

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. K₂ 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.

‘From Suru my wife, Lucas, and self, with a few men, went off and visited the Rangdung monastery ; the rest of the men were sent up to the right of the Gauri glacier of Nun Kun to scramble and climb under Harkia’s direction, where they did a lot of hard work before our return a week later. On our return Lucas and self tried a peak on the ridge west of the Gauri glacier, about 19,000 ft., but failed after a fairly hard day.

‘I saw Lucas off to Abbottabad the next day, and then with several days’ food and coolies crossed the Nun Kun ridge, intending to work westward, crossing ridge after ridge, and finally turning north to the Bhot Khol pass. We found, however, on crossing the Nun Kun ridge, that, instead of descending by a short glacier into a valley, we were on a very large glacier, whose end we could not see ; there were a good many hidden crevasses on the upper part, and also a good deal of soft snow, so we were obliged to get out the whole of the 400 ft. of rope, as we were over forty in the party. We got on to the glacier about twelve o’clock, and followed it until night-time, when we came to a large icefall, over which Karbir and myself, who had hurried on with a couple more men, were unable to find a way which would have taken us clear before dark ; so we were benighted—not the kind of benighted you like giving your friends,* but my kind of benighted, with three blankets and a potato pie and a bottle of cherry brandy. The next morning we got through the icefall in four hours—not a bad performance, I think, when you come to consider the coolies, whose behaviour was plucky but erratic. There was a great deal of slinging of men and loads. Harkia got knocked over in one nasty place, and his axe went down 50 ft. into a crevasse : it stuck in a crack on the side, so we let him down and he was fortunately able to recover it. Having got off the icefall we found ourselves directly below the Bhot Khol pass and only about 1,000 ft. from the summit, the route from the Bhot Khol to Kashmir continuing down the glacier, which is very free from moraine even at the bottom, and quite easy.

‘We then crossed the Bhot Khol and met my wife. I then managed to hurt my knee, and was laid up for a few days, during which Harkia and party climbed a peak 19,000 feet high by a difficult rock ridge due W. of the Bhot Khol pass ; and Karbir and party climbed a col between two peaks due

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xviii. p. 27.

N. of Dunore ; he described the climb as difficult and exposed to falling stones, of which there were a great many.

'Bad weather then came on, so we determined to go down into Wardwan. The question of supplies also had to be considered, as in Suru everything except sheep is very dear.

'On August 28 we had arrived at Konnag, on the way to the Wardwan. There was such an attractive-looking peak immediately to the S. of Konnag that I halted there and went for it next day. We took two parties. A long rock scramble, not very difficult, took us to the bottom of the main peak. From here we had to traverse a long ice slope to a little rib of rocks which took us to the top. The ice slope was steep, and the rocks above icy, and therefore rather difficult. Altogether a very nice climb. We reached our camp after 14 hrs.' work. Though the peak is only about 17,500 ft. it gave us about the best climb we had.

'We moved down to Wishni Wujan, and determined to climb a peak at the top of the Wishni Wuj valley, but were stopped by bad weather. However I saw two bears high on the hill opposite our camp, and made a good stalk and got both. You would have been amused to have seen me, as I had to wade a glacier stream nearly waist deep, and so took everything off, and finally stalked these bears in a shirt and a pair of shoes, a very comfortable and easy attire if one has to go as fast as possible uphill for 2,000 ft., as I had to then, to cut the bears off.

'We then moved our camp to Suknis. I took three days' leave, and tried for a Bara Singh stag, but without success. Karbir and party went on to Kohenar. On my return my wife carried the heavy baggage off to Kashmir by the Margan Pass, and I, with Harkia to lead, made a pass over the N. peak of Kohenar down to Shesha Nag. Later we had good scrambling on the descent. Karbir and party had crossed the W. peak to the Sonasar Lake.

'We met our baggage again at Pailgam, and then set out to climb Kolahoi ; but the weather was very bad indeed, and, after sitting in Lidarwat for a day, a telegram came to me, telling me to be at Darjeeling by October 5 for recruiting duty, so here I am. Nevertheless I got one more climb. With the men I went off the way I came to meet you when you came out.*

'We only got one more climb, however, owing to the bad weather—a peak just S. of the Shikara Pass and directly

* Latitude 34° 45' N. ; longitude 78° 45' E.

over it. We climbed to the top of the lesser peak (16,400 ft.) the last hour and a half in a storm; then a genuine thunder-storm came on and we had to retire. The other peak was only $\frac{3}{4}$ hr. distant, and the going perfectly easy. But the storm was too much for us. Five of the men were struck by lightning, to every one's intense amusement. This was an entirely new experience, and was much enjoyed by every one except myself. All our luggage was on the other side; so, as we could not get to it, we had to make for a village in Droma, about 10,000 ft. below us. We had climbed without roping, only letting a rope down at difficult places, as we had started late and the men proposed to go fast. Coming down Harkia led us directly to our first point, an alp called Kensi, 9,000 ft. below; he stopped twice to let some of us drink, but that was all.

'We got to Jagram, where we hoped to get a house and food, about 8 o'clock at night, and found it deserted. So we spent the night on a roof in some discomfort. However, after living chiefly on beans and Indian corn cobs for two days, we got back (in bad weather again) over the Shikara Pass, and so to Abbottabad.

'And thus ended our season. I find in my diary that the party, all told, not counting scrambles on ordinary passes (not mountaineering passes), did fifteen peak climbs, successful and unsuccessful, and three passes, the peaks varying from 15,400 ft. over Sonamarg to 19,000 ft. above the Bhot Khol, and the passes from 17,000 ft. over the Nun Kun ridge to 18,000 ft. from Shagrin to Suru. Harkia did another 18,000 ft. peak from Bhot Khol E. on to the glacier running down towards Tangol. I think that is satisfactory considering my wandering habits, and that I was only away ten weeks.

'The climbing in the Suru district is excellent, though rocks should be avoided as much as possible, as well as the awful screes, the softest and worst in the world, I expect. The amount of ice slopes as compared to snow slopes is remarkable: I should say owing to the dry weather and the hot sun in the day and cold nights.

'The climate in Suru is much drier than round Nanga Parbat. It was remarkable how much less icy the mountains were on the Kashmir side. Nun Kun itself is climbable possibly, but there is an immense amount of work to be done on it. I have not, however, seen the E. face properly. It would probably yield to a regular siege, as there is a large and perfectly safe col between the two peaks. The snow and ice

scenery on the W. side is as fine as anything that I have ever seen.

‘I have this year seen Mount Everest, Kanchinjanga, and K₂. I wonder if any one else has ever done that before in a year?’

Those who know the difficulties of mountaineering amongst peaks 23,000 ft. high will understand how successful Captain Bruce has been during this last summer, not only in exploration amongst new peaks, but also in having ascended a large number of mountains and discovered new glaciers and passes.

Moreover, owing to the delay in the delivery of ice axes and Alpine rope sent out from England, the actual climbing was done with native axes, specially made in Kashmir, and rope obtained from a Calcutta shipping store. He graphically describes it as follows: ‘400 ft. of cable; it was an awful weight, but had to be used, and would have held a house.’

I am, Sir, yours truly,

J. NORMAN COLLIE.

THE FIRST ASCENT OF THE SIMELISTOCK.

BY CLAUDE A. MACDONALD.

TO go out to beautiful ‘centrist’ Grindelwald, beautiful yet, though overrun with cockney tourists brought out in bands at so much a head, and to accomplish two brand new expeditions within a few hours of that fashionable centre (one of them a virgin peak), is a fairly good record in the year of grace 1898. This I accomplished last summer, no one being more surprised than myself, for I had gone out with my wife to Switzerland, on her first visit, with no higher aspirations than to have many pleasant wanderings, ‘through heights and hollows of fern and heather,’ and possibly to finish up with the Faulhorn by the S. face and the Männlichen by the S. arête. During our wanderings I had marked the N.—or, more accurately, N.W.—arête of the Klein Schreckhorn, and inspected it from all sides, and, having mapped out a route, made up my mind to attempt it at some future date. At another time, having walked over to Rosenlaui and enjoyed a few quiet days, far from the madding crowd on the other side of the Scheideck, we resolved to return there, perhaps in 1899, so that I could enjoy a week or a fortnight’s scrambling among the Engelhörner, and, having had pointed out to me