

MOUNTAIN EXCURSIONS IN GREECE.

ASCENTS OF MT. DELPHI (DIRPHE), IN EUBCEA; MT. LYKERI, EAST PEAK (LYCOREIA), THE HIGHEST POINT OF PARNASSUS; AND MT. ZIRIA (CYLLENE), WEST AND HIGHEST PEAK, THE HIGHEST SUMMIT, AFTER TAYGETUS, IN THE MOREA.—On May 9, 1878, Messrs. F. E. Blackstone and F. F. Tuckett left Chalcia, in Eubœa, and, after a leisurely ride (on mules) of five or six hours through scenery of constantly increasing beauty, reached the upland village of Steni, at the south foot of Dirphe, at a height of nearly 1,500 feet above the sea, and close to a brawling mountain torrent, which probably diminishes considerably in volume later in the season. Here they passed the night in excellent quarters, and at 5.10 the next morning started for the ascent of Mt. Delphi, as it is called by the modern Greeks. About 750 feet (by aneroid) above the village the path enters a noble forest of gigantic old chestnuts, which cover the mountain-side for a height of some 1,250 feet, the superior limit being 3,450 feet above the sea, lovely views of which, and of the mountains surrounding the plains of Bœotia beyond it, were disclosed at every turn. The chestnuts were succeeded by pines, extending upwards for about 300 feet, and, just beyond the line where they ceased, a col was reached which connects the highest peak of Dirphe with another summit—Xero Vuni (4,692 feet)—to the S.E. From this spot—attainable by mules—there is a grand view, on the farther or north-eastern side, into the head of a magnificent gorge or valley, in which is situated the village of Stropoñæs, probably well deserving a visit, and serving as a point of departure for the ascent of Dirphe to anyone approaching it from the direction of Koumi (Cumæ), a port on the east coast of the island, a colony from which is said to have founded its more famous Italian namesake. Turning sharp to the left along the dividing ridge, a second and lower col (about 3,600 feet above sea-level), immediately at the foot of the final southern slope of the mountain, was reached, and, there being a spring of excellent water—the last obtainable—close at hand, a halt was called about 7 o'clock. The time to this point had been one hour and three quarters, the pace being very easy. Nothing could be more simple or direct than the remainder of the ascent, which was straight up, at a rather high angle, over broken, rocky ground interspersed with patches of grass; but, as there was no occasion for hurry, and every inducement under a broiling sun to linger and enjoy the exquisite and momentarily widening view, not much less than two hours were consumed in attaining the more easterly of the two summits. This is slightly exceeded in height by its western neighbour, which last was reached at 9.45. Between the two, and on opposite sides of a ridge connecting them, there were two small crater-like depressions, in which were growing grass and flowers amid patches of unmelted snow; but though these and the peculiar outline of the mountain may have suggested the idea to some minds of a volcanic origin, no evidence whatever was observed to justify such a theory.

Light clouds at times drifting over the summit somewhat obscured the view whilst adding to its charm, and, though Olympus could not

be distinguished, Cyllene, Helicon, Parnassus, Oeta, Othrys, Pelion, the Gulf of Volo, the whole of Eubœa from Mt. Oche to the Straits of Artemisium, the course of the Euripus, Chalcis, Pentelicus, Hymettus, Parnes, Cithæron, and Boœtia were all visible. The following plants in flower (kindly named by G. C. Churchill, Esq.) were collected on the summit by Mr. Tuckett: *Crocus nivalis*, *Viola poetica* (?), and a *Fritillaria* of doubtful species.

According to the map of the French Etat-Major the height of Dirphe is 1,745 mètres, or 5,725 English feet. Mr. Tuckett, who was provided with two boiling-point thermometers and an excellent aneroid, obtained rather higher results, viz. 5,773 and 5,845 feet respectively, by comparison with his kind friend Captain Mansell's barometer at Chalcis, and with readings at Athens most obligingly communicated to him by Dr. Julius Schmidt, the well-known director of the National Observatory. The mean of the two boiling-point thermometers at 10.30 A.M. was 94°·22 C. (equivalent to a pressure of 615·67 mm.), with which the aneroid showed the close agreement of 615 mm., the air temperature in the shade being 11°·7 C. Captain Mansell's barometer (20 feet above sea-level) at 9 A.M. stood at 756·31 mm., with an air temperature of 21°·7 C. Dr. Schmidt's instrument (360 feet above the sea) at 10.30 indicated a pressure of 748·47 mm., with an air temperature of 24° C.

At 11.45, after two hours' enjoyment of the glorious panorama, the descent was commenced, and the spring reached in three-quarters of an hour by the help of some glissades down snow-slopes to the east of the line of ascent, and the village in one hour and three-quarters more of very leisurely going. The start thence being delayed till 4 P.M., darkness came on before Chalcis was reached at 9.45.

The same party, after visiting Thermopylæ, Salona (Amphissa), and Delphi, slept at the large and beautifully situated mountain-village of Arachova, or Rhakhova (Anemoria?), 3,232 feet in height, commanding a superb view of the peaks of the Morea beyond the Gulf of Corinth. At 3.30 A.M. on May 16 they started in brilliant moonlight for the ascent of Mt. Lykeri, the highest point of Parnassus, accompanied by a shepherd as guide. An easy ascent of one hour brought them to the summit (4,200–4,300 feet) of a ridge W.N.W. of the village, and about 1,000 feet above it, which forms the southern boundary or rim of an extensive crater-like upland plain lying to the west of the principal summits of Parnassus, and stretching away for several miles in the direction of Delphi, where it terminates abruptly in the grand cliffs of the Phædriades. Large portions are cultivated and produce corn, and on it are three lakes and two 'kalyvias,' or summer villages, belonging respectively to Arachova and Kastri (Delphi). Both of these, as well as the site of the famous Corycian cave—to reach which involves a detour of two or three hours—lie to the left of the track for the ascent of Mt. Lykeri, which, after descending about 200 feet on the northern side of the ridge, skirts round the eastern bounding slopes of the plain, at a slight elevation above it, and, alternately rising and falling, next climbs rapidly through fine pine-woods to a more bare and elevated plateau, from which the views between the partly pine-clad

spurs and *mamelons* of rock are exquisitely beautiful and picturesque. A solitary shepherd's hut (*ποιμενος*, pronounced 'peémino,' the *c* being dropped), made of rough pine-boughs, and open in front, was passed on the right, at which during the descent a halt was made, and bowls of delicious *διαουρη* (pronounced 'theeaortees')—sheep's-milk junket, slightly sour—were most hospitably supplied by the inmates, and proved very refreshing.

At 7.15, after a short halt for breakfast, a steeper portion of the ascent was entered on, and, after about half an hour's progress in an easterly direction, during which the highest shepherd's hut was passed, a snow-filled basin or valley was reached and traversed, a ridge at its head and a second basin crossed, and then the final peak attacked. The pace having been very leisurely, and some step-cutting having been necessary, or at least desirable, the actual summit was not reached till 10.20. Ten minutes previously, whilst halting on a rock in the snow, a rather smart earthquake shock was felt, a novel experience in mountaineering, and one which in the Alps would be a fresh source of danger, the more serious as its occurrence could never be foreseen and provided against, and the avalanches of ice, snow, and rock which it would probably occasion might take place when the position of the climber rendered retreat or shelter impossible. $1\frac{3}{4}$ hr. was spent on the summit in making observations and studying the wonderful view, which is not only of great beauty and grandeur, but, in the historic interest of its details, certainly unsurpassed by any in the world. To the south Taygetus was clearly distinguished, and reared itself up most grandly, and nearer, in a line from east to west, lay the summits of Cyllene, Chelmos, Olonos, and Voidhia (Panhellenicon) behind Patras. Mt. Guiona (pronounced 'Jona'), in Ozolian Locria, north-west of Amphissa, and west-north-west of Parnassus—which, according to the map of the *Etat-Major Français*, it overtops by 174 feet—was well seen; and of course the whole of Bœotia, with the channel of the Euripus beyond, lay spread out like a map, whilst due north and south respectively the Maliac (Gulf of Læmia) and Corinthian Gulfs were conspicuous and beautiful features. Eubœa was obscure, but some of the islands beyond it could be made out, and Olympus, or a lofty snow mountain apparently in its exact position, was also visible.

On the summit Mr. Tuckett gathered *Draba athoa* (?), the only species in flower; and farther down the following, also in flower, were collected by him: (at 7,000 feet) a species of *Crocus* unknown to Mr. Churchill; (6,500–7,000 feet) *Scilla bifolia*; (6,000–6,500 feet) *Anemone blanda*—a form closely allied to *A. appennina* of Dalmatia and Tuscany, which is also cultivated in English gardens.

The pine woods, which are of a rather scattered and open character, contain some old and large trees, but the majority are much distorted, as if the struggle for existence was a hard one, and, though very picturesque, would not make good timber.

The map of the *Etat-Major Français* gives the height of Mt. Lykeri as 2,459 mètres, or 8,068 English feet. Mr. Tuckett's boiling-point observations, by comparison with Athens as a base, give (as in the case of Dirphe) a rather higher result, viz. 2,517.4 mètres, or 8,259

English feet. The mean of the two boiling-point thermometer readings at 10.45 A.M. was $92^{\circ}03$ C.=567.33 mm., the air temperature being 10° C. Dr. Schmidt's barometer at the same hour indicated (by a slight interpolation) 753.76 mm., with an air temperature of $20^{\circ}2$ C.

At 12.5 the descent was commenced by a sitting glissade, the effect of which, in saturating the petticoats (*fustanella*) of the worthy guide—who managed this, his first, attempt very creditably—excited endless merriment and pantomime throughout the day. At 1.25 the snow—through which myriads of large and brilliant Alpine crocuses were forcing their heads—was finally quitted, and at 3 the *ποιμέρος*, already referred to, was reached. Halting till 3.30, the col on the ridge bounding the plain on the south was gained at 5.10, and Arachova reached at 6. The evening light shone gloriously on the blue waters of the Gulf of Corinth and the peaks of the Morea; and later there were wonderfully contrasted tints of deep blue shadow and yellow glow, followed, as the sun sank, by the splendours of a full moon.

The same party left Corinth at 7 A.M. (on horseback) for the village of Trikala, situated high (3,445 feet) on the side of the valley of the Sys, a torrent which descends from Mt. Ziria (Cyllene) in a N.E. direction and enters the Gulf of Corinth near the village of Xylo Kastron. After visiting *en route* the interesting plateau and ruins of Sicyon, the charmingly situated villages of Súli, Velína, and Márkesi were successively passed, but being overtaken by darkness shortly after leaving the last-named place, and the track, which none of the men had previously traversed, proving very rough and difficult to distinguish, it was 11 P.M. before Trikala was reached.

The following morning, whilst Mr. Blackstone proceeded, with the dragoman (Angelos Melissinos), 'agoyiates,' horses, and baggage, by a pass to Goura or Gura, a village near the Lake of Phonia (Pheneos), Mr. Tuckett started at 7.45, with a native as guide, for the ascent of Mt. Ziria (Cyllene). At 9.10, after a steepish ascent, a narrow, straight, and nearly level valley was reached, which led in 20 minutes to an upland plain, partially cultivated. Traversing this for a quarter of an hour, and then proceeding along a narrow continuation of it till 10.20, a *ποιμέρος* (height about 5,200 feet) was reached not far from the foot of the steep, bare, grey, rocky slopes leading up to the highest ridge of the mountain, the actual summit of which is situated at the west extremity of a crescent-shaped ridge some miles in length. A halt was called for *διαουρη*, and to admit of the really splendid fellows who were here established with their flocks examining all the novelties in the possession of the stranger—the, to them, marvellous powers of a telescope being very 'great medicine,' and calling forth shouts of childlike laughter and delighted astonishment. Starting again about 11, and taking it very easily up the rocky slope, where the heat was intense, the summit (which is a double one) was reached by the eastern ridge at 12.45. The view was cloudless, but at the same time not very clear, owing to the presence of a certain amount of haze. During his two previous visits to Greece Mr. Tuckett had noticed that the glittering crest of Cyllene was visible from a greater number of points than any other Greek mountain, and he had therefore specially marked

it down as deserving attention. The converse proved equally true when on the summit, for the whole Morea—or at least its principal features—was included in the wonderful panorama. The rich variety of the details may be inferred from the following names of places and objects which were distinctly recognisable: Salamis, Hymettus, Gerania, the Isthmus of Corinth, Mycenæ, the Plain of Argos, Nauplia and its gulf, Mounts Aphrodisium, Mænalus, Taygetus, Ithome (?), Olonos, Chelmos, Voidhia, Verdussia, Guiona, Parnassus, Helicon, &c. &c., with, of course, a considerable stretch of the Gulf of Corinth and a portion of the Lake of Phonia. Chelmos was the most imposing mountain-form visible, and constitutes a noble *massif* in itself.

Two and three-quarter hours were spent on the summit in observations and the leisurely enjoyment of the wonderfully beautiful and interesting view; and the temperature in the shade being 75° (!) Fahr. at 2.45 P.M., though moderated by a gentle breeze passing over patches of half-melted snow, nothing could well be more luxurious in its way. Cyl-lene is the barest, and in itself, it must be confessed, one of the ugliest of mountains, looking much more attractive at a distance than close at hand; but, being very easy of ascent and commanding a panorama of such exceptional magnificence, it well repays a visit. The mean of readings at 2.45 and 3 P.M. of two boiling-point thermometers was $92^{\circ}6$ C. = 579.59 mm., with (as already stated) an air temperature in the shade of $23^{\circ}9$ C. (75° F.) Dr. Schmidt's barometer at Athens, at the same hour, stood at 754.38 mm., air $30^{\circ}7$ C. ($87^{\circ}3$ F.), which gives a height above sea-level of 2,446 mètres, or 8,025 English feet, the French determination being 2,374 mètres, or 7,789 English feet. Flowers were exceptionally scarce, and *Crocus nivalis* was the only species found.

At 3.30 P.M. the descent was commenced, by way of an elevated col, to the S. or S.S.E. of the summit, from which the view of the Lake of Phonia was very charming. Below it a pretty little *alp* was traversed, and then followed some scattered pine-woods (one tree measured 15 feet in circumference at 3 feet from the ground), succeeded by a plain with shepherds' huts, separated from Gura and the valley of the Aroanius, which flows into the lake, by a low ridge, resembling in appearance an ancient *moraine*, and sweeping round the skirts of Ziria in a peculiar and graceful curve. This plain was reached at 5, the ridge at 5.25 (whence there was another lovely peep of the Lake of Phonia), and Gura itself at 6. The French map gives the height of the lake as 758 mètres (2,487 English feet), and that of Gura may probably be 500 feet greater, or about 3,000 feet, as it is situated considerably above the stream of the Aroanius.

Four days' ride, through most charming scenery, *viâ* Zarukla, the source of the Styx, Solos, the monastery of Megaspelion (Megaspelæon), and Vostitza (Ægion), took the party on the afternoon of June 1 to Patras, where their delightful four weeks' wanderings in Greece terminated.