

regarder comme authentique l'ascension de 1812: elle ne présente, selon moi, aucun des caractères qui permettent de considérer une ascension comme historique. Je crois donc que l'on peut attribuer en toute sécurité l'honneur de la première ascension du Finsteraarhorn à M. Sulger, de Bâle, qui y monta, au mois d'août 1842, par le versant occidental.

HENRY CORDIER.

Every one must agree with M. Cordier that the account given in the '*Reise auf die Eisgebirge des Kantons Bern*' teems with impossibilities. An ascent of the Finsteraarhorn from the Rothhorn Sattel over the Oberaarhorn condemns itself, to say nothing of the minor discrepancies pointed out by M. Cordier. But this pamphlet does not give us the Meyers' own words; it is a compilation, and evidently a clumsy one, by a Herr Zschokke. Herr Studer's belief in the reality of the ascent is founded on a contribution by Dr. R. Meyer to the *Alpenrosen*, a Swiss periodical, for 1852, which we have not seen, and we know M. Cordier had not seen, but which we hope to consult before this question is dealt with in the '*History of Early Mountaineering*.' In the meantime it is remarkable that in the map drawn up by the Meyers (one of them says of it, '*Von der Karte bemerke ich dass sie mit vieler Genauigkeit verfasst sei*'), and published in 1813 with the '*Reise auf die Eisgebirge*,' the track to the Finsteraarhorn is laid down and corresponds roughly with M. Cordier's. It is at least possible that the spot where he breakfasted 2 hours from the top may be near the halting-place of Rudolf Meyer. The guides who made the ascent in 1812 were no mean crag-men, as two of them showed a few days later on the Jungfrau; and the emphatic language in which the comparative easiness of the W. face of the peak is spoken of, shows that their estimate of difficulties approached more nearly to that held at the present day than to that of twenty years ago. There is also a matter-of-fact statement in the account of the passage of the Strahleck that the flag lately planted on the top of the Finsteraarhorn was seen through a telescope.—EDITOR.

MOUNTAINEERING IN JUNE 1876. By F. GARDINER.

DURING the winter months, 1875-76, the weather had been mild for the season in the Alps, and but little snow had fallen; in March an Italian mountaineer had crossed the Old Weissthor without meeting difficulties of any very serious

nature; but with the months of April and May came a long continuance of bad weather, and snow fell in large quantities, retarding the mountaineering season by four or five weeks, so that when I arrived at the village of Plan les Isles, in the Val des Ormonds, accompanied by my friend Cox, and the guides, Peter Knubel and Peter Egger, on the 12th of June, I scarcely found the higher Alpine regions 'swept and garished' for our reception.

This district has been so charmingly described by early writers in 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' that I feel an apology is almost necessary for troubling Alpine readers with my impressions, and can only offer as an excuse the exceptional condition in which I found these ordinarily easy expeditions, and also trust that it may induce those of the climbing fraternity, who follow sheeplike in beaten tracks, to turn their attention to this part of the Alps, than which I scarcely know a better to break ground in, being conveniently situated between the three great mountaineering centres, Chamonix, Zermatt, and Grindelwald, and from its peaks commanding extensive views of the great mountains of each district.

Of course our object was to ascend the highest peak of the Diablerets, an expedition that 'mine host' of the Hôtel des Diablerets did his best to dissuade us from. The only concession we made was to alter our line of attack. It was our intention to have attempted the ascent by the Rochers de Culand, the route shown in the woodcut of the mountain in Mr. Ball's 'Central Alps,' but the constant cannonade kept up in that quarter from avalanches made us decide upon taking the glacier to the left of the Creux de Champs, which was buried in avalanche *débris* extending almost as far as the first inhabited châteaux. The pine trees and larches, rising from a base of snow, covered with their green foliage, looked strangely beautiful. I had once before seen the same effect in the Val Louise in Dauphiné early in June. The 13th we spent in a long training walk, and on the morning of the 14th started at 2.30 A.M. A native porter accompanied us, but he was not happy upon the snow, and although he might have remained with us for some days, he found that a domestic calamity, which had not existed when we started in the morning, prevented his extending his engagement with us. The ascent from the Creux de Champs is direct and steep. The route we had chosen lies on the glacier between Le Sexrouge and the highest peak of the Diablerets. I cannot ascertain whether this route has been taken before, but it probably has, for it is obviously shorter and less difficult than that by the Rocher de

Culand. The snow, owing to the prevalence of a N. wind, was in good condition, but later in the day when the sun asserted its power, it was not all that could be desired. Heavy clouds driving up from the N. shut out the view from that direction, but to the S. it was clear, and we had the peaks from Mont Blanc to Monte Rosa spread out before us, covered with an inconvenient quantity of snow. We had reached the summit at 8.55 A.M., but the strong N. wind prevented our making a long stay. Our route in descending lay over the Sanfleuron Glacier, between the Oldenhorn and the Tour de St. Martin: not a particle of the glacier was visible, all being covered with a sheet of snow, which, softened by the heat of the sun, made this part of the expedition very fatiguing, especially as we had to 'prod' with our ice-axes at every step in search for hidden crevices. Descending from the glacier to the Olden Alp upon a convenient avalanche, much to the consternation of our porter, we discovered the existence of the châteaux connected with it by a portion of their roofs appearing through the snow. A narrow and badly-made path upon the face of a precipice leads to this Alp from the châteaux of Reusch, and it seemed to us almost an impossibility to get cattle up and down by this perilous route.

Descending this path we reached the lovely Reusch Alp, which, at that season, was brilliant with masses of spring flowers, and shortly afterwards joined the new carriage-road which extends as far as the top of the Col de Pillon; at the Col is the boundary between Canton Berne and Canton Vaud, and the latter has not yet extended the road to Plan les Isles. We arrived at Gsteig at 2.30. The position of Gsteig is charming, and although the inn is rough and without any pretensions, we found it clean, the people civil, and the charges moderate; but our experience seems exceptional, for both at Plan les Isles and Lauinen the visitors' books teem with accounts of extortion and incivility.

The following day we crossed the Crinnen Pass to Lauinen, which we reached shortly before midday, and having laid in a store of provisions, started for the Stieren Dungal châteaux, where we passed the night previous to ascending the Wildhorn. About an hour's climbing brought us to the snow, by which many of the upper châteaux were still surrounded, and before reaching our destination, were caught in a violent thunderstorm and were completely wet through when we reached the châteaux, which luckily we found well supplied with wood, and soon dried our dripping garments at a good fire. It rained during the greater portion of the night, and we scarcely expected to be able to

start; but at dawn on the 16th the weather looked somewhat better: so we determined to set out. We now found we had slept too high up: we ought to have used one of the Kuhe Dungal châteaux some distance lower down as our resting-place. Our route lay over the Dungal Glacier, in order to reach which we had to climb a difficult precipice; the snow when reached was in an abominable condition and very fatiguing, and when we gained the summit, everything was so shrouded in thick mist that we were glad to have our traces to serve as guide when returning. As we wished to reach the village of An der Lenk, we descended by the glacier between the Niesenhorn and Schneidehorn at the head of the Iffigen Thal, which we found buried in snow, and the Iffigen See frozen over; and even as we passed along avalanches were falling, but by keeping well in the centre of the valley we were out of their reach. As we got lower down it was sad to see the havoc they had made among the forests on either side, and in one part we found a group of châteaux destroyed and partially buried in avalanche *débris*. The village of An der Lenk lies on flat, swampy ground, and must, I think, be malarious; but the Baths are situated on the hill-side, about 300 feet above the valley, and the Hôtel in connection with them is admirably managed, and offers accommodation equal to any I have yet met with among the mountains.

On the 17th it rained hard during the greater part of the day, and was intensely cold, snow falling almost as low as the Baths, and we congratulated ourselves upon being in such comfortable quarters; but towards evening the weather cleared, and we got our first view of the Wildstrubel all aglow in the sunset. An der Lenk being at some little distance from the Wildstrubel, we determined to sleep the following night at one of the châteaux near the Sieben Brunnen, which reminded me somewhat of the Trafoi Springs—the situation is equally lovely. The worthy cowherd, at whose chateau we slept, received us with effusion, and so far extended his efforts for our comfort as to detach the bells from the necks of his cattle, in order that we might sleep in peace. Starting at daybreak on the 19th, we climbed the steep slope beneath the Fluh See, and from that found no difficulty whatever in reaching the summit. The northern faces of the Diablerets, Wildhorn and Wildstrubel, bear a strong resemblance to each other, and present some very pretty pieces of climbing. From the summit we had a view of extreme grandeur; not a cloud or particle of mist was visible, and we had the giants of the Oberland and Pennines spread out before us: luckily we had arrived early and could devote some time to the contemplation of the view.

We found the snow soft in descending the Lämmeren Glacier, and reached the top of the Gemmi Pass shortly before mid-day. The aspect of the pass was bewildering: no Dauben See was visible, and where it is usually seen in summer time, extended one vast snowfield. Snow lay in huge masses on the path leading to Leukerbad, and patches of snow extended almost as far as that village. Some way below we saw gangs of workmen clearing a path, and extending across the Dauben See were the traces of some recent travellers; the path was of course completely buried in snow, and the track in the centre of the Dauben See was taken in order to avoid the avalanches which were constantly falling. The Schwarenbach Inn was surrounded by snow which extended far below it; it had been but recently opened, and was, to say the least of it, rather damp. The 20th we devoted to the ascent of the Balmhorn, from which we obtained a perfect view. This mountain had already been ascended on June 2, by Miss Stratton, the enterprising lady who during the winter of 1876 made the ascent of Mont Blanc; we had not been told of this ascent at the Schwarenbach Inn, and were surprised to find her card in the bottle on the summit. Huge cornices of wicked-looking snow overhung the S. face of the mountain, and the SE. arête, by which route we had hoped to reach the Lotschen Thal, was so loaded with snow and within range of fire, from the aforesaid wicked-looking cornices, that we were reluctantly compelled to abandon the idea and descend to Kandersteg.

Next day, we crossed the Lotschen Pass to Ried in the Lotschen Thal, where, somewhat to our consternation, we found the inn still closed. The landlord lives at Gampel; but fortunately the keys were in the possession of a cheerful young person with short petticoats and an incipient goitre, who 'came up smiling' from one of the chalets below the inn and set before us the very toughest hen that it has ever been my ill-fortune to masticate. On the 22nd, after spending the morning in placid contemplation of the Bietschhorn, which we hoped to storm next day, we started for a chalet marked Nesthütte on the Federal Map just above the pine trees. The heat was intense, and a storm was evidently brewing. We luckily reached the hut just before it broke. At daybreak next morning it was not raining, and we thought it just worth while starting, but the weather, instead of improving, got gradually worse, and when we had reached a height of about 11,600 feet in the midst of a violent snowstorm, we agreed reluctantly to accept defeat and return to Ried. On our arrival we were welcomed by Herr Lehner, who, hearing that the unusual pheno-

mena of mountaineers during the month of June had invaded the Lotschen Thal, left his valley quarters at Gampel to bid us welcome. He is a man profuse in apology and troubled with much serving, but anxious to do all in his power for travellers, and fully deserves every encouragement. The weather had completely broken during the latter part of the day, so we decided to abandon ambitious schemes upon the Bietschhorn and start for Lauterbrunnen by the Petersgrat on the first favourable opportunity, which luckily occurred the following day, the 24th, that ordinarily easy pass being rendered at least very fatiguing on account of the abominable condition of the snow. We took up our quarters at the Hôtel Belle Vue on the Wengern Alp, and stoically endured bad weather for three days; but the 28th was fine, and we started for the Eiger by lantern-light at 2 A.M. The quantity of snow upon this mountain was something appalling, and I doubt whether we were prudent in attempting the ascent under such conditions; it was very laborious, and the rocks frequently glazed with ice, the cold was intense, and we had but little feeling in hands or feet when we arrived on the summit at 9.10 A.M. We did not remain there long for various reasons, the cold being the principal one. During the descent we had to use every precaution to avoid the courses of avalanches, and at one place, while looking back at our route, an avalanche of alarming dimensions crossed the exact spot where we had stood about ten minutes previously; we returned to the Wengern Alp at 3 P.M.

During the afternoon the weather again broke, so we determined to give up further expeditions in the Oberland, and start for Simplon viâ the Grimsel Pass. When we reached the Grimsel Hospice on July 3, we found it surrounded by 30 feet of snow, all the outhouses destroyed by avalanches, travellers descending from the Mayenwand in sledges, and the lake near the hospice covered with ice and snow. Probably the large quantities of snow may have given to the peaks with which I commenced my mountaineering campaign this year an aspect of grandeur that might be wanting later in the season; but I shall always congratulate myself upon having chosen this district during a season when the higher peaks were, if not absolutely impossible, at least (as in the case of the Eiger) somewhat dangerous.