

sad story deserves to be noted. The foreign guides suffered in no way from local jealousy, and their conduct received the warmest praise from the French authorities.

Mons. H. Cordier, who was only 21, was a grandson of the geologist of that name and a great-nephew of M. Ramond, and gave promise of future distinction in the high honours he had taken in the *École des Sciences Politiques*. In the Alps he had climbed many of the Dauphiné peaks, and had shared last year in Mr. Middlemore's ascent of the Aiguille Verte from Argentière. His English friends, by whom he was warmly regarded, desire to join heartily with the French Club in its expressions of regret over their common loss.

FÊTES OF FOREIGN ALPINE CLUBS.—The second congress of the French Club will be held at Grenoble on the 12th August and following days. Special invitations have been courteously sent to many members of the English Club, and it is hoped that we may be represented at a meeting which promises to be very pleasant. The general meeting of the Italian Alpine Club is finally fixed for the 25th August at Auronzo. Another meeting was held at the Little St. Bernard on July 30 and 31, under the presidency of Mr. R. H. Budden. The Swiss Alpine Club met at Glarus on July 21 for a week of feasting and climbing. The German Club meets at Traunstein, in the Bavarian Alps, on August 21.

NOTICES.

A GUIDE-BOOK TO VAL D'AOSTA.*

In nothing has there been a more general advance of late years than in local guide books. It would be easy to spend a page in describing and illustrating the faults of the old school, the distinguishing mark of which was to give the smallest possible amount of information at the largest possible expense of type.

But we must go at once to the Italian work before us. The guide to the Val d'Aosta of M. l'Abbé Gorret and Baron Bich is a closely-bound volume of 400 pages. It is an excellent specimen of the new school, which is practical, intelligent, and thorough. It commences with a series of notices—geological, botanical, historical, philological, commercial—which will have each their interest for some readers. We can only cull a few facts promiscuously from them. There are now five observatories at Ivrea, Aosta, Cogne, the Great and Little St. Bernard, where meteorological observations are regularly taken. A French patois belonging to the *Langue d'oïl* is the native tongue of Val d'Aosta. There is, however, in one of the side valleys, that of Gressoney, an odd invasion of German. Numerous theories have been started to account for this curious colony. One writer maintains that we are in the presence of a tribe of Saxons escaped from Charlemagne, another that the German-speaking villagers are the de-

* Guide de la Vallée d'Aoste, par M. l'Abbé Gorret et M. le Baron Bich. Turin, Casanova, 1877. Prix 6 francs.

scendants of some soldiers of Otho III. It seems probable that they came from the neighbouring parts of Switzerland, attracted by commercial advantages in the days when the St. Theodule was a frequented route and the Val d'Ayas was called 'the merchant's valley.'

Aosta and its antiquities are naturally described at length, and many travellers who have spent an idle day at the Hôtel du Mont Blanc, will, when they take up this excellent chapter, find for the first time how much they have missed. Nor are the Aosta antiquities of the class not unknown to readers of local handbooks, which grow less interesting on approach and investigation. We would specially draw attention to the very beautiful mosaics which, as at Siena, decorate the cathedral floor. In the centre of the principal design sits the Year, represented as a beardless youth holding in his hand the sun and moon; in smaller circles round him are figures representing the Months.

The very vigorous grotesque carvings of the stalls deserve notice both in the cathedral and at St. Ours. The cloister attached to the latter church is most interesting. Close by stands the priory built in the fifteenth century by Georges de Challant, a great local benefactor. Its picturesque octagonal tower, its frescoed chambers, its walls and windows interlaced and surrounded by elaborate bands of terra-cotta ornaments, all deserve and repay a detailed study.

Turning to the strictly Alpine part of the work, we find each valley treated from the tourists' and climbers' point of view in a way which recalls the method and terseness of the 'Alpine Guide.' *Cogne* is a good example of the general treatment, and here the list of excursions ends up with '*Pics et glaciers encore à étudier*,' a heading which ought to be welcome to the mountaineer. We learn also that a mule-path has been constructed to the ridge of the *Pousset*, and that the access to the highest peak overlooking the valley has been made easier. Nor do the authors omit practical details as to guides and inns.

There can be little doubt that when Aosta is, as it must be before long, connected with the rest of Italy by a railroad, which will do away with the long dusty drive from Ivrea, it will become frequented by travellers returning from Italy as well as by those descending from the Alps. Its inhabitants hope for still closer connection with the world, and one of their favourite projects is a tunnel under Mont Blanc, which they undertake to show is the easiest railway route beneath the Alps. But mountaineers need not wait for railways or tunnels. They will find that a summer could hardly be better passed than in and about Val d'Aosta, at Gressoney, Val Tournanche, *Cogne*, and *Courmayeur*; and those who are tempted to spend a holiday in this region cannot fail to reap the advantage of some added pleasure by making this volume their companion. We are glad to add that, though old *Jean Tairraz* no longer lives to play the host, that most comfortable of Italian inns, the Hôtel du Mont Blanc at Aosta, is kept up by his family, and may still be counted on as a resting-place by English travellers.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS.—We have received from Messrs. Stanford an excellent guidebook to the Engadine, written by a native, Herr Caviezel, full of practical information as to inns and lodgings as well as

excursions. At present we can only call attention to the new volume of the French Alpine Club, and a splendidly got-up and thoroughly satisfactory monograph of Mont Blanc by M. Charles Durier.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ALPINE CLUB.

May 8, 1877.—A General Meeting took place at the Club Rooms, Mr. HINCHLIFF, *the President, in the chair.*

Messrs. A. SLEE and A. C. SLEE were elected members.

Mr. BARLOW proposed, and Mr. Lewis seconded, the following resolution :—

‘That, in the opinion of this Meeting, the rooms now occupied by the Club are totally inadequate to its accommodation, and that it is highly desirable that steps be taken to dispose of the present lease and to obtain better rooms elsewhere.’

After considerable discussion the above was carried by 30 to 17.

Mr. BARLOW then further proposed, and Mr. Lewis seconded :—

‘That the Committee be requested to consider whether the present income of the Club is sufficient to provide for increased accommodation, or how additional funds, if necessary, can most conveniently be raised.’

Mr. MOORE moved as an amendment to leave out all the words after ‘accommodation,’ and instead thereof to substitute ‘and to report to a future General Meeting.’ This was seconded by Mr. Wallroth.

On a Division the amendment was lost by 24 against 27, and the original resolution was then put and carried.

June 5, 1877.—A General Meeting took place, Mr. A. E. MATTHEWS, *Vice-President, in the chair.*

Mr. W. M. CONWAY was elected as member.

Mr. PENDLEBURY read a paper on ‘New Ascents of the Grivola and Grand Tour de St. Pierre.’

Mr. C. C. TUCKER pointed out that there were still unclimbed peaks in the Graians, amongst them the Pointe d'Ondezana, and that the ranges round the head of Val Soana had been as yet very imperfectly explored.

Mr. D. FRESHFIELD mentioned the intention of the Italian Alpine Club to improve the accommodation for travellers by encouraging inns and erecting huts. The Italian Club consider that it would be greatly to the advantage of Alpine climbers if a plan for a model hut could be drawn up by competent hands, and they are anxious to receive suggestions or designs for this purpose, which should be addressed to the Club at the Palazzo Ferroni, Florence.

The Summer Dinner of the Club took place on June 19th at the Crystal Palace, when 76 members and their friends sat down to dinner.