Expeditions from the Gauli Glacier and the Bächlithal.

By FREDERICK GARDINER.

THAT portion of the Bernese Oberland which lies N. and N.E. of the Lauteraar Sattel, between Grindelwald and the Grimsel Hospice, and is described in Sections vi., vii., viii., and ix. of the 'Climbers' Guide to the Bernese Oberland,' vol. ii., is perhaps as little known and visited by English-speaking mountaineers as any portion of the great Bernese chain. There is, of course, the everlasting procession of climbers (and others) who ascend the Hasle Jungfrau (which is not the highest point of the Wetterhörner), and an occasional ascent of the Ewigschneehorn or passage of the Gauli Pass, but such peaks as the Berglistock, the Hühnerstock, the Ritzlihorn, or the Bächlistock are rarely ascended by English climbers. I have paid many visits to the excellent Gauli Club hut, and the Pavillon Dollfuss, both of them very conveniently situated for working this district, and never met an English climber at either. The Dossenhütte above the Urbachsattel, which is almost entirely used for the ascent of the peaks of the Wetterhörner, is also a very good hut and conveniently situated for reaching the Gauli Glacier and the Gauli hut, the most direct route being over the Dossenhorn and the Wetterlimmi. To reach the Gaulihütte from Innertkirchen involves a long walk up the Urbachthal, but it is the nearest point from which supplies can be obtained, for were they taken from either the new inn at Gleckstein, the Baths of Rosenlaui, or the Grimsel Hospice they would have to be carried over one of such glacier passes as the Rosenegg, the Wetterlimmi, the Hühnerthäli, or the Gauli. The Gaulihütte was formerly well provisioned, but in 1905, when I paid two visits to the hut, I found condensed milk the only thing obtainable; but there is always fuel to be had in the hut, which is a great convenience to travellers coming over any of the passes. I first visited this district (apart from ascents of the Hasle Jungfrau) in 1886 with my old friend Mr. Coolidge, but it was not until the year 1897 that I began systematically to make expeditions in this part of the Bernese chain, which I have continued with the interval of but two or three seasons until July 1905, culminating with the first ascent of the Brandlammhorn from the Bächli Glacier. Undoubtedly the finest expedition in this district is that of the Hühnerstock, of which Mr. Coolidge and myself

Digitized by Google

made the first ascent on September 15, 1886, from the Pavillon Dollfuss, and which I described in a short paper in the 'Alpine Journal' (vol. xiii. pp. 309-313). There was some question among foreign climbers as to whether the point we reached was actually the highest one, and Mr. Coolidge, with that painstaking thoroughness which characterises his mountaineering career, ascended (1894) the mountain a second time (an experience I do not envy him, for the mountain is one of the most rotten and toilsome that I ever climbed), and the point is now conceded to us (see Studer, i. p. 510). The Hühnerstock may be ascended either from the Pavillon Dollfuss or the Gaulihütte by way of the Hühnerthäli Pass with equal convenience. Next in point of interest I am inclined to rank the Ritzlihorn, a peak that evaded me for years. It is most conveniently ascended from the Matten Alp, near the foot of the Gauli Glacier. It can also be ascended from Guttannen, in the Haslethal, which was the route taken in 1891 by Mr. Coolidge (on the ascent, for he went down to the Matten Alp), but it is a very long and steep ascent taken that way, and I shuddered when I gazed from its summit at the village of Guttannen in the depths directly below. The peak most frequently ascended from the Gaulihütte is the Ewigschneehorn, why I do not know, except that it is very easy, and can be conveniently taken in conjunction with the Gauli Pass, a much-used pass between the Lauteraar Glacier and the Gauli Glacier; but I consider Ankenbälli a finer mountain and equally easy. Numerous passes lead to the Gaulihütte, perhaps one of the finest combinations being to go from the Baths of Rosenlaui to the Dossenjoch, then over the Dossenhorn and by the Wetterlimmi. Should the traveller wish to start from Grindelwald, then the best route would be to go to the excellent little new inn at Gleckstein (very comfortable and moderate) and cross the Rosenegg, and with it combine the ascent of the Rosenhorn, the third peak of the Wetterhörner, or ascend the Berglistock and cross the Berglijoch to the Gauli Glacier. Instead of crossing the Wetterlimmi the Renfenhorn can easily be taken in combination with the Dossenhorn, and the traveller would arrive at the same point on the Gauli Glacier, where he would leave the ice and join the faint track under the Kammligrat that leads to the Gaulihütte. Another combination which I took last year was, first to ascend Ankenbälli, and then skirting under the buttresses of the Grünbergli and Im Hubel to reach the Hühnerthäli Glacier, and then to make the ascent of the Hühnerthälihorn, the latter a short but very interesting

Digitized by Google

rock scramble. In this connection I may mention that from the point where the ridge was reached between the Hühnerthäli Glacier and the Gruben Glacier, S. of the Hühnerthälihorn, a very convenient snow-filled gully leads direct to the Gruben Glacier and so down to Handeck without (apparently) any difficulty. We could not take it, for we were obliged to return to the hut, where we had left our baggage, and descended to Innertkirchen that night (being driven down by lack of provisions); but had it been otherwise we could have reached Handeck with infinitely less fatigue and hours earlier. The Hangendgletscherhorn is the most direct ascent from the Gaulihütte, and is made by the Hangend Glacier, keeping under the N.E. slope of the Kammligrat; being quite free from difficulty, and not very lengthy, it could be taken on a half fine day, when more important expeditions were impracticable. The precipices on the N. of this peak and the view down the Urbachthal are very fine. The Hubelhorn is worth ascending for the wonderful view one gets of the ridge leading to the Hühnerstock, and the Hühnerthäligrat is a convenient pass for reaching the Pavillon Dollfuss and the Grimsel Hospice, but in doubtful weather and in point of time the Gruben Pass (the route to which passes under the N. face of the Hühnerthälihorn and then crosses the Grubengrat between the ridge of the Hühnerthälihorn and the S. Goleggghorn to the Gruben Glacier, and so down to Handeck by the Aerlenalp), is the easier. There are few more desolate and unvisited valleys in the Oberland than the Bächlithal. It is best reached from the Grimsel Hospice by crossing the bridge below Nollen leading to the old mule track which was used before the Grimsel road was made, and following the old track for about half an hour; then taking a very steep and faint sheep track one reaches a small tarn under the Geisshöhle, and bearing always to the left high above the Bächlisbach the entrance to the valley is gained. It is then necessary to descend slightly to a plain at the termination of the Bächli Glacier, and so one arrives at the glacier itself. From this valley the Bächlistock and the Brandlammhorn can be ascended and crossed to the Unteraar Glacier. I made the first ascent of the Brandlammhorn from the Bächlithal in July 1905, and crossed the Bächlistock, both very interesting expeditions. The Brunberg can also be taken from this valley, and I should think (judging from what I saw from the top) that the Aelplistock could also be reached, but it is easier to make the ascent of that peak direct from Handeck by the Schafälpli, as I did, when making the first ascent in July 1905.

Digitized by Google

A pass (the Obere Bächlilücke) still remains to be crossed between the Bächlistock and the Gross Diamantstock (3,151 m.), which would connect the head of the Bächli Glacier with the head of the Hühnerthäli Glacier, but there is one place on the Bächli Glacier side where it seemed to me that difficulty would be encountered (see 'Climbers' Guide to the Bernese Oberland,' vol. ii. p. 155). Such a pass would make a very direct although not very easy connection between the Grimsel Hospice and the Gaulihütte. Although, with the exception of the Hühnerstock, the ascents referred to in this paper might not be appreciated by the climber of the modern gymnastic school they are well adapted for men like myself, who seek 'mountaineering for the middle-aged' rather than the 'tours de force' of one's younger days, and the expeditions, while not being too lengthy, contain many pieces of interesting work and a certain amount of novelty as well as difficulty.

The Cordillera de Potosi.*

By HENRY HOEK, D.Ph.

S.E. Bolivia is an extensive mountain-land, correctly speaking a high-level plateau, that sinks gradually towards the E., intersected by several deeply cut valleys, above which rise groups and chains of fairly important mountains.

Most of these peaks are uninteresting to the Alpine sportsman. Their ascent is tedious and boring, and they belong absolutely to the class known amongst climbers as 'cow mountains.'

Still I look back with pleasure on the ascents I made there, for the clear, dry desert air ensures an almost unlimited view, which although not beautiful in the ordinary sense of the word is yet curious and impressive. Its chief characteristics are the extent of the landscape, the soft outlines and grey-blue colouring of the whole picture, and the absolute lack of all mist in the distance—that tender haze which in our own Alpine views so readily stirs the romantic and sentimental chords of human nature. It was from the highest point of one of these E. Bolivian mountain groups, the summit of the Cerro Ligui (5,100 metres), that I, for the first time, set eyes on the 'Cordillera de Potosi.' To the N.W., separated from

---

* November 1903.

Digitized by Google