

GLÄRNISCH FIRN AND BÄCHISTOCK.

through many lovely valleys south of the Rhine and Rhone valleys, till on September 1 we emerged into civilisation at Binn. After a short stay there I went for a short run in the Dauphiny, which I described briefly in the 'Alpine Journal,' vol. xvii. pp. 555–8. On September 21 I met Almer by appointment at Bern, and we spent the day at the very interesting Agricultural Exhibition there (his first experience of that kind of thing), returning wearied to Grindelwald that evening. We had opened our season of 1895 by climbing on May 29 the Eiger Rothstock (2,668 m., 7,441 ft.), west of the Eiger. So, not unfitly, we ended that fine season by an ascent (on September 26) of the Eiger itself, having with us Almer's eldest boy, 'Christian III.,' whose second 'grande course' this was. But though 1895 will always remain full of pleasant memories for both Almer and myself, none is pleasanter, and upon no part of our prolonged wanderings that summer do we look back to with more agreeable recollections, than the four days we spent around the Fluchthorn and its neighbours, in pursuance of our 'plan.'

An Ascent of the Glärnisch.

By WILLIAM CECIL SLINGSBY.

In each group of mountains in the Alps nature has provided one or more peaks—apparently for a most excellent purpose, namely that of affording for her lovers remarkable views from their summits. These peaks are the watch-towers of the Alps, and the views comprise peeps of the vales, the plains, the rivers, also of villages and peaceful homesteads, as well as of the sterner scenes above the snow line. It does not follow that these views are the finest that can be obtained; indeed, they may not be half so glorious as the view of Mont Blanc from Le Jardin or from Le Grand Plateau, nor half so beautiful as dozens of notable views of the Faulhorn, Gorner Grat, and Monte Generoso type, but they certainly appeal to us mountaineers with a force not to be equalled by any which can be seen by merely walking on a footpath up to the top of a hill which is probably desecrated by a drinking booth.

The peaks must, of necessity, have narrow rock crests or snow crowns. They are placed, as the Aiguille de Trélatête and the Eiger, at the corners or ends of the main ranges, or of those lateral ranges which, fortunately, are so numerous in the Alps; or, like the Dent d'Hérens and the Tödi, they form

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centres from which several valleys radiate; or, as the Galenstock, they head some great valley; or, like Monte Leone, they stand as sentinels guarding some great gap in the main chain; or they tower, as Monte Viso does, head and shoulders above their neighbours. But in every case they invite, nay, they command mountaineers to touch their proud crests.

In addition to the gratification of his æsthetic tastes, which are at least as refined and as appreciative of the treasures of nature as those possessed by other travellers, the climber requires to add, or at any rate feels happier if he can add, to his topographical knowledge, and in doing this he dearly loves to recognise and to greet, no matter at what distance, the forms of old friends, perhaps in new garb, amongst the mountains around him.

I need hardly point out that the Glärnisch* ('this great mountain, perhaps the most remarkable in Switzerland of those not immediately connected with either of the main ranges of the Alps,' says Mr. Ball) has claims, which cannot be disputed, to be included amongst the type of mountains which I have briefly described. Most of us have seen this mountain from some peak in the eastern Oberland, from one of the Maderanerthal heights, or possibly from the Lake of Constance. Many of us have resolved to climb it some day. How few modern English climbers have acted upon this resolution a glance at the 'visitors' book' in the Glärnisch Club hut will reveal, and it will be a surprise to the reader. The 'Alpine Journal' has no record of any ascent in the range since that described by Mr. Howells in vol. i. p. 120. Though this was a much more heroic expedition than that made by our party last summer, they contented themselves with climbing Der Ruche, the second highest point in the range, and left the highest alone. This, however, has very frequently been climbed by Swiss and German mountaineers. In 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' first series,† there is, of course, an admirable paper by Mr. R. W. E. Forster on the mountains and district generally about Stachelberg, but, as he did not climb the Glärnisch, he said little about it. All the Swiss guide-books that I have seen describe the range very well, and give details about the canton of Glarus, which in general interest, past and present, will vie with any canton in Switzerland. These I will not encroach upon.

The position of the Glärnisch is admirable as a point of view, as any one can see who looks at it on the map. It is an

* *North Switzerland*, p. 180. † Pages 371–398.

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exceedingly interesting mountain in many ways. It is the most northerly snow mountain in Switzerland, and possesses a large, gently inclined, and relatively high snow-field, which from a distance appears to be much larger than it is in reality. It rises with a series of grand precipices to a height of 8,004 ft. above the salmon * river at its base, the merry and swift-running Linth, and with still grander precipices to a height of nearly 7,000 ft. from the Klön See, and shows a noble profile to the people in Glarus, though hardly of the form portrayed in Scheuchzer's 'Itinera Alpina,' p. 172. It towers superbly above its neighbours, and, like a wise and beautiful woman, it makes the most of the charms with which nature has so liberally endowed it.

All the poetry and special beauties of the best limestone scenery so dear to us in the North of England are present on the Glärnisch. Below are the brightest of green meadows, lovely beech woods, and rivers; then come steep grey rock escarpments dotted with dark yews, white and yellow saxifrages, and green or golden mosses. With these alternate terraces—some broad enough to afford pasturage for many cattle and sheep amongst the pink primroses and white parnassus with which the grass is embroidered, others merely narrow ledges or shelves, which now and then disappear entirely into the face of the rock, and which, reappearing, can be traced for miles round the massive buttresses, deep ravines, and steep rock-faces. Think of the becks clear as crystal, some gushing out of dark caves, others springing up on the roadside from under the roots of an ash or a beech tree, each one the favoured haunt of some pair or pairs of water ouzels. This, one of the most lovable of all wild birds, is called in Norway 'Fosse Kongen'—the king of the waterfall—a most suitable name. Then, too, look at the petrified mosses, branchlets, and leaves! Where can you see such streams as on the limestone formation?

All the lines of the Glärnisch show strength and beauty; from no point of view has it the appearance of a weakling, and yet the height of this mountain, expressed in feet, does not require the use of five figures.

The view of the range from the cosy Hotel Klönthal at Vorauen has but few rivals of its kind in the Alps. Beyond lovely green meadows is to be seen one of the grandest per-

* *Coxe's Switzerland*, 1789, vol. i. p. 43: 'They (the salmon) are taken in these distant parts in September and October, and about the size of seventeen or twenty pounds weight.'

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spectives of massive buttresses, pine-fringed at their base, then green, and lastly grey or white, which carry the eye from the shoreless waters of the Klön See to the grim battlements of Der Ruche, 6,904 ft. above the lake. The clouds play—rather too often, we thought—at hide and seek in the deep ravines, and mingle with the spray from many a wild cataract. Everywhere too are lovely foregrounds to be found. This scene was most successfully painted by the artist of our party, who, for a few days, was unfortunately not well enough to climb, but in consequence much enriched his portfolio.

In addition to the usual Swiss flora nearly all the best limestone flowers and ferns grow in rich profusion in the Klönthal, and together they make a noble show.*

Our large party arrived at Vorauen by different routes and at various times. Some came over the Pragel Pass, others by rail to Glarus, and from thence by carriage. My wife and I were among the latter, and drove up the lovely glen from Glarus on the evening of June 25, and on our arrival were told that the Glärnisch was still unclimbed by our vanguard.

Next day the rain allowed of nothing but short walks, which, however, are most beautiful and interesting around Vorauen; and the walkers returned with bright nosegays,

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* Herr M. Brunner-Legler, the proprietor of the Glarner-Hof in Glarus and of the Hotel Klönthal at Vorauen, a most obliging man and a great lover of nature, frequently spends two or three weeks at Vorauen in the winter, when he feeds the wild birds until they become quite tame, and he wanders far on to the hills with his St. Bernard dog, his only companion. He is also very fond of flowers and sent me a long list of the plants which grow in the Klönthal, from which the names of the following have been selected by a botanical friend, who, however, says, 'I see nothing very wonderful among them, though of course there is abundant scope among the names given for a glorious display of bloom:'—Salvia glutinosa, Astrantia major, Gentiana verna and excisa, Verbascum thapsus, Ranunculus aconitifolius and alpestris, Pinguicula alpina, Eriophorum angustifolium and alpinum, Lonicera cœrulea, Dentaria polyphylla and digitata, Lunaria rediviva, Pyrola uniflora and secunda, Cephalanthera rubra and xiphophyllum, Cypripedium calceolus, Polygonatum multiflorum, Ribes alpinum, Erica carnea, Rhododendron hirsutum and ferrugineum, Dianthus silvestris, Hypericum coris, Saxifraga Aizoon and varians, Digitalis ambigua and lutea, Teucrium montanum, Primula auricula, Oxytropis campestris, Astragalus alpinus, Hedysarum obscurum, Epilobium Fleischeri, Galium helveticum, Linaria alpina, Silene acaulis, Soldanella alpina, Globularia nudicaulis and cordifolia, Lycopodium annotinum.

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comprising gay orange lilies, ladies' slipper orchids, globe flowers, columbines, pyrolas, yellow foxgloves, and lovely spikes of *Anemone narcissiflora*.

As the weather in the evening appeared more hopeful, it was decided that the following day three of the party should be told off to go to the Swiss Alpine Club hut, to sleep there, and to climb the Glärnisch on the second day. Messrs. Horace Walker, Ellis Carr and I were deputed to sacrifice ourselves to this call of duty, and to this we consented, but only on the condition that we were to be accompanied as far as the highest chalet by the rest of the party.

The walk up the Klönthal and the Rossmatterthal was very pleasant, and, as we had ample time, we strolled along leisurely. The latter valley, contracted at first, expands further on to a great width, and is headed by half a dozen wild glens and fine coves or bays in the hills, such as are common in the limestone. These have at their head steep cliffs which run out on the sides of the glens into a series of rock escarpments and green terraces. The path up to the Club hut mounts two of these terraces, and in turn is carried along the edge of each for some distance; and a very pretty path it is too.

We parted from our friends at the chalet Käsern with much regret, and were assured by Melchior Anderegg that fine weather awaited us on the morrow, though then the Bächistock, the highest peak, was enveloped in clouds.

Soon we came to steep ground and zigzags on the path. We found here and there amongst the crags *Lonicera cærulea* in full flower; *Daphne Mezereum* also grew in rich profusion, and filled the air with delicious fragrance; and at the very edges of the terraces *Primula auricula* formed a most lovely yellow fringe, whilst the whole ground was carpeted with the brightest Alpine flowers.

Above the path, on the north side, are some most fascinating ledges, overhanging crags, wild rock towers, and a promise of many wild caverns, which I longed to explore. Monsieur Martel has made at least one visit to Canton Glarus, and, sooner or later, will probably explore some of its caverns.

On our arrival at the Club hut we received a hearty welcome from the woman who acts as caretaker there during the summer months, and, with but little addition from our own supplies, she provided us with a very fair dinner. The hut, which was beautifully clean, has two sleeping-rooms, as well as a kitchen and feeding-room, and is perched like an eagle's nest on the edge of a crag, affording an excellent view of

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green alps and of the Böser Faulen, then in snowy garb, a remarkably fine peak, quite of the aiguille character.

With the exception of a porter, who came with us from the last chalet, we were the only visitors. This was really great luck, as it was the end of the week, and during fine weather it often happens that several parties come up from Glarus, Zürich, and South Germany, in order to spend the Sunday in climbing the peaks, or in gathering the edelweiss, an act forbidden by law in this canton, and therefore, like poaching, a sport naturally invested with a special charm.

A playful kitten was by no means the least important being in the hut, and some goats were tethered outside. The night was most lovely, there was a very keen frost, and though we each had a couple of rugs we felt cold. During the following month we slept in many huts, but very rarely had any frost at all. On three consecutive nights which we spent at the Concordia the snow outside never hardened. The result can easily be imagined.

Next morning, June 28, we left the hut at 3.55, and followed a steep track up the side of another wide cove to the wall at its head. This is skilfully turned by the path. At the top we reached a snow-field, which at first we thought to be the Glärnisch Firn, especially as in a thin mist it looked very large, and a well-marked track on the snow tried to lure us on. However this did not agree with the map, as it was too far north. After looking about a bit we saw scratches below the nose of a projecting crag, and after following a very pretty ledge we came in a few minutes to the north edge of the glacier itself, a little above its snout. The first snow-field, though then pretty large, is not glacier, and most probably nearly disappears during the summer months.

Then, for the first time, the line of peaks which form the rim of the basin containing the Glärnisch Firn broke through the morning mists. Though the Bächistock, or Hinter Glärnisch, the highest peak of the range, was our goal, the majority of climbers ascend Der Ruche, the second highest, on account of the admirable view of the Klön See which is afforded from its summit. This peak and the Vrenelisgärtli form the northern rim of the great snow basin.

On looking towards our peak we noticed across the glacier a line of high crags, at the top of which lay a still higher portion of the snowfield. This line was intersected by two glacier tongues or broad couloirs.* The eastern one was the

* These are well shown on the accompanying illustration, which

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easiest, and is, as we afterwards heard, the route usually followed, but as the western, that to the right hand, though rather steep, was evidently shorter and well within our powers, we chose it for our highway.

We were soon over the glacier, then Carr cut a short staircase up steep snow at the foot of the couloir, and, after mounting it, we turned to the rocks on the W. side. These brought us pleasantly enough to the upper snows. When there, by some uncanny atmospheric means, to the E. of the rock peak which we had decided to climb, a snowy dome seemed to rise to a great height through the thin mist which was just then drawn over the range, so we reluctantly bent our steps towards it. After a quarter of an hour's trudge the mists blew away, the high snow dome, a mile away, resolved itself into much more modest proportions, and 'Right wheel' was the order given at once by Walker.

A few more minutes and we were enjoying the firstfruits of success—in other words, we were looking down on the other side. All climbers know well how delightful it is to get their first peep over the ridge, which, in this case, was especially enjoyable. An interesting rock crest led us to the summit, which we reached at 6.35, or in 2 hrs. 40 min. from the hut. Here a clear sky and bright sunshine awaited us.

The view was very wide, varied, and beautiful, and combined the rich colour of fertile valleys with much weird mountain grandeur, the nearness of the Tödi, Biferten Stock, and Scheerhorn, and a view both up and down the Linththal would alone guarantee that. I will say no more than that we expected to have a noble view, and that our expectations were more than realised.

Plenty of tempting variations for the descent, difficult and easy, offered themselves to us to E., S., and W., but we rejected them with scorn. We had been delighted with the route by which we had come; why should we take another? Several routes led to Stachelberg, whither, indeed, we were bound; others led to Glarus and elsewhere. Undoubtedly there is still much new work to be done on the Glärnisch, and more old work which will be new to Englishmen. Well! let others come; let them win the glory and wear the laurel: we were contented. It was also our opening day, and it would have been foolish to indulge in heroics on our first mountain.

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was evidently taken from the place where we joined the glacier; the northern summits are not seen in the picture. We are indebted for it to Herr C. Koch, of Schaffhausen.

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We spent 55 min. most enjoyably on the narrow rock-crest which forms the summit, put the first English names into the bottle which we found in the cairn, and left it with regret at 7.30.

Near the bottom of the couloir an absurd incident happened. I had in my boots a number of new four-spiked Mummery screws. The sun had softened the snow-crust to snowball consistency. Without any warning both my boots balled and I shot off at a speed almost as great as that described by Carr on another occasion as 'stealthy haste.' In my case I hardly know where the stealth would come in. I pulled myself up when abreast of Walker, who was in the middle, and though at the time I felt rather like a naughty boy who had been caught stealing an apple, and who expects a whipping, I thoroughly enjoyed seeing Walker turn round, drive his axe-head into the snow, and draw the rope in taut, all in a second of time. It was delightful. Carr would have done just the same, but he was in front, and it all happened so quickly that he missed it entirely. He was almost if not quite on the flat snow-field, so that we could not possibly have come to any harm.

We arrived at the hut at 9.10, and sauntered gently down to Vorauen, where we received the congratulations of our friends, and left with much regret this lovely little alpine resort in the evening for Stachelberg. We then had an ambitious programme, which began with the Tödi and Maderanerthal, but which, alas! was ultimately changed to the Schweitzer Hof at Lucerne, Meiringen, and the Grimsel. As it turned out, we climbed the Glärnisch on the one fine day during our stay in Glarus; none other would have done so well, and we considered ourselves to have been most fortunate in thus scoring a success at the outset of our campaign.

The Ascent of Aconcagua.

THE following telegram from a member of Mr. FitzGerald's party appeared in the 'Daily Chronicle' of January 18, and is printed here with the permission of the Editor:—

'Mendoza: January 16, 7.35 P.M.

'Mr. FitzGerald and Zurbriggen, with four Swiss porters and ten mules, left Inca for Horcone's Valley on December 23, and bivouacked 12 miles up the valley.

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