

ALPINE NOTES.

CLIMBING IN THE HIMALAYA.—Mr. W. W. Graham, who made the first English ascent of the Aiguille du Géant last summer, has begun his climbing amongst the Sikkim peaks. He spent a week on the elevated table-land of Gongri (12,000 to 14,000 feet high), surrounded by the great summits of the Kinchinjunga range. But there was still three to four feet of snow on the ground, and after climbing a fine peak (c. 18,000 feet high) at the end of the Singalilah range Mr. Graham was forced to retreat to Darjiling on April 12, but hoped to start on a fresh journey in August. The peaks are described as most formidable in appearance, their most notable features being smooth, steeply inclined surfaces of 4,000 to 5,000 feet in height. Mr. Graham's guide, Imboden, having been obliged to return to Europe, his place has been taken by Emil Boss and Ulrich Kaufmann (Mr. Green's companions in New Zealand). We hear that Mr. T. S. Kennedy, with Johann Jaun, proposed starting for the same district in July, and Major Mitchell hoped to be able to give the party the benefit of his great Himalayan experience.

EXPLORATION OF THE NEW ZEALAND ALPS.—Since the 'Novara' visited the shores of New Zealand Austrian travellers seem determined to make a *spécialité* of New Zealand exploration. To the names of Von Hochstetter and Von Haast the name of Von Lindenfeld, and indeed that of Frau von Lindenfeld, must now be added. The last mail brought details of Von Lindenfeld's expedition up the great Tasman glacier, by which he has settled an interesting question relating to topography of the watershed of the south island, to which I alluded in a paper in this Journal (vol. xi. p. 139). His first telegram on his way back from the mountains was as follows:—

'Albury, April 2.

'Made successful ascent of Hochstetter Dome with lady; much higher than Mount Darwin. Had splendid weather; bivouacked five hours above Green's fifth camp. Twelve hours from there to summit. Cloudless sunset on top; descended in moonlight, and reached bivouac 8 A.M. next morning. Enormous crevasses all the way; much step-cutting. Mount Cook on Green's route this year impassable: too little snow and insuperable crevasses. Had ten fine days on glacier; did much trigging, photographing, and sketching.

LINDENFELD.'

Von Lindenfeld and his young wife were only assisted by three colonists whom they engaged to act as porters. They followed my route very closely, and pitched their fifth camp where my fifth camp had been. Here they found some articles which we had left. Continuing to follow our route, they ascended the Mount Tasman spur to our highest bivouac, but were unable to reach the 'Great Plateau.' Some days afterwards they bivouacked at the foot of the Malte Brun peaks, and from there in twelve hours gained the summit of the Hochstetter Dome, which he estimates, pending the working out of

his observations, at 11,200 feet. In my paper in the 'Alpine Journal' above referred to I have compared the Hochstetter Dome to the Cima di Jazi, but I should have added '*on a large scale.*' It resembles it in position, occupying a commanding situation on the ridge where the great Tasman glacier begins, but it rises 500 feet above the glacier saddles which flank it on either hand, and is not overtopped by higher peaks, as the Cima is by Monte Rosa. According to Dr. von Lindenschied it is higher than Mont Darwin, and its ascent involved a long spell of step-cutting. The bergschrunds were enormous and most perplexing. When we remember that the party had no professional assistance, it is evident that Von Lindenschied must be a mountaineer of no ordinary skill, and an expedition of twenty-seven hours was a severe test on the endurance of the whole party.

I have received many more details from Dr. von Haast; but, as a full account will appear in 'Petermann's Mittheilungen,' I shall not at present occupy your space.

The exploration of the Mount Tyndall district, with the grand ice-fields of the Classen and Godley glaciers, is the next link for some one to work out in detail. Is it in German that these details will be laid before the world?

W. S. GREEN.

P.S. In Dr. von Haast's 'Geology of Canterbury and Westland' there is a photograph of the Hochstetter Dome. If any member is interested in these explorations I shall be happy to send him a copy of my map, as I have several to spare: it shows Von Lindenschied's route. A few further details, with a small map, are given in No. 116 of the 'Oesterreichische Alpenzeitung,' June 15, 1883.

AIGUILLE DU GÉANT.—On July 4 I ascended the Aiguille du Géant with Hans Jaun and Laurent Lanier. The weather was bad, hail and snow falling continuously, accompanied by a cold wind. The lower rocks, until about 50 feet beyond Burgener's cairn, we found easy, but from this point to the lower peak the climbing is very difficult, in one or two places there being almost no hand-hold. The greatest credit is due to the Maquignaz's for their ascent of this part of the mountain. We were much struck by the *very* small difference in height between the two peaks. We paid particular attention to this, estimated it at from 5 to 8 feet, in which we are borne out by the other three parties who have reached the summit this season. The passage from one peak to the other we found this year quite the easiest part of the mountain; in fact, it is the only place where two parties can pass one another. This bears out Signor Sella's explanation that it was only want of time which prevented his ascending the higher peak. The two Cupelins were on the mountain at the same time as we were, engaged in placing ropes to facilitate the first ascent by an English lady, which was accomplished on the 13th in one long day of twenty-one and a half hours from and back to the Montanvert.

J. W. HARTLEY.

THE BESIMANDA.—In the last number I described a November walk south of the Col di Tenda. I now supplement it with a June excursion on the Italian side of the pass. A few weeks ago I found myself, not alone, but in company with an established guide and an orthodox mountaineer, at Limone. It was 2 p.m. on Midsummer Eve.

My proposal to start up a mountain at such an hour naturally struck my companions as a questionable innovation on ancient usage. But by concealing the fact that I aimed at a peak almost as high above us as the Faulhorn is above Grindelwald, I induced them to start.

For the first half-hour or more the path led up a stony ravine which had collected the noontide sunshine and gave it out unsparingly; then followed a sharp climb past some huts to the brow above it (1 hour). Thus far the disadvantages of a P.M. ascent were obvious; but from the moment we faced the north wind, and exchanged stones for flower-studded turf, no one had breath for anything but admiration. We climbed leisurely up a steep spur with a blue carpet under our feet, the bluest of skies overhead, and the range of the western Alps opposite. In 2½ hrs. from Limone we were on the broad crest which divides the valley we had left from the glen of the Certosa di Pesio. In the hollows snow still lay; elsewhere flowers were bursting out of the hardly thawed brown turf. We were on the pass, known apparently by the simple name of Il Colle, which is mentioned in 'Ball.' North of us, at some distance, rose a 'panoramic point.' We agreed to make for it. The path lay along a broad ridge with no climb till the end.

The Besimanda (7,170 feet), on whose summit we stood at 6 P.M., stands forward immediately overhanging the plain in the angle where the Alps bend eastwards before they sink towards their true limit, the valley of the Tanaro.

As a view-point it deserves a place in the front rank of minor peaks. The outlook over Provence to Corsica seen from the loftier Maritime Alps is lost. But there is the same magnificent panorama of the Western Alps as far as and beyond Monte Rosa; and, as its peculiar merit, the mountain shows an admirable and singular prospect of valleys opening and alpine ridges breaking down into the plain. The comparison to a relief map was obvious, but superficial; for it did no justice to the symmetry, the variety, the charming contrasts of open hillside and forest, and, above all, the colour which gave such splendour and peculiar richness to the view. Below the hills and along their base lay a number of picturesque towns—Cuneo and Mondovi the most conspicuous. Monte Rosa was exquisite; Monte Viso, sublime; Mont Blanc, as usual, on the Italian side, was hidden behind the Grand Paradis. It is only Mr. J. A. Symonds who can call up at will the Monarch of Mountains.

In the east a surprise was in store. Beyond the gap in the range by which the Savona railway passes a smooth grey surface caught my eyes. On its even edge shone a golden bar. It was the city of Genoa catching the evening sunshine. We saw as far as the headland of Porto Fino, and there seemed no reason, had the air been vapourless, why the eye should not have reached the peaks of Carrara, seen by Mr. Tucker from Monte Viso.

After an hour spent on the top we descended the opposite eastern side of the peak, crossing the head of one glen and descending into the next. At its mouth we turned into the valley of the Certosa, where a large hay meadow fills the level space between a clear trout stream and a country road, shaded by an avenue of stately chestnuts and

limes. No house was in sight until a farm was passed on the right, and on the further bank the white front of a chapel and a stately pile of buildings rose above the luxuriant foliage.

The Certosa of Pesio, founded in the twelfth century and dis-established by Napoleon I., was one of the largest and wealthiest Carthusian establishments in Italy. The campanile that crowned the pile is gone, stupidly destroyed at the time of the dissolution. But its quadrangles and gardens, its half-mile of pillared cloisters, its grand staircase and lofty refectory remain. Two covered bridges, decorated with frescoes of saints of the order, span the bright torrent, whose strength is kept within bounds by fern-grown walls. Passing under an archway and by the Casa dei Pescatori, the visitor reaches a terraced bowling-green shaded by noble trees. Under the second archway, leading to the lower quadrangle, the grand staircase opens, and up this he mounts to the upper quadrangle. One side of this has been destroyed, and a view thus opened of the walled wilderness, which was once the common garden. Round the remaining sides runs a cloister, giving access to the separate dwellings of the former inmates, now turned into suites of apartments for the guests of the Pension. I know no more fascinating resting-place in the Alps. There are fine crags to explore at the head of the glen, and from the meadow lawns beside the river the mountaineer sees above the tree-tops a familiar and welcome sight, the line of the Zermatt peaks, with the sharp spear of the Weiss-horn filling the gap of the St. Théodul. Did the 'shy recluses' who set up their home in this lonely glade fix of purpose on a spot whence their only outlook on a world beyond might be not on the towns and towers of men, but on the silver sheen of ramparts which it hardly needs a monk's fancy to liken to those of the Celestial City?

From Limone to the Certosa by Il Colle takes about 4 hrs., over the Besimanda 6 hrs. The height of the Certosa is 2,850 feet. D. W. F.

MEETING OF THE FRENCH ALPINE CLUB.—An alpine meeting of tourists belonging to this Club will take place at Sixt and Chamonix between August 11 and 17. The first three days will be devoted to Sixt and its neighbourhood, and will be 'purement alpestres.' The concluding portion of the fête at Chamonix will be less purely alpine, and provision will be made for weak brethren who fear the 'privations' of Sixt and look on the Grands Mulets as an 'ascension difficile.' Very comprehensive special arrangements, including two morning services, several banquets, and two evening fêtes, illuminations of cascades, a 'punch d'adieu,' &c., have been made. Any members desirous of attempting more serious work will be assisted in their preparations by *la Section du Mont Blanc*, 'bien entendu que le Club Alpin ne prend point la responsabilité de ces excursions, qui en principe ne doivent être tentées que par des caravanes peu nombreuses et composées de personnes habituées aux montagnes.'

BIGNASCO.—The house in this village formerly owned by Signor Patocchi (see Freshfield's 'Italian Alps') has been sold, and opened as an inn by the purchaser. A want long felt by all visitors to Val Maggia is thus supplied.

D. W. F.