The Fusshörner.

By the EDITOR.

GREAT to the rock-climber are the attractions of the Fusshörner. Their haughty challenge rouses him even when at Brieg, and from the Bel Alp bids him close with them at once; for who, looking upon peaks in form so shapely, in steepness so uncompromising, in boldness so defiant, in proximity so inviting, can hesitate to deliver his assault at the earliest possible moment? In 1894 bad weather prevented me from completing the ascent of one of their unclimbed peaks, but last summer I enjoyed the happiness of success. I purpose to relate briefly the history of the group so far as I have been able to learn it, and then to give a short account of last year's climb.

(1) The highest peak of the Fusshörner group, called Rothhorn (3,701 m.) on the Siegfried map, was first ascended on August 28, 1871, from the Triest glacier by Mr. Coolidge, Miss Brevoort, and Mr. S. P. Cockerell, with the dog Tschingel.*

(2) The second peak (3,628 m.) (Siegfried) fell on September 21, 1876, to Miss Brevoort and Mr. W. Little. 'This is the peak which is so conspicuous from the Bel Alp Inn, as apparently the culminating point of the great rock wall of the Fusshörner.' †

(4) The next apparently highest point, resembling a blunt spear, is well seen from the terrace behind the hotel at the Bel Alp, and was ascended by Messrs. J., C., E., and J. G. Hopkinson on September 6, 1895.‡

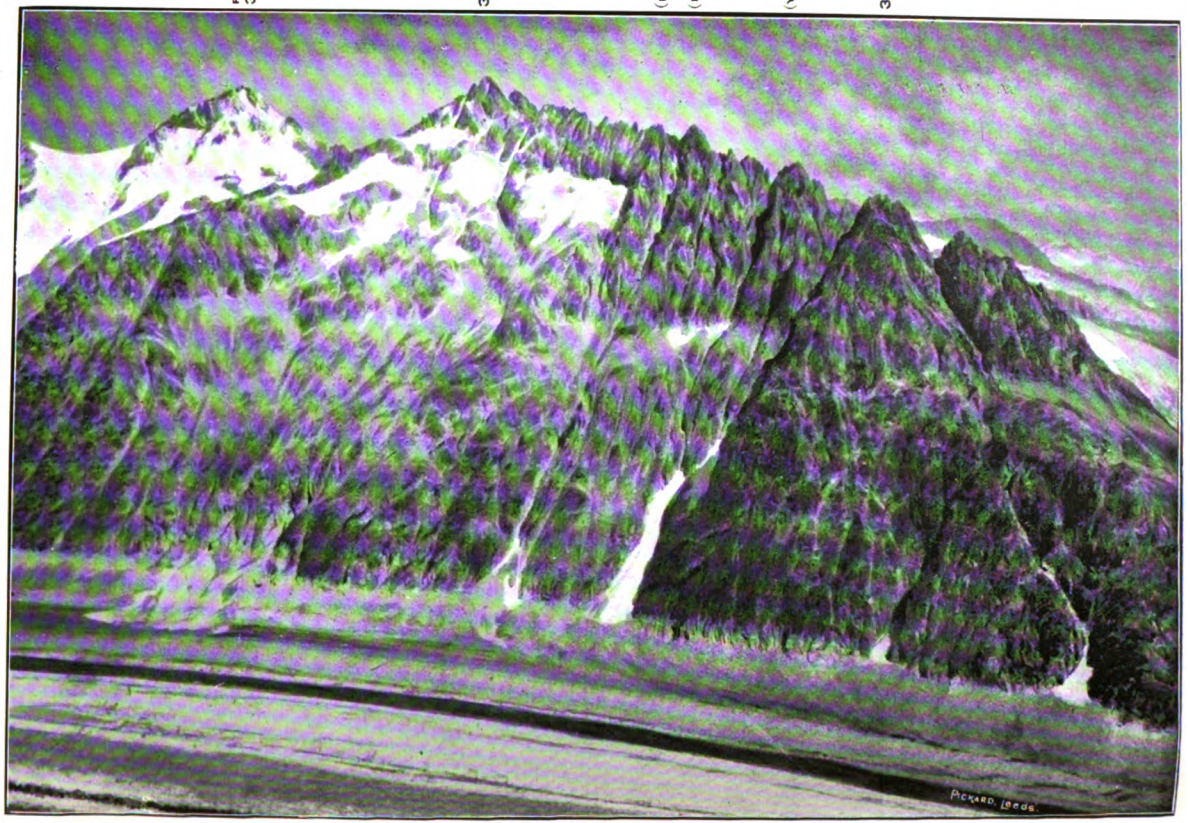
(3) A higher point between this peak and the peak marked on the Siegfried map (3,628 m.) was conquered on July 13, 1896, by Messrs. C. Pilkington, W. C. Slingsby, E. Carr, and G. A. Solly.§

(5) Finally, the highest point between Messrs. Hopkinsons' peak and the Bel Alp end of the Fusshörner ridge was vanquished on August 17, 1898, by the present writer and Mr. G. G. Yeld, called hereafter M. Georges.

These climbs are *arranged* in chronological order, but are *numbered* from the Rothhorn to the Bel Alp end of the group. I have not thought it necessary to give here all the recorded ascents.

---

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. v. p. 276, and xiii. p. 268.
† *Ibid.* pp. 268–9. ‡ *Ibid.* vol. xvii. p. 588.
§ *Ibid.* vol. xviii. p. 408.



Tempest Anderson, Photo. *Chas. R. H. Pickard, Photo Engraver.*

THE FUSSHÖRNER FROM THE S.W.

For another ascent of No. 1 the reader is referred to 'Alpine Journal,' vol. xvii. p. 588, and of No. 2 to 'Alpine Journal,' vol. xiii. p. 269. An unsuccessful attempt of the present writer's will be found in 'Alpine Journal,' vol. xvii. p. 360.

On August 17, 1898, my son and I, with François and Sylvain Pession, started from the Bel Alp Hôtel for the point of the Fusshörner which we had chosen. I may say that we found it difficult when immediately under the peaks to tell which was which, and if I had not carefully noted a certain sharp rock by which to make sure of the wished-for summit, I believe we should have made a mistake. I came to the conclusion that Lord and I, in 1894, had been driven back by the storm, not from the peak which fell to me in 1898, but from another lower point nearer the Bel Alp end of the range. To put it briefly, we made for the great cut in the ridge to the left hand (in ascending) of our peak.

At the foot of the gaunt precipices of the Fusshörner immediately above the Ober Aletsch glacier, where the ordinary tourist would hardly venture, and where he would certainly not expect to find before his eyes in varied abundance flowers, exquisite in form, fragrance, and colouring, we came upon a natural rock garden such as wealth and skill combined could hardly hope to imitate, though the combination of the two has accomplished much marvellous work in England. I have resolved, like many another climber who loves the Alpine flora, not to disclose where the loveliest blossoms of the Alps are to be found—not, that is, to reveal with local details their actual habitats. The arrival of the pseudo plant-preserver, whose words are softer than butter, and whose heart longs for sacks full of *Eritrichium nanum*, has dealt doom to many a colony of the rarest children of the mountains. But here I feel on safe ground. Here *Gentiana acaulis*, *Viola alpina*, *Ranunculus glacialis*, *Androsace chamæjasme*, *Lloydia serotina* * flourish in their rocky fastnesses. Here the mountaineer and the flower-lover may find them in their chosen homes; but there is some satisfaction in the thought that the plant-harrier, if he climbs high enough, is not unlikely—well, to bring his plant-harrying to a close.

As I said before, we, roughly speaking, made straight for the great gap to the left of our peak. One gully, probably the largest on this side of the mountain, caused François some anxiety, for it was evident that stones came down it

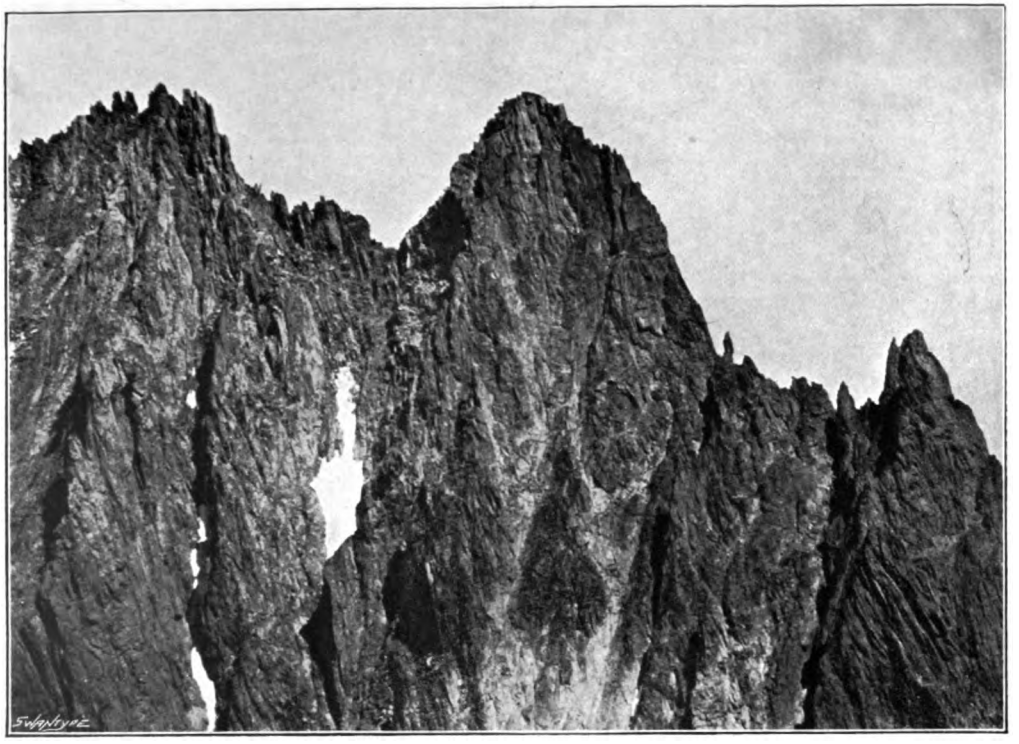
* These plants were in flower.

with great velocity, though at that time in the morning and in such good weather it was no doubt reasonably safe. We lost no time in crossing it. Much higher up, when we were on a ridge by the side of it, having repassed it below, I saw distinctly marks where stones had fallen into it. It was altogether an evil-looking spot. I doubt whether a party in the gully at this point could have escaped these stones had they fallen when the whole party were in the bed of the gully. Wrath flashed in François's eyes, for, though no party could possibly have been better led than ours, it confirmed his distrust of the gully which he had expressed lower down, and he is always indignant that any of his Messieurs should have been in danger from falling stones. The marks were certainly recent. There was a gruesome precision of detail about them that left no doubt on that point. They turned the scale as to choice of route. We might have climbed to our right; we could certainly have forced a way for some distance into a hollow under the main ridge of our peak; but what we should have met with at the back of the rocks in this hollow was a matter of conjecture. To follow this line we should have had to risk the gully again. To that François was decidedly opposed, and with very good reason; so was I. We therefore continued along our little *arête*, and, keeping to the left, reached the great cut in the ridge of our peak which shows so plainly from the terrace behind the Bel Alp Hôtel.

To get to the ridge from the gap we had to climb to the right, not directly from gap to ridge, but up a very steep edge of rock on our right. Just above this spot we saw a very fat mouse. The climbing here was arduous, but François skilfully overcame its difficulties and we followed—a much easier matter. Once on the ridge of our peak the view became more suggestive. On the Ober Aletsch side the wall was steep enough in all conscience, but it was nothing to the precipice that flanked the Triest glacier. A more hopeless cliff than this I have never looked upon. Had it been cut by machinery it could hardly have been more completely vertical. I looked down between my legs and saw straight to the Triest glacier. It was most impressive. But the grim precipice, with its gaunt and splintered pinnacles of rock, only increased our enjoyment, for the climbing here was such as the mountaineer desires. The difficulties were those which skill and experience could fairly face and conquer: astride a knife-edge of rock, with one leg over a sheer precipice and the other over no mean imitation of one—we enjoyed a combina-

Pilkington's Peak.

Hopkinson's Peak.



Tempest Anderson, photo.

FUSSHÖRNER.

Swan Electric Engraving Co.

tion of the pleasure of climbing and delight in the noble scenery such as could not easily be surpassed.

I had doubts of our success several times, but François's skill dissipated them. I can see him still, with a smile on his face, looking down on us from some formidable tower or sharp edge of rock. That smile he always wears when the work is hard.

At last we had gained a point where nothing but one great tower remained between us and the top. As I examined this tower my hopes fell. It hung over slightly towards us, and the first rock to the left on the way up it was loose, and would not do to trust to. There seemed no way round it. 'Now, how are you going to climb that?' inquired the neophyte. 'Let him have time to examine it,' I replied. 'It certainly seems formidable; but if man can circumvent it, François can.' Sylvain now came up, and the tide of patois was in full flood. I meantime was not altogether unable to interpret. 'They will probably fix one of the ropes over that cut in the top of the tower.' Our second rope of 100 ft. had already been employed; tied to the new one of 80 ft., it had enabled me to keep a hold on François in a difficult spot which he had just negotiated. Sylvain took it, gathered it in his hand very carefully, and threw it with great skill just where it was wanted. I never saw a rope pay itself out so regularly. When I was afterwards complimenting Sylvain on his dexterity he said, 'Oh, when I was on the stone-boat on the Lake of Geneva I learned how to throw a rope a distance of fifteen mètres when we were coming to the quay.'

The rope once in position, François's strong limbs soon raised him to the top of the tower, and the rest of the party followed. Only a few steps now separated us from the actual summit. Eagerly we pressed on, and another of the unascended Fusshörner lost his claim to that adjective. The ascent had taken between six and seven hours.

It had been a thoroughly enjoyable climb. Hard work, oft-recurring excitement, and startling views had delighted us ever since we left the great gap in the main ridge of the range. The prospect from the summit could hardly have been more impressive than it was.

Like most mountaineers, I keep in my memory a long count of glorious rock-towers, some wedge-shaped, some pinnacled, some with square heads and threatening brows; but such a group—there were, I think, seven—as furnished our peak with a bodyguard at some distance below his summit I never looked upon. No two of them were alike;

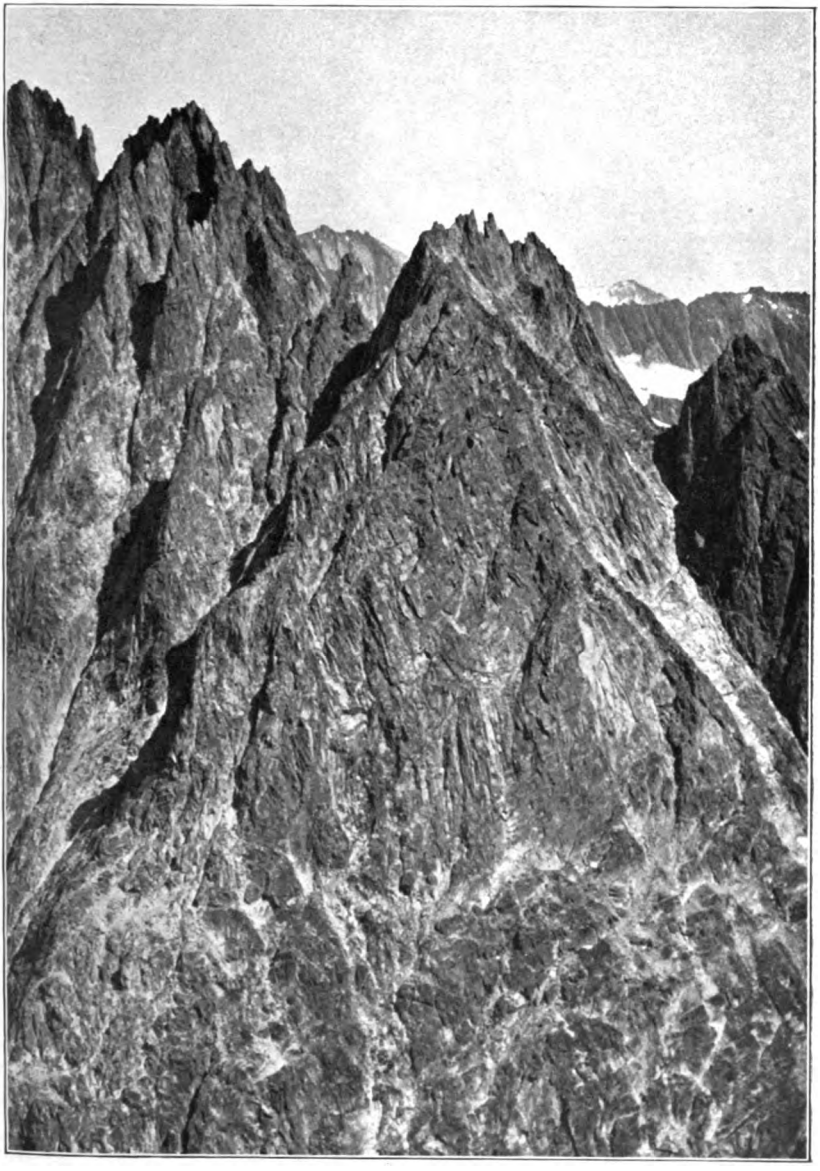
but, though they varied in shape and size, they all glowered at us in savage defiance. Over their heads we descried the gorge of the Massa and many other sights, but of them all the Bel Alp Hôtel perhaps gave me the most satisfaction. How the days came back when, consumed with apparently hopeless longing, I had looked at our peak, now hidden in vapour, now glorified in sunshine! I recalled François's words. When we arrived he said to Sylvain, 'M. Yeld will be sure to want to climb those peaks.' I thought with a smile of that melancholy evening when, wet through and with much-rent garments, I had halted before entering the hôtel to put on a greatcoat lest haply the multitude should jeer. Above all, I wished that Lord, who had shared the difficulties of the famous * *couloir* and the persecutions of the wind, snow, and rain, had been there to share in our triumph—a wish to which François had given utterance a few minutes before.

After a thorough examination of all that there was to be seen, we had our lunch and then fell to the building of a cairn. François was architect-in-chief, M. Georges and Sylvain supplied stones, I stood by and offered Nestorian remarks at intervals. When the cairn was finished, François and Sylvain uplifted a big block and fixed it on a flat projecting rock by the side of the cairn. During these operations one large stone escaped, fell far before striking the cliff below, and then split with a horrible crash into many pieces. The consequences of meeting such missiles were so obvious that it was needless even for a Nestor to call attention to them: the lesson of the stone-marks in the big gully was thus emphasised.

We descended by the same route as we had followed in the ascent to some distance below the great gap. I should mention that on the steep edge above the gap a second rope, fastened round a wooden wedge driven into the rock, was used, and saved some time. This wedge, I ought to say, had not been employed in the ascent. Unluckily, some distance below the gap we turned aside to try a new route, and paid the proverbial penalty. After Sylvain, M. Georges, and I had been let down a steep and narrow gully with a great deal of trouble, the way proved impracticable, and we had to be hauled up again. Finally we humbly resought our morning's route, whereby a considerable ascent was involved, and did not reach the Bel Alp till quite late, the Nestor of the party being little better than one of the weary.

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xvii. p. 360.

Yeld's Peak.



Tempest Anderson. photo. *Swan Electric Engraving Co.*

FUSSHÖRNER.

A day or two afterwards one of the local guides remarked to Sylvain: 'That peak of yours does not look much.' 'No,' said Sylvain, 'it does not *look* much, but appearances are deceptive; to appreciate it properly you must have made the ascent.'

Mountaineering in the Himalayas.

To the Editor of the Alpine Journal.

16 Campden Grove, Kensington, W.:
January 10, 1899.

DEAR SIR,—Having received from Capt. C. G. Bruce, of the 5th Gurkhas, an account of an expedition made by him last summer, I enclose the following extracts from his letter, as I think they will be of considerable interest to the readers of the 'Alpine Journal.'

The letter is dated from Darjeeling. Captain Bruce was recalled near the end of his leave in order that he might proceed to Darjeeling on recruiting duty.

'The mountaineering party consisted of, at first, Lucas and myself, Harkia, Karbir, and fourteen new men from five different battalions.

'Our route, Kashmir *via* Scinde valley to Sonamarg. Here we had two climbs on the mountains to the south of Sonamarg, part of the Kolahoi ridge. Thence *via* Zoji La to Dras, *via* Umba La to Takba, where we made a camp, and ourselves went up into the mountains, making another camp at about 13,500 ft., below Peak D 66. We did here a good deal of scrambling, including a climb with Lucas, led by Harkia, to a point on the Shagrin ridge to about 18,000 ft.; we had from here a splendid view of the Mustagh range. K_2 was very distinct; we were due south of it. Karbir and Harkia alone made an attempt on Peak D 66, but after getting within 300 ft. of the summit they had to give it up, as the rocks were so absolutely rotten, the softest sandstone. I have never seen anywhere such soft rocks as there are in the whole of Suru district,* though some mountains are notable exceptions.

'The whole party then made a new pass about 18,000 ft. direct to the Suru valley.

* Latitude 34° N.; longitude 76° 5′ E. Many of the places mentioned will be found on the map (facing page 1) of the Kingdom of Kashmir in Sir Martin Conway's *Climbing and Exploration in the Karakoram Himalayas*. London: 1894.