

wreathing snow-clouds, making weird music in these desolate fastnesses. The clear satiating air, the delicate purity of the Alpine tints, have given way to fog, mist, slush, and smoke-laden atmosphere. Would you recall these mountain pictures? Draw close the curtains, stir the coals into an indignant crackling blaze, and fashion in the rising smoke the mountain vista. How these scenes crowd back into the mind, with a revivability proportionate to the impression originally made! What keener charm than to pass in review the memories of these simple, wholesome pleasures; to see again, as clear as in the reality, every ledge, every hand and foot hold; to feel the fingers tingle and the muscles instinctively contract at the recollection of some tough scramble on rock or glacier?

I have endeavoured to give the impressions made by our expedition. I only wish that anyone could derive a hundredth part of the pleasure in reading that I have had in writing them.

AN ASCENT OF THE TÄSCHHORN FROM THE FÉE GLACIER.

By the REV. F. T. WETHERED. Read before the Alpine Club on March 4, 1879.

THE Saas Grat, which within the memory of Professor Forbes was scarcely known to mountaineers, remains even now insufficiently explored, and yet there is no district which includes a greater number of first-rate glacier expeditions than that extending from Monte Rosa to the Balferin.

It is not the object of a paper like this to usurp the function of a local guide-book; but, as I am anxious to draw special notice to the varied attractions of this glorious range, as well as to the neighbourhood of Saas in general, I trust that I may be pardoned if I dwell very briefly—before starting on my climb—upon the general configuration of its peaks and passes, and if I touch upon some other interesting particulars connected with the Saas Thal. Take, in the first place, its passes (the heights are reduced from the mètres of the Federal map into English feet). The Dom Joch, estimated at 14,062 ft., is the highest purely *Swiss* pass; and is only inferior in height to the Sesia Joch, the Lys Joch, and the Col de la Brenva, in the whole Alps.

The Nadel Joch, set down by the same authority at 13,672 feet, would, as Mr. Foster says, be a 'grand pass if it were not dwarfed by its rival.' The Mischabel Joch (from whose summit I enjoyed one of the most splendid double views I ever

had from a col, on August 1 last) is 12,652 ft., whilst the Adler and Alphubel (both over 12,000 ft.) as well as the Gassenried, the height of which is about 12,050 ft. although not noticed on the Federal map at all, are highly interesting passes. Nor are the peaks, which these passes divide, unworthy of their connecting links. The Rymfischhorn, the Strahlhorn, the Allalein, the Alphubel, and the Balferin, are all easily reached in crossing the cols between them, and each admits of variation of route, as I have myself proved on two of them. The *pièces de résistance*, however, of this range are of course the Grosse Mischabel Hörner, including the Dom, or Grabenhorn, (which at 14,942 ft. is the highest mountain wholly in Switzerland); the Täschhorn (14,758 ft.), which is certainly not lower than third on the *Swiss* list; whilst the Nadelgrat, with its pair of sentinel peaks, acts as an advanced northern guard to the great *massif*. From this group the ridge bends round to the NE., rises in the Ulrichshorn (or Klein Mischabel), and terminates in the Balferinhorn overlooking Visp. Thus composed—and intersected by a glacier system such as the Findelen, the Allalein, the Fée, and the Gassenried—the Saas Grat holds a position of the highest order amongst Alpine watersheds.

It will take time, however, before Saas will compete on equal terms with Zermatt. The Matterhorn and its weird associations possess, of course, attractions peculiarly their own, and I am certainly not the man to depreciate the sister valley. Albeit, for loveliness of situation and splendour of near view, there is no hamlet to correspond with Fée in the Zermatt neighbourhood.

Not long ago a gentleman, who spent some weeks at Saas in 1872, wrote me a letter in praise of this district. After dilating upon its charms, he added: 'But there is yet another inducement for the visitor to seek Saas, viz., a famous iron spring, which, from want of funds, has not been made use of for years. Those who are cognisant of the great change which has come over the value of the property in the Aarthal,' he continues, 'known by the name of the Apollinaris Spring, can easily imagine how the patronage of a few medical men might improve the property at Saas.'

As a centre for mountaineers it would be difficult—the valley of Zermatt excepted—to find its equal. In common with the latter, the Saas Thal is rich in attraction for climbers on either side of it. The mountains on its eastern watershed, though not to be compared with the Mischabel in the general attraction which they offer to climbers, command splendid

views of the Saas Grat opposite, whilst its passes are by no means unimportant in interest.

The Rossbodenhorn (or Fletschhorn proper) ought not to be omitted from the 'list' of any active member of the club, either as a *fait accompli* or else as a climb in store; whilst the Laquinhorn and Weissmies must be ascents within the compass of moderate mountaineers. The Fletsch Joch, the Laquin Joch, the Zwischenbergen Pass, the Rossboden Joch, the Simmeli Pass, and the Gamser Joch,* varying in respective difficulty (the two last in conjunction with the Sirvolten Pass across the E. ridge of the Nanzerthal, and lying to the N. of the Sirvoltenhorn), will take the traveller over to the Simplon Road.

There are many charming walks of a less enterprising character in the neighbourhood of the village, amongst which the Trift Grätli (a spur of the Trifthorn), immediately at its back, is deserving of special notice; whilst, to return to the W. side of the valley, the Egginhorn and Mittaghorn are each within an easy day from the hotel, and are strongly recommended for the grandeur of their views in a note made last year in the hotel book by a member of the club.

Last, not least, the neighbourhood of Saas is highly interesting from an historical point of view, in connection with the Saracenic invasions of the tenth century, as many of my hearers are probably aware; and it is to the *mountain nomenclature* of the valley that the historian is largely indebted for his clue to research. 'Allalein' (Ā'la'lain, 'very lofty of the fount'), 'Alphubel' (Alfu'abl, 'a thousand blocks'), 'Mis-chabel' (Ma'wil'shibl, 'abode of the whelps'), and 'Balferin' (Bau'u'lfari'ain, 'slope of the two peaks'), are instances well in point; whilst, in the words 'Almagel' ('the halting place'), 'Distel' (Dī'lsatal, 'possessor of the eagle'), and 'Eien' (Ain, 'eye, source—of stream'), we have also indications of a Moorish origin.† Nor is it remarkable that the Saracens should thus have left their traces upon this quarter of the Alps, for we have it on the authority of Bishop Liutprand, of Cremona, that these marauders secured a position of some years' permanence along the whole Alpine chain, in the year 942 A.D., the Great St. Bernard and the Septimer Passes being the two they principally used. From these they carried on raids upon the adjacent districts, although for the most part living peaceably

* See 'Alpine Journal,' vol. vii. pp. 215, 216.

† I am indebted to Mr. Nicholl (of Balliol College), the Lord Almoner's Professor and Reader of Arabic, at Oxford, for the above *conjectural* derivations from the Arabic.—F. T. W.

and intermarrying with the women of the country. It appears that Hugo, King of Italy and Count of Provence, had a formidable rival in one Berengar, Marquis of Ivrea, who was, however, at that time north of the Alps; and, in order to put an obstacle in the way of his return, the king, who had been laying siege to Fraxinetum,* where the Saracens had taken up their head-quarters, concluded a treaty with them, to the effect 'ut Saraceni in montibus qui Sueviam atque Italiam dividunt starent.'† Hence the Arabic sounding names in the Saas Thal, and 'Pontresina' ('Ponte Saracena'), in the Engadine Alps, not far from the Septimer Pass; whilst we touch upon them again in the family name of 'Saratz,' at Pontresina itself.‡

In the first volume of the 'Alpine Journal' Mr. Coutts Trotter writes that his party, on their way to the Mischabel Joch, in 1862, 'examined carefully the cliffs of the Täschhorn and Dom, in order to see whether it appeared possible to climb the, at that time, unascended Täschhorn from its eastern side, and that they came to the conclusion that it was probably not impossible, though the climb would doubtless be very long and very steep.' To these remarks Mr. George, then the editor of the 'Journal,' appended a foot-note: 'The eastern side of the Mischabel Hörner could never be climbed unless when the rocks were denuded of snow, which very seldom happens.' Mr. Whympster also seems to have been impressed not a little with their formidable appearance from the slopes of the Weissmies, in 1860. 'The peaks seemed to me then,' he writes in 'Scrambles' (p. 4), 'hopelessly inaccessible from this direction.' Such surmises and vaticinations have been lulled to rest—with many another Alpine prophecy—by the course of subsequent events.

The eastern face of the Dom was successfully ascended in 1875 by the Messrs. Puckle, and the corresponding problem solved on the Täschhorn by Mr. P. Watson and myself in the summer of the following year. I have no hesitation in saying that the rocks on the Saas side of these mountains offer some of the finest climbing in the Alps.

At Zermatt, one early day in August 1876, Watson and I made solemn compact to meet at Saas the next Saturday even-

* Fraxinetum is situated between Fréjus and St. Tropez.

† See Liutprand, *Antapodosis*, bk. v. cap. xvii.

‡ See, however, on the subject of this paragraph, the Editor's Note on the Saracens in the Alps, at the end of this paper.

ing. The 'Monte Moro' hotel was, of course, our trysting-place; our project, a return into the Zermatt valley over the summit of one of the Mischabel 'Twins.'

After a successful time at Zermatt, I set off on the morning of August 5 for the Adler, with Laurent Proment of Courmayeur as sole companion. The weather was fine; the views were glorious. So fine was it, that on the way we effected an ascent of the Rympfischhorn by a variation from the ordinary route, striking the Rympfischwänge rocks not far from the base of the col.

The moon shone brilliantly along the Saas Grat range as we entered the village between 9 and 10 P.M., and the Mischabel giants, with the Fée Glacier at their base, were beautiful 'beyond compare.'

Watson, who had turned up in Saas the day before, had beguiled his waiting hours by ascending the Rossbodenhorn. Having long before our arrival given me up as faithless, he had acted accordingly and sloped off to bed, but goodnaturedly insisted on turning out and giving me my supper.

Next morning plans were discussed. Alexander Burgener, Watson's guide, counselled us to give up all thought of the Dom and 'go in' for a maiden ascent of the Täschhorn from this side. A careful examination of the rocks, the previous winter, had disclosed a route which in their present favourable condition would, he was confident, land us on the summit.

An additional guide, one Benedict Venetz, of Stalden, whom I have pleasure in recommending, and a sturdy local porter for the transport of blankets and provisions to the Gletscher Alp, made up our contingent to six in all, and shortly after 4 P.M. we meandered in single file up the corkscrew path which leads through the woods to Fée. The curious 'stations' for which this path is famous, erected on rocks, the striations on which give evidence of glacial action in bygone years, terminate at last in a votive chapel containing all manner of wax models—hands, arms, legs, &c.—the votive or propitiatory offerings to Our Lady, made by her thankful or suffering devotees. A pilgrimage, I believe, is annually made to the shrines by the surrounding peasantry on a certain holy day of the Church, and a solemn function ensues.

Ere long, as we wended our upward way, the most majestic mountain circle that I ever yet beheld burst into sight. The vast glacier of Fée lay extended right and left before us; under our feet were countless wild flowers, which, even thus late in the Alpine season, fringed the footpath in such profusion that I gathered, from mere curiosity, five-and-twenty different

specimens without leaving it for more than ten yards at a time. The village of Fée is rightly named. No 'fairy' enchantress ever conjured up such splendid battlements as those which environ this charming spot. As we passed through its long narrow street the villagers, lounging about in holiday costume, were enjoying quietly their day of rest, whilst a few were keenly disporting themselves in an innocent game at bowls. The smiling meadows around would, perhaps, be almost outraged by the introduction of an hotel in their midst; and yet, unhalloed as the idea may seem, I cannot imagine, for the life of me, why the 'fairies' have had it all their own way hitherto, in this respect! Will no mortal, more matter of fact than the rest, supply a deficiency which is largely felt? Amidst an amphitheatre of 'everlasting hills' more perfect than any mere imagination can paint, Fée stands forth a very paragon of loveliness, altogether unsurpassed in Switzerland.

From the Hinter Allalein to the Ulrichshorn and Gemshorn a scene presents itself which *my* pen at any rate shall not desecrate by attempting a written description. As we reached the Gletscher Alp, two hours after leaving Saas, some blooming milkmaids vacated one of the milk-châlets in our favour, and we got a very comfortable shake-down on the hay. The bold cliffs of the Mischabel, as they towered behind our sleeping quarters that night, are not likely to be forgotten by those who saw them.

Two o'clock next morning found us once more on the move. The Täschhorn had been with us in our hurried dreams, and was finally adopted as our pass to Zermatt. The Dom from the Gletscher Alp seemed too long altogether, unless we were prepared to sleep on the top; and, moreover, the probability of falling stones on its face was by no means inviting. Alexander, however, thought that the Täschhorn would not trouble us with such projectiles.

Our mountain seems to have been 'under a cloud' when Mr. Foster made his first advance upon the Dom Joch in 1869, for, 'singularly enough,' as he says, it was overlooked by his party altogether on that occasion. As a result of this missing link they found themselves, when too late to retrace their steps for the former col, making for the Nadel Joch, which was crossed to Randa; the Dom Joch reserved for another day. Fortunately the weather or the 'fairies' befriended us, and we experienced no such difficulty in our search for glory in 1876. Framed between the Dom Joch and Mischabel Joch, the great peak rose defiantly from his basement of ice, and there was no possibility of mistaking his

identity. Following the route of the Mischabel Joch for some distance, we bore to the right on approaching the rocky ridge descending from the Alphubel, which those who know the glacier will easily recognise. Wending our uneven way amongst a labyrinth of beetling seracs and huge crevasses, into which this portion of the glacier is broken, we made straight for the foot of the Täschhorn rocks.

The weather by this time had materially improved, and our hopes of success ran high.

The course we had to follow, although tortuous and somewhat involved, was for a while not difficult to thread. Plain sailing upwards on this troubled sea was soon, however, destined to end.

At the time of roping, Burgener and Venetz were attached to Watson, whilst Proment and I contented ourselves on another coil. We had not been trussed more than twenty minutes—I was standing upon a narrow ledge of hard ice, of about a foot in width, and forming the boundary line between two steep slopes of the glacier—when Proment slipped suddenly and unaccountably right out of his steps. His heels flew well from under him, and, with ice-axe in hand and the usual mountaineering *impedimenta* at his back (including a wine tin), like some ill-fated hero in the *Iliad*,

δούπησεν δὲ πεσὼν, ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῷ.

Fifteen feet of good cord were firmly between us; and, when it became taut in a few seconds, as he 'slithered' hopelessly down the slope towards a great crevasse which heeled over some distance beneath, I fortunately was able to bring him to an anchorage, and both of us were thus relieved from a singularly uncomfortable and anxious predicament. I took care that we were all five roped together during the remainder of the day. With the Mischabel Joch and Alphubel well to our left front, the rocks of the Täschhorn were reached in 6½ hrs. from the Gletscher Alp.

After a brief halt, we took immediately to a buttress, or rib, of rock upon the face of the mountain before us, directly under the highest point. A snow couloir ran down at no great distance on our right. From this point to the summit the gradient was very steep. The rocks at first, although shaly, were upon the whole good; but, as we advanced to about half-distance, they became much broken and slightly risky. Altering our course now a little to the right, we crossed over to another rib—snow-covered at the time—and planted ourselves, without further incident, upon a depression about 90 ft. north of the

highest point, having climbed all the way straight up the face from the Fée Glacier. The top was gained a few minutes later, at a little before 11 o'clock. The Täschhorn has two well-marked points on the summit-ridge; the one we ascended, towards the south, having slightly the advantage of its northern rival. We found Mr. Gardiner's card (or rather paper) in the accustomed bottle.

It is difficult to credit that this peak is nearly 200 ft. lower than the neighbouring Dom. Having ascended both, I confess that, to my unaided eye, the difference between them—thus ascribed—seems more imaginary than real. At one time the Täschhorn was given the advantage in hypsometrical reckoning; it is so computed in the Appendix to the Introductory number of 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' although the 'query' after the figures indicates that such an estimate was not intended necessarily for final adoption.

Between the eastern and western sides of the Täschhorn there can be no comparison. The former is by far the finer of the two in every way—whether as regards the climbing or in respect of the views which each ascent affords.

Novelties are not essential to maintain mountain enthusiasm. The Alpine Club will flourish long after the last 'new expedition' shall have been chronicled in the Journal; at the same time, it does not follow that an appetite must needs be jaded because it seeks after an occasional stimulant. I do not refer to the stimulant afforded by unwarrantable risk, but to that supplied in the discovery of new routes and means of ascent.

Whenever the Aiguille du Géant and the Aiguille du Charmoz shall have followed the excellent example lately set them by their near neighbour the Aiguille du Dru, and have owned their masters, the only 'new expeditions' left us—in the best known Alpine districts—will be those which old friends with new faces afford.

The Dom and the Täschhorn have shown, of late, more new lines of successful attack than a few years ago were deemed possible upon them, and I, for one, am by no means prepared to admit that 'new sides' are principally 'wrong sides.' In some cases, of course, all sides of a mountain but one have been left untried, because it has been evident, from the first, that it were absolute foolhardiness to attempt a second; but, in many another instance, experience gained of late has suggested a survey and eventually an attack upon slopes which have been found, notwithstanding all previous forebodings and forewarnings to the contrary, quite possible to cope with, without

any risk which can be called unjustifiable, but which have not until late years even been 'looked at' except to be pronounced 'impossible.'

The descent of the Täschhorn to the Fée Glacier would, I think, be practicable when the mountain is in really good condition and free from much coating of snow; but Mr. James Jackson was well advised when, having reached the summit a few days after us, he declined to retrace our route, notwithstanding that his guide was Christian Almer. The descent of the rocks on the eastern face in such weather as he describes in the Journal, it would be nothing short of lunacy to attempt. I fully agree with Mr. George, that the mountain from the Saas side would be altogether impracticable except under very favourable circumstances—when the rocks are, for the most part, free from snow.

In descending to the Kien Glacier, we quitted the rock arête from the summit at a very awkward point, too low down, and considerable care alone prevented a bad slip before reaching the upper snow-fields. A long grind through soft and even yielding névé brought us at length to our goal, down the tedious Wildbach. Eight o'clock saw us comfortably at dinner in the excellent little hotel 'du Weisshorn,' at Randa. Burgener, as prime mover of the expedition, was naturally as much pleased as any of us at so complete a success, and it is only due to him to add that he led splendidly to the summit without a single fault. Notwithstanding his more recent exploit on the Dru, the memory of the Täschhorn from the Fée Glacier (two years before) is not likely soon to be effaced. I hope to see the day when Saas and Fée shall be provided with good hotel accommodation, for I am convinced that when this *desideratum* is supplied, there will not be a more popular Alpine centre than that to which I have here endeavoured to draw the attention of mountaineers.

NOTE ON THE SARACENS AT SAAS AND ELSEWHERE IN THE ALPS. BY THE EDITOR.

My attention has lately been drawn to the statements as to the presence of Saracens or Moors at Saas in the tenth century, made in works commonly in the hands of English readers, such as Isaac Taylor's 'Words and Places,' Murray's 'Swiss Handbook,' and Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' which are repeated by Mr. Wethered above. These statements appear for the most part immediately derived from Engelhardt's 'Monte Rosa und Matterhorn Gebirg,' published in 1842. But it is somewhat singular that English transcribers, while copying and adopting Engelhardt's conclusion as to the presence of Saracens at