpose from the lower outside world. As may be supposed, the religious ceremony, which all seemed to join in with much earnestness and devotion, was preceded and followed by an immense amount of gossip, and I strongly suspect that many a hard bargain is struck on these occasions. Indeed, the 'Guardia Generale,' in full uniform, sat for hours in his private bureau giving audience to a succession of clients, with whom he appeared to transact a considerable amount of business, as many of the dealers from the plain select Sunday for their visit, since it brings them into contact with all the various classes of the forest folk with whom they may have business relations. Mass was over before we had finished our breakfast, and as the men lounged on the green sward outside, or laid siege to the *vino nostrano* of our host, we joined some of the groups, and talked about wood and charcoal as a preliminary to extracting more general information, especially in connection with a meditated ascent of Monte Cavallo on the morrow, and the selection of the best point of attack. As they gradually swarmed into the 'Palazzo,' Whitwell and I sauntered off across the green undulations—like a bit of the Roman *campagna*—of the central meadow, towards the wooded slopes on the eastern side, and, stretched beneath the shade of pines, in this part constituting the principal growth, whose ancestors may have served

'to be the mast
Of some great ammiral'

of the republic in her former days, whilst the gentle breeze

'Made in the levis grene a noisè soft,
Accordant to the foulis song on loft,'

enjoyed our own quiet little service, and lounged away the mid-day hours in talk and reverie.

The 'Bosco' is famous for its strawberries, which are gathered in vast quantities by the children, and taken by them to Serravalle, Cenceda, and other towns or villages; but, un-

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fortunately, our visit was a little too early for us to enjoy this luxury. The circumference of the extreme verge of the plateau, sloping inwards crater-like on every side but the north, must be about twenty miles, and the diameter about five miles from W. to E., and perhaps six from N. to S., whilst I should guess the elevation of the 'Palazzo' to be not very far from 3,500 feet. The central meadow, roughly circular in form, may be about 1½ mile across in every direction, and from it the girdle of forest—mostly beech, but including a large amount of pine, and from 1½ to 2½ miles in breadth—rises in gentle undulations,

> 'Shade above shade, a woody theatre
> Of stateliest view,'

to where

> 'Yet higher than their tops
> The verdurous wall upsprung,'

cutting off all the outer world, save where, to the NW., the Dolomites of the lower Val di Zoldo, or to the NE., the nearer group of Monte Cavallo, reared their varied forms above the partial depression in the bounding rim. Some six or seven isolated 'casere'—cattle-stalls, with house attached for the shepherd—dot the surface of the central meadow, or 'Pian del Consiglio,' whose generally even floor is broken by numerous hollows, such as characterise the district of the Karst between Trieste and Adelsberg, though of inferior dimensions. Some of them were dry, and others more or less filled with stagnant-looking water, covered with slimy scum of water-plants, algæ, and confervæ, &c., whence came the ceaseless croaking of myriads of frogs, and sundry emanations, more visible to the eye after sunset than during the day, which must I think render their neighbourhood by no means desirable for constant sleeping quarters. The great want of all this district, both in an æsthetical and practical point of view, is water. No babbling brooks trace their lines of silver amidst the brown beech leaves, or burst into daylight from rocky crannies, as in the more favoured limestone ranges N. of the central zone. After heavy rain, indeed, improvised streams converge from all directions towards the central area; but, arrived there, they merely convert its circumference into a temporary morass, and then drain away into the cavernous limestone beneath, filling the basins already described, but carrying their music and their coolness to the hot and thirsty plain below through subterranean channels, like that most remarkable one at Oliero, in the gorge of the Brenta above Bassano, by which the drainage of the 'Sette Communi' plateau is discharged. The wine of

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the country being often of that description which, as the poet feelingly remarks, would

'Rive the gizzard of an ancient cock,
Or make a brazen monkey weep,'

the position of a teetotaller at the Palazzo, unless he be a Dutchman and accustomed to the flavour of ditch-water and chickweed, would be a painful one, for I doubt whether the liquid furnished by the ponds, and rich in froggy extract, is really safe for those unaccustomed to it, though boiling may possibly improve it in a sanitary point of view, even if it does not remove that suspicion of 'body' which its appearance and *bouquet* suggest.

After dinner we heard from some of the latest lingerers of the morning gathering that they were inhabitants of a certain little settlement called Canaje, lying to the E. of N. at a distance of 1½ hour in the direction of Monte Cavallo, and as they were starting to return, and offered to lodge us for the night and show us the way, we gladly availed ourselves of so promising a proposal, which would save us a tedious addition to the next day's work. We accordingly set off together at 4·15, after a friendly parting with our host, and leaving a message for the courteous 'Guardia Generale,' who was still busy with his contractors and men over books, contracts, and measurements. His fourteen subordinates are all armed with gun and revolver; for, besides their duties as foresters in the ordinary sense, they practically constitute the police of a district which, from its position and character, might otherwise become the resort of *mauvais sujets*. Our new companions informed us that none but the 'guardie boschi' are allowed in theory to carry, or even possess, firearms, yet that everybody had them, and moreover used them, for casual sporting purposes, so that game had naturally ceased to exist throughout the whole extent of the forest. A year or two before, indeed, an event had occurred in the shape of the visit of a she-bear and her cub, who, however, merely strolled through the district *en touriste*, and, I believe, gave no one a chance of a shot.

On the northern bounding rim we halted for a quarter of an hour, and then dived downwards through charming glades of beech, past Valmanera and the 'casera' Costalta to the 'Pian Canaje,' and so to the little wooden huts of the quiet settlement above. These are very diminutive and closely grouped together on a small space of tolerably level ground, partially cleared from trees, and from which the woods slope upwards and downwards in dense masses of greenery.

Seating ourselves on a bench at the door of one of the first

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houses, which proved to be a sort of *osteria*, we soon found ourselves surrounded by, and in lively chat with, almost the entire population, who turned out to examine the strangers—the first English they had ever seen. A little magnesium wire and 'drawing-room lightning,' supplemented by a few simple conjuring tricks, and the gift of some packets of needles, delighted the women and children, whilst the men were nothing loath to try our tobacco and relate stories over their pipes of the good old times to fresh, and presumably sympathizing, ears. Under the old Austrian *régime*, a man might have as much wood as he pleased; at least, if he might not cut down a tree at his own absolute discretion—at Canaje they are all woodcutters—he had only to indicate his wishes to the central authority, or 'Forst Inspektor,' at the 'Palazzo,' and the required permission was rarely withheld by the representative of the Imperial 'Ærarium'—the 'Bosco' constituting what is called '*ärarisches Gut.*' But 'now, if you so much as break a bough for firewood off a decaying or fallen stem; nay, if you even collect the chips after cutting down a tree according to contract, the '*guardie*' are down upon you. They ain't bad fellows; but what can they do? No, the times are changed, —ecco signori!' and so on. It must be rather hard lines to live surrounded by timber and yet have to pay, and dearly too, for every stick of firewood, especially if such a state of things is of quite recent origin.

These people appeared to us to be of a decidedly superior type, both as to manners and intelligence, many of them speaking both German and Italian; and it was with no little interest that we heard from one of their number that they were originally of the Sette Communi stock, and had migrated when the gradual destruction of their own forests had put an end to their means of livelihood as woodcutters. The first emigrants consisted only of five families; but as these increased and multiplied, they split up into as many little settlements, of which three are in the neighbourhood of the Palazzo, and one near Osigo, whilst Canaje is the fifth. At present they number in all about 280 souls, and have quite abandoned their old 'Zembro' dialect—a sort of Suabian patois, many words of which would be intelligible to the peasantry of the N.E. of Switzerland—though one old man could still speak it. Our informant, who was really a very superior and intelligent man, had first attracted our attention by asking, after learning that we were English, whether we knew the works of 'un certo Miltone,' or the 'Storia di Ser Gualterio Scott,' both of which he said he had read in translations with great interest!

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Meanwhile our supper had been preparing, and we were now summoned to enter the *barraque*, which, thoroughly smoke-grimed and of Lilliputian dimensions, served as the inn. What was our astonishment to find, in strange contrast with the surroundings, a table-cloth and napkins of spotless purity, clean plates and cups, and brightly-polished spoons and cutlery, whilst an attentive hostess was at hand to supply all our wants, so far as her modest stores would admit of. The roof was, indeed, sooty enough; but that was merely an almost inevitable condition of the locality, arising from the nature of the fuel, and the discouragements thrown by the authorities in the way of constructing more commodious and substantial buildings; whilst, as far as depended on the population itself, the race, with German instincts, in spite of Italian surroundings and limited means, asserted its preference for cleanliness and propriety. When, about ten o'clock, we suggested that it was time to retire, in ignorance and great doubt as to the probable character of the sleeping accommodation, no less a surprise awaited us. We were led to another small hut of by no means very promising external appearance, but were ushered into a wooden room, of small proportions it is true, but exquisitely neat, and containing a bed of ample dimensions, well provided with really snowy linen, equal to anything that the best Swiss mountain inns could furnish, and doubly welcome for its spotless cleanliness. Altogether, the time spent amongst these kindly, hearty, simple people, is a very pleasant spot in our memory, and we should like to have seen more of them had time permitted; but we had an appointment for the 14th at Pieve di Cadore, with the rest of our party, and in order to keep it, it was necessary to leave Canaje very early on the morning of the 13th, if we meant to ascend Monte Cavallo, and, passing over its summit, reach Cimolais viâ Barcis the same evening.

We roused at 2.45, got some coffee, paid a nominal bill, and at 3.30 started with one of our friends to put us in the way, and a porter who was to carry our *rücksacks* over a low pass S. of Monte Cavallo to the '*malga*,' or '*casera*,' of 'Pian del Cavallo,' to which we proposed to descend after bagging our peak. We struck up through the wood on the south side of the village, a course which ultimately involved some detour, and I believe loss of time, so that it was 4.45 when we reached the Palentina alp. A ridge descending from Monte Cavallo had next to be traversed, in order to reach the north branch of the Val di Piera, and then our course lay up a narrow ravine leading right into the heart of the *massif*. At

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its head was a depression, the peak to the south of which appeared to be the highest, though still further to the right there was another summit seemingly of about the same altitude. We decided to gain the 'sattel,' follow the ridge to the nearest point, and reconnoitre from thence; and, after half an hour's halt for breakfast, resumed our march. One hour's easy walking from the Palentina alp placed us on the ridge, and twenty minutes' ascent of the broad arête to the south of it sufficed to gain the peak, which we at once perceived was overtopped, though but slightly, by its southern rival. Fortunately, it appeared practicable to pass from one to the other, so, without lingering, we walked or clambered along the easy but picturesque connecting *arête*; and, after a short but more interesting scramble up the steep final rocks, reached our goal in twenty minutes, at 6.50. Its height is 7,377 feet, and though the view was by no means so clear as from the Col Vicentino, it was yet very extensive and full of interest. Behind us the great green crater of the 'Bosco' lay spread out in all its beauty, whilst far away the Dolomites on one hand, and the rich plain and flashing sea on the other, each lent a special and contrasted charm to the picture. To the east the atmosphere was hazy, and we failed to make out Trieste—which indeed may very possibly be concealed by intervening hills—or to obtain more than glimpses of the ranges stretching away southwards from it towards Pola.

After spending an hour here most enjoyably, we dropped down in one more on the opposite or east face of the mountain, over steep rocky slopes, every cranny of which was filled with luxuriant vegetation—the mountain is one of several scattered along the south border of the Alps, well known for their botanical treasures—and along a sort of dry lake bed, almost straight upon the huts of the 'Pian del Cavallo,' where milk and other châlet luxuries were forthcoming, and had ample justice done to them, delaying us till 9.50. The porter had duly arrived, so, shouldering our '*rücksacks*,' we strolled leisurely downwards in a northerly direction through the Val Isola della Stura, charmingly wooded in its middle and lower portion, to Barcis in Val Zelline, about six miles above its termination in the plain of Friuli. Here we encountered an obstacle the very last for which our waterless experience of the previous two days had prepared us. Between us and the village flowed the broad but rapid Zelline, rivalling in its exquisite purity and delicate tints of green, brown, and blue, those lovely streams of the Salzkammergut and Styria; but the bridge was gone! and there was nothing for it but to wade, an operation which was by no means disagreeable, except that

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our delicate consideration for our boots—not shared in by our two men—induced us to carry them carefully, and surrender our bare feet to the tender mercies of angular dolomite pebbles. The water came in places nearly to mid-thigh, and was deliciously refreshing, though a trifle too forcible here and there for perfect luxury.

We lounged, dined, and dozed away the heat of the day at Cilli's quaint and very fair inn, and at 4.15 started off once more up the picturesque valley for Cimolais, which we reached at 7.45, after a very agreeable walk through much interesting and varied scenery, of which the beautiful Zelline was the constant and special charm. There is a very fair char road for some distance, but it has never been completed, and has gone to ruin in many places, so that Cimolais is not very unlike Primiero used to be before the new road from the Val Fassa by Paneveggio, the Costonzella Pass, and S. Martino di Castrozza, was constructed. O. Brescha's (or Brescia's) inn furnished us with very fair quarters; but I will not dwell longer on this region, which has been so fully described by Mr. Gilbert,* and does not come within the special scope of this paper. Suffice it to say, that on the morning of the 14th we proceeded up the gradually narrowing valley, through gorges of really great grandeur, to the opening of the northern lateral Val di Fontane—a walk of two hours—and turning into the latter, and striking off up its northern branch, the Val di S. Maria, reached a col at its head in two hours more. Glorious views of Monte Cridola, and the fantastic chain of aiguilles between it and our position, here opened out; but a heavy storm was brewing to the N.W., and already the Marmarole and Antelao were hidden by dense clouds, from which darted flash after flash of forked lightning, so we did not long delay, but bearing away to the left, followed the ridge of Monte Vedorchia; and after sundry halts in hay châlets to seek refuge from torrents of rain, reached Pieve di Cadore in two hours' walking from the Pass, thoroughly soaked, and quite prepared to do full justice to the good fare which, thanks to the exertions of the ladies of our party, who had preceded us by some hours, was soon in readiness.

* 'Cadore,' pp. 63–66.

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