

both climbed in 1873 by General Ezio da Vecchi and Signor Arnaldo Pozzolini. The Pizzo d'Uccello had often been reached before, but the Pisanino, it is believed, never. The gentlemen describe the ascents as 'for practised climbers easy, for amateurs difficult, for people unaccustomed to mountains dangerous, for those subject to giddiness impossible.'

Inns at Massa: Buon Gusto, fair, but tricky people. Il Giappone.

5. By rail to Via Reggio. Visit Gombo or Val d'Arni.

6. By Serravezza to Levigliani to sleep. Fornari's house offers two clean beds.

7. Over Pania della Croce, 6,102 feet, and by Forno Volasco to Galliciano (in the church a fine work of Luca della Robbia). Drive to Barga. Good clean inn outside the gate, used as luncheon-place by excursionists from Baths of Lucca. Interesting specimen of a mediæval walled hill-town in an exquisite situation. Ancient duomo with curious pulpit.

8. Walk over Rondinaja (6,364 ft.) to Boscolungo (A. del Abetone, new inn and pension), 4,265 ft. The Florentine section of the I.A. Club are doing their best to make Boscolungo a comfortable summer resort. The excursions and walks in the neighbourhood are described as pleasant, and the flora as particularly interesting to botanists. See Professor Tigri's useful guide for topographical details, as well as much local information, including specimens of the rustic poetry for which this district is famous.

9. Ascend Cimone (7,080 ft.), the highest of the central Apennines. The ascent takes about 3 hours from the inn.

10. Drive by San Marcello (A. della Posta and several other inns) to the railway station at Pracchia, or (more to be recommended) over the Apennine to Pistoja or Pescia.

TEN DAYS' HARD WORK IN THE ZERMATT DISTRICT.
BY THE REV. F. T. WETHERED. Read before the
 Alpine Club, December 16, 1875.

'Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.'

FOR the last fifteen or twenty years Zermatt has been such a nucleus of mountaineering, that the peaks encircling it, their difficulties and essential peculiarities, have become as well known, either from personal experience or from the graphic accounts which others have given us of them, as any part of the Alpine chain. I feel, therefore, some diffidence in offering the present paper, descriptive of ascents made last summer in that district. There will soon, however, be nothing new of any sort for Alpine narrative. With such ever-increasing vigour is mountaineering prosecuted nowadays, that if the *raison d'être* of the various Alpine Clubs be merely the search for novelty, we shall soon have to seek it outside, or

upon the confines of the European continent. Such, however, I apprehend, is not their only object. We have not lost our interest in mountains because we have secured them as our own—rather may we be excused, *because* they are more or less familiar, for recurring to them under any fresh circumstances, which may enable us to estimate the better their comparative beauties, dangers, and difficulties; by which we may the better gauge them, not only as isolated peaks, but as integral parts of a mighty whole. And, if I am correct in this assumption, I trust it may not seem, in any sense, impertinent if I occupy a few pages in attempting a sketch of four great mountains in the Valais, which I lately ascended within the space of ten days.

Although the August of 1875 was by no means, as regards weather, all that mountaineers could wish, it was happily far less inclement than the preceding month, which will be long remembered in Switzerland as one of the wettest Julys within the ken of most of us. I was thus enabled to get through a good deal of hard work.

Christian Almer met me at Chamonix on August 1, on my descent from the Aiguille du Midi, the summit of which I had reached with François Devouassoud, by the eastern rocks. I had hoped to pass over the summit of Mont Blanc to Courmayeur, and so reach Zermatt from the south; but as this was thought by the guides this year to be impracticable, we ascended and descended that mountain by the ordinary route, and went on to Zermatt on Friday 6th, *viâ* Visp and St. Nicholas. The weather had, for several days, been miserable in the extreme, and seemed likely to continue so, but Saturday morning brought with it a marvellous transformation; and as Sunday was also fine, I determined to go up to the hut of the Matterhorn on the following day. Monday morning, however, was so doubtful that, after consultation with Almer, I decided to wait until midnight, and then if the weather were fine to ascend the mountain direct from Zermatt.

It was clear, though there was no moon, at twelve o'clock, and twenty-five minutes later we left the hotel, and were soon wending our way through the silent night amongst the pasture lands, and along the winding paths, which lead to the foot of the Hörnli ridge. Another gentleman and his guides set off at the same hour, and reached the summit with us. The sun rose shortly after we had gained the base of our peak, and the grim mountain before us glowed beautifully beneath his touch; the effect on the rocks, candied over as they were with freshly fallen snow, being very lovely. The hut was attained

at about eight A.M., and some of the party were of opinion that, with the amount of snow still on the face, we had better not attempt to reach the summit thus late in the morning. Almer unroped himself, and went forward a little to reconnoitre. It takes a great deal to turn Christian from his purpose, and he evidently was not going to surrender if he could help it—especially as in the then unsettled state of the weather no one could tell what a single day might bring forth. After a few minutes he returned with a confident '*das geht*;' the minds of all were soon made up, and we continued the ascent at about nine o'clock.

I wish to give no overdrawn picture of the Matterhorn on August 10, 1875, but the fact is that the mountain was scarcely 'open' after the stormy weather and consequent snow of the previous week; and, added to this, our late start from the hut was much against us. It is my firm belief that had Christian Almer not been of the party we should not have reached the summit that day; and Aloys Pullinger, who has probably at least as good a knowledge of the mountain on the Swiss side as any living man, confessed afterwards that he had never before found its ascent so difficult.

The rocks between the 'shoulder' and the 'roof' were loosely sprinkled all over with snow—thick enough to prevent secure foothold beneath it, and too loose to furnish any itself. The cold here was most intense, the wind bitterly keen; our gloved hands were often frozen on to the chains before we could relax our hold, and two of my fingers were almost frost-bitten.

So long as artificial helps are used in the Alps, they ought, at any rate to be secure. Rotten rounds to ladders clamped against rocks, as, for instance, on the Wetterhorn; rotten ropes, as formerly on the Zermatt side of the Matterhorn, and still on the Rothhorn and elsewhere, might lead to lamentable accidents, and thus what was intended for one's welfare be converted into a means of bitter falling. I was, therefore, glad to find that the chains which in 1874, I had seen hanging idly on the outside of the Matterhorn hut had supplemented the ropes above the 'shoulder.'

At length we overcame our difficulties. The top was reached at a quarter to two in the afternoon. The summit ridge of the Matterhorn has altered much since it was first ascended in 1865, having become much narrower and more attenuated during the last ten years. 'In '65,' says Mr. Whymper, 'one could *run* without any imprudence or risk from one end to the other, but in '74 this was entirely impossible—not only

from the narrowness of the ridge, but from the hardness of the snow.' From two comparative sections, which Mr. Whymper has kindly sketched for me, it appears that the conformation of the upper part of the mountain was materially the same in August last as it presented itself to Mr. Whymper in 1874. The view from the summit was not clear, the time of day was late, and it was very cold; so that, after twenty minutes upon it, we commenced the descent. Even greater caution than in going up was now necessary, and certainly more than one of the party was heartily glad when we had turned the shoulder and got on to the N.E. arête. Rather more than midway between the summit and the shoulder, I saw distinctly, on our right, the phenomenon called the Spectre of the Brocken. The part of the mountain on which it appeared was in thick cloud at the time. A mirror was formed by two concentric, coloured circles, within which our bodies were plainly reflected.

We did not reach the hut until 7 P.M., and were therefore, though short of provisions, reluctantly compelled to pass the night in it. The condition of the Matterhorn hut, as of too many others in the Swiss Alps, is disgracefully bad. A stove, it is true, has been recently fitted inside, but the interior generally more adequately represents an ice-house than a resting-place for human beings. I mention this, since I cannot but think, that with a little pains and money expended on it, the place might be made more water-tight, and be altogether much improved. And here I would venture to raise a question with regard to Alpine huts in general. Do Alpine Clubs do as much, in this department, as might fairly be expected of them? I am not aware of the amount which has been done by our own club, and would gladly think that I am wrong in supposing that it has not been very much. On the mountain-side one does not look for more than mere necessities and common cleanliness; but is it vain to hope that some day, not far distant, each hut may not only have its roof from time to time made water-tight, but also be *furnished* and maintained a little better than at present is generally the case? The hut near the Eiger glacier, at the base of the Mönch, presents a model in this respect, which might with advantage be imitated elsewhere.

At the end of the week in which I ascended the Matterhorn, after having meanwhile been provokingly driven back by a regular *tourmente* of snow and wind from the Rothhorn, I crossed the Triftjoch, with Mr. J. H. Kitson, into the Val d'Anniviers, intending to take vengeance on the foe by returning to Zermatt over its summit.

We spent Saturday night and the earlier part of Sunday in the clean little mountain hostelry above the tenantless village of Zinal, and in the afternoon strolled leisurely back up the valley to the hut at Mountet, on the rocks of the eastern arm of the Durand or Zinal glacier. The wild amphitheatre which here presents itself, with the Durand glacier as its great arena, is strikingly grand. The precipitous western face of the Rothhorn, with the Trifthorn on its right, the long arête of the conical Gabelhorn, as it sweeps gracefully upwards to the summit, the undulating ridge connecting it with the Col Durand and Dent Blanche towards the west, the Col du Grand Cornier, and the Grand Cornier itself form a *coup d'œil*, which, especially in the evening or early morning, as these great Alpine sentinels bid farewell to the departing sun, or glow under his first rays, is very beautiful. As we stood outside the Mountet hut, watching the sunset, Mr. Kitson suddenly proposed that we should change our tactics, by giving up the Rothhorn and making the return journey over the Gabelhorn instead. I willingly consented to this arrangement, especially as Mr. Kitson had, only a few days before, reached the summit of the Rothhorn from the valley of the Trift, and I had, moreover, still time at my disposal in which to revenge my defeat on the latter.

At two o'clock the following morning we descended the rocks upon which the hut is situated, and were soon walking along the slushy surface of the glacier. Fearing avalanches if we attempted to reach the western foot of our peak by the ice-fall, which may be said to connect this arm of the Durand glacier with the base of the mountain, we made a *détour* towards the Col Durand, so as to reach the peak by way of the ridge, which I have already described as connecting the Dent Blanche with the Gabelhorn. Bearing well to the west, and hugging the S.E. end of the Roc Noir prettily closely, we at length began to mount the slope, which was set in some places at a tolerably high angle. After overcoming a large *bergschrand* not far from the top of the ridge, we found ourselves upon the Col Durand; from this point we proceeded eastwards to the foot of the Gabelhorn without difficulty, *viâ* some exceedingly steep snow-slopes. I was under the impression when I sent a note of our ascent to the *Journal* that the actual Col, so called, was some short distance further west, nearer, that is, to the Dent Blanche than the point at which we struck the ridge. Mr. Kitson, however, who had made the passage of the Col Durand to Zermatt in a former year, has since assured me that the route which he then took was as

nearly as possible identical with ours in August last, so far as regards the point at which the ridge was struck, and this he believes to be the usual point where the pass is made. I am particular in thus slightly correcting my note referred to, since, as Mr. Kitson points out, no doubt the ridge is inaccessible, without some danger, except at the point we mounted it. Our route in the ascent of the Gabelhorn, though longer in point of distance than that taken by Messrs. Hoare and Hulton in 1874, is by far the safer of the two, and also, as it would appear, somewhat the shorter in point of time; since, on comparing their note, as sent to the *Journal*, with my own memoranda of August last, I find that we reached the summit more quickly than they did, though by not more than thirty-five minutes.

A good deal of snow was lying on the N.W. face of the mountain, but we did not find the ascent very difficult. Still, there were one or two awkward corners on the rocks, and I certainly have a vivid recollection of thankfulness when we had passed at least *one* place on the way up. Just after this we turned on to the northern face, which, in about a quarter of an hour, landed us on the summit. The top of the Ober Gabelhorn this year was composed of a narrow ridge of snow, with three projecting points, slightly overhanging towards the south, of which the central was somewhat the highest.

The *massif* of this range, as viewed from the Trift valley, embraces two unequal wings: towards the end of the south-eastern is the Unter Gabelhorn; while the flat, snow-crested, top of the '*pic sans nom*' is the great feature of the other or north-eastern wing. The Ober Gabelhorn comes in as the body between the two.

The weather was gloriously fine, and we sat a good hour—from 9 to 10 A.M.—enjoying the magnificent panorama which extended itself on all sides.

The Matterhorn, Dent Blanche, and Rothhorn, the somewhat further Mte. Rosa group, the Mischabelhörner, the distant Oberland and Mt. Blanc chain, with Monte Viso in the S.W. more than a hundred miles from where we sat, made up a view which is seldom surpassed in the Alps. 'Time' at length was called, and we began the descent by the eastern rocks, *en route* for Zermatt. The arête, which near the summit was none too easy, turned very soon in a north-easterly direction, and proved in such bad condition that we declined altogether to face it. A long and terribly steep snow-slope descended on our left to much-broken séracs at its base, while to

our right a very short piece of steep snow would have brought us down to smooth and crumbly rocks, which we should have found both difficult and rather more disposed to showers of stones than would be agreeable to most mountaineers. Of this we had practical evidence when we got lower down. 'Must we, then, after all,' the unwelcome, but quickly rising, thought suggested itself, 'return by the same way that we came up?' Happily, not so. Almer, as I had found from experience on the Matterhorn, is not a man easily to be baulked. The rope was detached from each of us, save only from Christian himself; it was then paid out by Ulrich, as his father descended with his face towards the steep incline on the northern side of the mountain. The latter, on finding the snow '*fest*' after he had been let down some fifty feet, gave the word for us to come, and one by one we started off down the slope to a rock on which Almer had taken up his stand; Christian Bohren, as 'last man off' acquitting himself most cleverly. Having again roped ourselves together, an hour or so of cautious descent, during which we bore diagonally across the mountain face, brought us to the edge of a cornice facing due east, and easily traceable on photographs of the Gabelhorn taken from the Zermatt side. A gap was soon hewn out, and the suspending process again adopted, as we were each lowered separately, some twenty feet (this time it was a sheer drop) into a bed of soft snow beneath; a mode of progression which, to adopt the feeling language of Mr. Coolidge when thus trussed on a like occasion, 'to say the least of it, was very disagreeable.' Christian Almer was 'last man' this time, quite equal, however, to the emergency. Slinging the rope round a hummock of ice, which he had left of set purpose in the centre of the gap, and digging his toes well into the precipitous snow wall, he thus extemporised a species of ladder, by the aid of which he came down to us in safety.

The Gabelhorn glacier gave us some trouble amongst the labyrinth of crevasses with which its ice-falls are intersected. Into one of these, not far from the northern bank of the glacier, our whole party was obliged to descend, being driven right into a *cul de sac* in their midst. '*Facilis descensus Averni*,'—but emerging from it is quite another matter. The ingenious and never-failing Christian, although he had never been on the Gabelhorn before, seemed to-day even to 'out-Almer' himself. Burying the axes in the wall of the crevasse with their heads left protruding, to act as steps, he first mounted on them himself, then bade us to follow; the last man up recovered them as he came out, and we were thus

extricated from our difficulty. Nothing more of interest occurred that day, and Zermatt was reached, *viâ* the right bank of the Trift, the same evening.

A day or two later I settled my old score with the Rothhorn. Leaving the hotel half an hour after midnight, with Johann Knubel as second guide, I wended my way once more up the already familiar valley, under a brilliant moon, reaching the snow at about 4.45 A.M., and the summit at half-past eight.

The lower portion of this mountain, towards the south, is separated from the peak by a large kamm, which gradually tapers off into a very narrow snow arête with a cornice overhanging, towards the east, the splendid glacier basin below, while the stately Weisshorn beyond crowns a near view of great beauty.

As we neared the base of the peak itself, I was struck with the dark nature of the strata, which I conclude are protogine gneiss, of which this district mainly consists. Gradually the snowy ledge became interspersed with rocks, and soon we began to mount the side of the dark red peak by a series of snow couloirs until we struck the edge of the saw-like S.W. arête, so well seen in the ascent of the Matterhorn. A gap in the ridge opened out another fine view on the N. and W. —the Dent Blanche and Grand Cornier, across the Durand glacier, appearing to great advantage. Here we halted for about a quarter of an hour, made a light meal, left our axes and *impedimenta* in the little nook, and commenced the upward scramble to the summit. The last part of the Rothhorn, up and round the jagged teeth of the arête, affords good hard climbing—arms and legs being all brought into very active service. There is one spot, with a rotten rope affixed along it to seduce the unwary, in traversing which one's movements have to be very spiderlike indeed. The rocky slabs face smoothly downwards, and offer, for a couple of minutes, as nasty a piece of this species of climbing as I have ever met with. The whole arête is certainly stiffer than anything we encountered on the western side of the Gabelhorn, though not of very long duration. Our time from the point at which we struck it to the bipronged wild-looking summit was just thirty-two minutes. The descent was easily effected, and we reached Zermatt about the middle of the afternoon.

There was one more mountain—the loveliest and most seductive of the four which were allotted to me this year in the Pennine Alps—and that—need I say?—was the Weisshorn. A new hut, built originally for cowherds and shepherds by

the men of Randa, and situated about half an hour above the Schallenberg Alp proper—not far from the northern bank of the lower or southern basin of the Hohlicht (or Schallenberg) glacier—has been used, for the first time this year, by mountaineers in the ascent of the Weisshorn. The time occupied from Randa to this new sleeping-place is somewhat less than three hours. At midnight, on the 19th, the moon was shining even more brilliantly than when she had lighted us up the Trift valley two nights before; and as we left the hut at that hour it was nearly as light as day. The snowslopes, which we reached in about three-quarters of an hour, were of almost adamant hardness, and progress up them accordingly rapid. We reached, at length, the foot of the cliffs, which form a kind of buttress to the south of the great eastern arête. The passage of these, at first, presented no difficulty; but our way ere long lay transversely across the tremendous rock wall which rises out of the Schallenberg glacier in this direction. This, with its series of couloirs ribbing the steep incline, affords some climbing requiring care, and reminded one of portions of the north-eastern face of the Matterhorn. On it there must always be a certain amount of risk from falling stones. I shall not easily forget the sight of some of these as they bounded downwards towards the glacier. At length we found ourselves arrived, between some rugged teeth, at the edge of the arête, nearly two-thirds of the way from its base. During our halt for breakfast, at a little before 5 A.M., the sun rose in the far distance behind the Rhätian Alps, colouring the mountains on all sides with roseate hues. The Bernina group appeared on fire beneath the reddening light; Monte Rosa was first fringed, and then wholly absorbed in his newborn rays. The graceful summit of the mountain we were on at the time was amongst the most beautiful objects of the scene. All these effects made the sunrise, which I witnessed that morning, the grandest I ever saw in the Alps. We gained the pyramidal summit at twenty-five minutes past 6 A.M. The moonlight, and the coldness of the night—in the middle of which we started from the hut—had favoured us in the ascent of the lower snow-slopes; and this, together with the excellent condition of the snow of the arête, mainly accounts for the short time in which we reached the top.

The panorama which we enjoyed from the Weisshorn was finer than either that from the Gabelhorn or Rothhorn, because of the more central position and greater height of the peak. From it well nigh all the Oberland is visible; whereas, from the other two, the Weisshorn itself intercepts somewhat the

view towards the north. The Finsteraarhorn, Aletschhorn, and Bietschhorn strike one, from this point, as very much greater in bulk than any of the rest of their neighbours. The Matterhorn, as seen from the Weisshorn, stands out wonderfully—single and alone—more remarkable than from anywhere else I know of—its *raison d'être* more unaccountable than ever. After an hour and a quarter spent on the summit we started downwards, enjoying many a glissade on the snow slopes, which were in a very different condition to that in which we had found them in the earlier morning hours.

It is not hard to pronounce upon the respective difficulties of these four summits as they presented themselves in 1875. I must venture, so far as my own experience goes, to demur altogether to the opinion, which I believe is held by some, that one or more of the three peaks of which I have been writing last are harder than the Matterhorn. I am aware that nothing can be more different than the same mountain, on different days; but taking these four peaks near Zermatt, when each respectively is at its best for climbing, I have no hesitation in saying that the Matterhorn must ever be the hardest of the four. The Weisshorn arête, when in bad order, must be very labourious work indeed; but I cannot imagine it, ever, presenting difficulties to be overcome as serious as those which we experienced on August 10th between the 'shoulder' and 'roof' of the Matterhorn.

The latter peak is now so frequently attempted by second-rate guides and inexperienced amateurs that it appears to be necessary that its dangers, under certain conditions, should be strongly insisted on. The list of accidents on Mont Blanc affords lamentable proof of what carelessness can do in the way of making an easy mountain dangerous. If Zermatt follows in the ways of Chamonix, the first will assuredly not be the last fatal ascent of the Matterhorn.

There is, I should add, however, no piece of rockwork on the other peaks I climbed as stiff, in itself, as on the last ridge of the Rothhorn. In point of symmetrical beauty there can be no difficulty in assigning the palm. For combination of rock and snow, for gracefulness of outline, and for general grandeur, there is no mountain in the Alps which can equal the peak which I have last been writing of—the Weisshorn.