

THE EASTERN LIMESTONE ALPS

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IN these days of ever-ascending achievement and ever-wider ranging exploration it requires some courage to deal, in a paper to this Club, with any range under the 20,000-foot level or within 3000 miles of South Audley Street. But I fortify myself by various considerations. I believe there are still among us members whose purses are as exiguous as their holidays are inadequate to distant expeditions. There are others who from sheer natural preference, sometimes accentuated by increasing shortness of wind, look upon 10,000 ft. as a quite sufficient ceiling to their climbing aspirations, and believe that they can find even more varied beauty and quite enough of mountaineering interest and even difficulty at this comparatively humble level. Lastly, there are those who, for their background on off days, may sometimes wish to exchange the untrodden wilderness or the merely hotel-created high Alpine centre for old-world historic towns and villages, and for the flavour of some long-settled local civilization.

It is to these classes of the mountaineering community that I would address myself, and draw to their attention the merits and charms of a part of the Alpine world which, however familiar to Continental climbers, and easily accessible even from here, has, for some reason or other, been comparatively neglected by British mountaineers. I refer to that outer girdle or periphery of limestone ranges which encircles the main Alpine mass from N.E. to E. and S.E. Their names, as they extend along the Bavarian-Austrian frontier, across Styria and Carinthia down into upper Yugoslavia and Italy, are many: Allgäuer Alps, Wetterstein, Karwendel, Kaisergebirge, Kitzbühler Alps, Berchtesgaden Alps, Totes Gebirge, Dachstein, Ennstaler Alps, Lower Tauern, Carinthian Alps, Karawanken, Carnic and Julian Alps, to mention only the chief among them. They include no glaciers to speak of, and no extensive snowfields, in summer at least. Those who wish to climb in winter or early spring can, no doubt, get all the snow and ice experience they want. But they offer an almost unlimited field for the rock

climber, in countless peaks ranging from 6-7000 ft. up to monarchs of these lesser ranges like the Zugspitze, Dachstein or Triglav which only fall just short of the 10,000 ft. Many of these have had their most frequented routes 'made safe for democracy.' But there is plenty left unspoilt of every grade of interest and difficulty. Nor need the serious Alpinist despise them for mere lack of scale. In spite of their modest height they include some of the longest and steepest rock faces in the whole Alps, from the 6000 ft. rock wall of the Watzmann downwards. Those who insist on long days out need not be afraid of not being able to find them.

The landscape in these ranges has its own peculiar charm, due not only to the bold variety of their peaks, but even more to the spacious and undulating character of the valleys, and above all to the exquisite beauty of their innumerable lakes. In this—naturally, perhaps, as they are limestone—it bears more resemblance to the Rockies than to the High Alps. Only one has to think of the Rockies as tamed by millennia of human effort and influence, from the days of the Hallstatt lake dwellings through Roman times onwards. Nor is it only the bigger centres like Innsbruck, Salzburg, Klagenfurt or Villach that are historically and artistically of interest. Innumerable smaller places like Oberammergau, Mittenwald, Aussee or Hallstatt have their own peculiar charm or tradition. Everywhere, too, among the inhabitants, whether Bavarians, Austrians, Slovenes or Italians, you will find character still unspoilt, great independence and abounding kindness. Lastly, to mention a point to which I know most of our members are serenely indifferent, ancient civilization has brought with it comfort, cleanliness, good cooking and good drinking. No mountains have ever flowed with such delectable coolth of beer as the Bavarian Alps, and the wines, white and red, light or potent, are as varied as the ranges and valleys from the Rhine to the Adriatic. The smaller inns are generally good and cheap, and the huts are clean, with comfortable bedrooms and good fare. To see, hear and smell the coffee beans being specially ground and the cream specially whipped for one's cup of coffee makes one savour its merits even before charming Frieda or Annerl serves it.

There is much, too, to gladden eye and heart in all these ranges for those who enjoy birds, beasts and flowers. The eagle still soars over their summits and chamois are abundant on the higher screes. Capercaillie, black game, and roedeer are to be met with lower down in the woods, and the streams and lakes are full of trout which others can catch for our delectation. Of the

wealth of flowers everywhere I can only speak in those terms of general enthusiasm to which a non-botanist is wise to confine himself. My most vivid recollection is of the regular alpine flower gardens of the Steinernes Meer south of the Königsee, of the Totes Gebirge and of the Črna Prst in the Julians ; of woods carpeted with pink cyclamen, and as blue with willow gentian as an English wood with bluebells.

I make no claim to anything like a complete knowledge of the Eastern Limestones. But I have spent a few weeks in each of the last three summers in the Bavarian Alps and the Julian Alps, at the two ends of the semicircle, and in the Dachstein range in between, just enough to be able to give you my impressions and to whet, I hope, your appetite to acquire a fuller experience yourselves. In this endeavour I fear I may be somewhat handicapped by my slides. My own photography is very erratic and was somehow peculiarly unsuccessful these last two years, and I have had to fill up largely with slides from picture postcards and illustrations in books.

In 1935 I spent the month of August in the Bavarian Alps. I cannot give you a first-hand description of the westernmost chain, the Allgäuer Alps, but Oberstdorf and Oberammergau offer lovely scenery, and there is, I believe, some quite good climbing. Then comes the Wetterstein, continuing the frontier with Austria and offering many good expeditions both from the Bavarian side, where Garmisch-Partenkirchen is the most frequented headquarters, and from Lermoos or Scharnitz on the Austrian side. The Zugspitze, its highest point, is desecrated by a funicular and a monster hotel almost at the summit. But from there eastwards the range is unspoilt. I made my own headquarters for a fortnight at Mittenwald, a border village in the gap formed by the Isar between the Wetterstein and the Karwendel ranges.

In the Middle Ages Mittenwald was a busy centre on the main road from Germany to Italy through Innsbruck. Later it declined, and then, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, found a new prosperity as the home of a flourishing violin industry, a worthy rival of Cremona. Its beautifully frescoed houses recall those prosperous days, and violins are still turned out by families who have plied this skilled craft for over two centuries. I went one night to a play, words, music and acting all provided by the villagers themselves, *Das Sternenlied*, telling of the tragedy of Stainer, the first great German violin maker, unrecognized by his own countrymen, and seeing his favourite apprentice taken away to study under his competitor, Amati of Cremona.

Just above Mittenwald, and under the nearest peak of the Wetterstein, are several pleasant little lakes offering a fine view across the valley at the W. end of the Karwendel. This is really a double range divided by a beautiful valley some fifteen miles long, the N. forming the Austro-Bavarian border. The southern range offers a fine variety of peaks to climb, but I can only speak from hearsay. I traversed the northern range to the finely situated Karwendelhaus at the head of the valley, hoping to do one or two climbs, but the weather was adverse, and I can only show you a few views taken on the walk down the valley to Scharnitz on the Isar, a few miles upstream of Mittenwald.

The crown of the Bavarian Alps is the Berchtesgaden mountain group, in the heart of which lies the Königsee, perhaps the loveliest of all the smaller Alpine lakes, flanked by the tremendous precipices of the Watzmann group. At the head of it a strip of level ground leads to a second and smaller lake occupying the floor of a magnificent mountain amphitheatre. Behind this lies a jumble of barren lunar landscape valleys and sharp peaks, the Steinernes Meer, the edges of it a veritable garden of Alpine flora. The first day I wanted to walk up the wooded side of this amphitheatre I was warned off by a man who told me that the wood was full of bears! I was relieved to find that these were not a normal part of the local fauna, but let loose for the day by the Ufa company for the purposes of a Rocky Mountain film.

The great feature of the Königsee, and the most famous climb in the district, is the Watzmann Ostwand, or E. face of the southernmost of the three Watzmann peaks. A few feet short of 9000 ft., the peak is still 7000 ft. above the lake, 6000 of which form an unbroken precipice. On the lake, at the edge of a lovely stretch of parkland and wooded slope leading up to the face, lies the old monastery of St. Bartolomä, now a restaurant whose iced coffee and other delicacies it would be difficult to beat. Before tackling the Watzmann I did a few smaller climbs in the district, including the Hochkalter, which boasts the largest glacier in Germany, and the E. face of the Middle Watzmann. An ascent of the Obersalzberg, to spend a morning with Herr Hitler, hardly comes within the definition of climbing in the Eastern Alps.

On August 19 I dined at St. Bartolomä off some admirable venison with cream sauce, and went to bed wondering much how I should stand up to the renowned Watzmann face, which has a terrific local reputation for length, difficulty and casualties. This has been chiefly created, I fancy, by the misadventures of guideless youths who have lost their way on the vast face for want of nail marks to direct them—all the serious climbs in

these limestone mountains are, of course, done with *Kletterschuhe*. Still my Meyer's *Hochtourist*, not normally given to exaggeration, described it as a matter of 9-16 hours' continuous climbing, usually done with one or more bivouacs on the way! Even the assurance of my excellent guides, Michl Russegger and Sepp Kurz, that we should not be more than nine to ten hours at most on the rock left me dubious, for I was by no means in good training. However, I was determined to go very light, with two guides to save me from carrying any weight, the thing most resented by those of us who have passed their threescore.

We were off soon after four on the 20th by the light of a friendly moon, and in one and a half hours had traversed the wood and reached the top of a long slope of avalanche snow to the foot of the actual climb. An hour or more of zigzagging up fairly easy rocks brought us to another large patch of snow, after which we put on our *Kletterschuhe* and tackled a shallow vertical chimney, which presently overhung and had to be circumvented by a decidedly tricky traverse to the left. Russegger did this in very good style, but my extra short legs could not nearly reach the only possible foothold, stretch them apart as I would, and in the end I had to tell him to hold tight while I swung across. This was the only passage of the whole climb which could be described as of real difficulty. Above this we climbed more or less straight to a little cave, the Zellerloch, where we breakfasted. Then up to the third of the broad bands or shelves which run across the face of the mountain and followed it—a pleasant walk for a change—diagonally up to the left till it petered out, and then struck straight up, eventually following the right-hand ridge of a long steep gully slanting steeply up from left to right. Above the top of this we worked away to the right, the Middle Peak of Watzmann now well in view, and then straight up by a series of chimneys and steep faces to the summit. We were up just before 12.15, after $6\frac{3}{4}$ hours on the actual face. The climb is one that I can safely recommend as full of varied entertainment. For those who want something more strenuous I would suggest the Trichterweg on the W. face of the Hoher Göll, just across the lake, first climbed in 1922 by Messrs. Aschauer and Kurz, which offers some 5000 ft. of climbing at an average pitch of 80° .

In any adequate account of these limestone ranges considerable space ought no doubt to be given to the Kaisergebirge, where the modern German and Austrian technique of achieving the otherwise impossible by the help of *pitons* or iron pegs and *Karabiner* or snap rings has been developed *in excelsis* on climbs

like the Fleischbank and Predigtstuhl. But I just haven't been there, so pass on, with apologies, to the Dachstein, the monarch of the Styrian Alps, in whose neighbourhood I spent a consistently wet August last year. From Salzburg below the Hoher Göll, where music-loving relatives can always be parked while one is climbing either in the Berchtesgaden Alps or in Styria, the lovely chain of lakes, Gmundener and Hallstätter lakes, extends to the northern underfeatures of the great Dachstein massif, the series being continued by Lake Aussee and Grundlsee further E. Aussee, where I stayed, is a delightful centre for mountain walks, but offers little real climbing, except the 2000 ft. face of the Trisselwand, which rises sheer from the lake and offers a good sporting climb, not altogether free from falling stones. This is an outlier of the Totes Gebirge, another wild region of barren limestone or *Karst*, offering wonderful ski-ing in winter and a fine field for the botanist in spring and summer, but only mediocre climbing, among its many 6000–7000 ft. peaks. I confined myself to one pleasant day traversing a long broken ridge called Rotgschirr.

The Dachstein can be most easily ascended from Lake Hallstatt or, preferably, from the N.E. from Gosau and the Gosau lakes. The Gosau valley, which is reached by a narrow wooded gorge from Lake Hallstatt, is one of the most delightful in all that part of the world. There is no end of good climbing to be got in the Gosaukamm, extending from behind Gosau to the Dachstein. Unfortunately, hopeless weather defeated my attempts to do anything in that chain, except, on my last day, an ascent of the Kleine Bischofsmütze at the Dachstein end of the range. The Gosau Lake—or rather Lakes, for as at the Königsee there is a smaller upper lake right under the main mass of the mountain—is the gem of these Styrian lakes, and the nearest thing I know in Europe to Lake Louise in the Rockies.

By either of the ordinary routes, *i.e.* over the glacier and by the E. or W. ridges, both liberally fool-proofed, the Dachstein is mainly worth climbing for the glorious view to south-west and south over the great snow ranges of the Venediger and Hohe Tauern, and beyond to the Karawanken and Julian Alps and north-west to the Kaisergebirge and Bavarian Alps. This is hearsay, for I did it with a party of young people in a snow-storm and we saw no more than was required to feel our way up and down again. More suitable to the weather of those weeks was a visit to the Dachstein ice caves. These are entered at a height of some 4000 ft. above Obertraun on Lake Hallstatt and run for miles under the mountain. The precipitation of moist warm air

entering these caves and deposited as rime has in course of the ages filled them with regular underground glaciers, rivers and waterfalls of solid ice, while the moisture trickling down from the roof has festooned these vast underground halls with fantastically beautiful icicle pillars and curtains. Cleverly lit by electricity, these caves are well worth a visit.

Of the climbs on the N. side of the Dachstein range I can say little. The Windlegergrat on Torstein at the W. end of the range is a long and, I believe, most interesting climb which weather, and the state of my fingers after the Dachstein S. face, prevented my trying. But the Eiskarlspitze by the E. chimney, which I did instead, provides excellent sport for an off day from the Adamek hut. The great climbs on this range are provided on the S. side, over the Enns valley, where the whole range, Dirndln, Dachstein, Torstein, etc., breaks off in one continuous wall of from 2000–3000 ft. and remarkably vertical. After nearly a month of frustration I decided that I must at least try the Dachstein by this face, and on August 27 went round with my guides Karl Resch of Aussee and Loisl Zopf of Goisern by train and motor bus to the Ramsau plateau—a great ski-ing resort—and so up to the S. Dachstein hut.

There are two routes up this face,¹ the Pichl route, first done in 1901 by that fine pioneer of the Eastern Alps, whose name is most familiar to those who frequent the Dolomites in connection with the Pichlriss, or Pichl crack—and the deuce of a crack too—on the last 50 ft. of the Delago Tower. This runs out on to the E. ridge of the mountain some little distance below the summit. The other, the Steiner route, first ascended in 1909 by that daring cragsman and adventurous character Jörg Steiner, leads straight up to just below the summit on the W. shoulder. This is the finer route, both for this reason and because it maintains its standard of difficulty *crescendo* to the very end. But in the bad state of the rocks both Zopf and Resch agreed that it was out of the question. As it was the Pichl route gave us all we wanted.

We started off at 5.15, and by eight o'clock had reached the top of a 300-ft. slope of very steep and very hard-frozen snow which made us regret having left our ice-axes behind. Zopf led off up an interesting succession of traverses, faces and chimneys, all at a very steep angle, but nowhere unduly difficult, which brought us half-way up the face in a couple of hours. We congratulated ourselves on making such good time, and Resch cheerfully assured me that the real difficulties of the climb were all over, a remark which was to become a standing joke during

¹ See illustration, *A. J.* 49. opp. 243.

the next seven hours. Almost immediately afterwards we were really up against it. Zopf was leading up an overhanging chimney with an exit by a tremendously exposed traverse over a bulging vertical face when he suddenly gave vent to a terrific series of heartfelt curses.

It appeared that the only available handhold, further helped by a fixed peg, which had formerly facilitated the manœuvre, had vanished, probably knocked off by a stonefall. Without the handhold he was unable to fix a peg out far enough, and two that he fixed on the edge of the chimney for the pulley effect were not enough to enable him to get across to any kind of hold. For half an hour or more he tried, but just couldn't risk it at the critical moment, and there was serious talk of having to turn back. At last Resch, who, though less familiar with the climb, was slimmer and had a longer reach, somehow swam across to a hold—an admirable piece of rockcraft.

This was one of the cases where peg and snap ring do add enormously to safety, and I confess I cannot share the prejudice of our extreme conservatives against their use—in moderation. It opens up new opportunities and adds a new technique. To hang like a fly on a wall and shift the ring from the rope in front of you to the rope behind you with the minimum of fuss or delay is an art that gives its own satisfaction. To carry up a sackful of pegs in order to make a spike ladder up a continuously impossible face is, of course, indecent. But two or three carried in the pocket to bridge, in reasonable safety, an occasional flaw in an otherwise feasible route seems to me a venial and even meritorious act.

From now on we were in continuous trouble owing to the masses of slushy melting snow lying on all the normally easier ledges. In places we were climbing through a regular cascade. I remember one very tricky traverse to the left with a single line of good handholds, but no footholds below and no handholds above till one had somehow managed to stand up on one's handholds without being pushed over by the sheer wall, a feat of balancing relatively easy for the second on the rope, but requiring great nerve and suppleness on the part of the leader. An overhang of which I had heard much proved, on the other hand, comparatively simple. Presently we reached the 'bivouac,' a dripping recess with a curtain of water flowing in front of it. So towards four o'clock to a broad shelf, where Zopf produced an apple—we had each had a slice of bread and butter before starting the climb—and declared that the difficulties were finally and definitely over and that we had only to walk out along the sloping

shelf. I had the laugh of him when round the next corner the shelf pitched steeply upwards and became a nasty smooth chimney with an overhanging roof. However, we extricated ourselves from this eventually and struck the ridge at five o'clock. Normally the climb should not take more than four or five hours for the 3000 ft., but we had spent seven over the last 1500. In good conditions it should be a truly delightful climb. I fancy the Steiner route is even more sporting throughout and, indeed, all the climbs on this S. face of the range are of first-rate quality.

Another two hours or so took us down the ridge, across the Hallstatt Glacier and over the Steinerscharte to the Gosau Glacier and to the kindly welcome of the Adamek hut. So ended a day I shall always remember both for sheer variety of interest and for the continued excitement almost to the end of not being quite sure that we should do it. Two days later we descended 'from the Dachstein's heights where the eagle soars,' as Styria's national song has it, to Gosau, after a good finish to a poor season. In a normal year an active party would find all they could want to do, and more, in the Gosau and Dachstein ranges and in the Ennstal Alps beyond.²

From the Dachstein Triglav in the Julians can be seen some fifty miles away across the intervening Ennstal and Carinthian Alps and Karawanken. I have left the Julian Alps to the last, though I was there in 1936, partly in order to follow round the map, partly also because they are the least visited, and in many ways the most attractive. Few readers of Dr. Kugy's delightful *Alpine Pilgrimage* can fail to have been tempted by the thought of visiting a region which he describes with such infectious enthusiasm. But there seems to be an idea that they are very remote, and inhabited by folk who speak no known language. As a matter of fact, one can reach them within half a dozen hours from Innsbruck, and, to reassure those of our members who are not fluent in Slovene, I might add that German is widely understood, though a nod of assent does not always imply complete comprehension.

For the greater part of their length the Julian Alps form the boundary between Yugoslavia and Italy, only their western extension towards the Carnic Alps lying wholly in Italy. Of this latter section I cannot speak from experience, though I believe the Seisera valley and Montasio equal the finest scenery in the Eastern Julians. Nor have I seen anything of the Italian side of the Eastern Julians, except for a day spent walking up the Trenta, the lovely valley of the upper Isonzo, from the foot of

² A.J. 44. 245-256.



Photo, W. Bellows.]

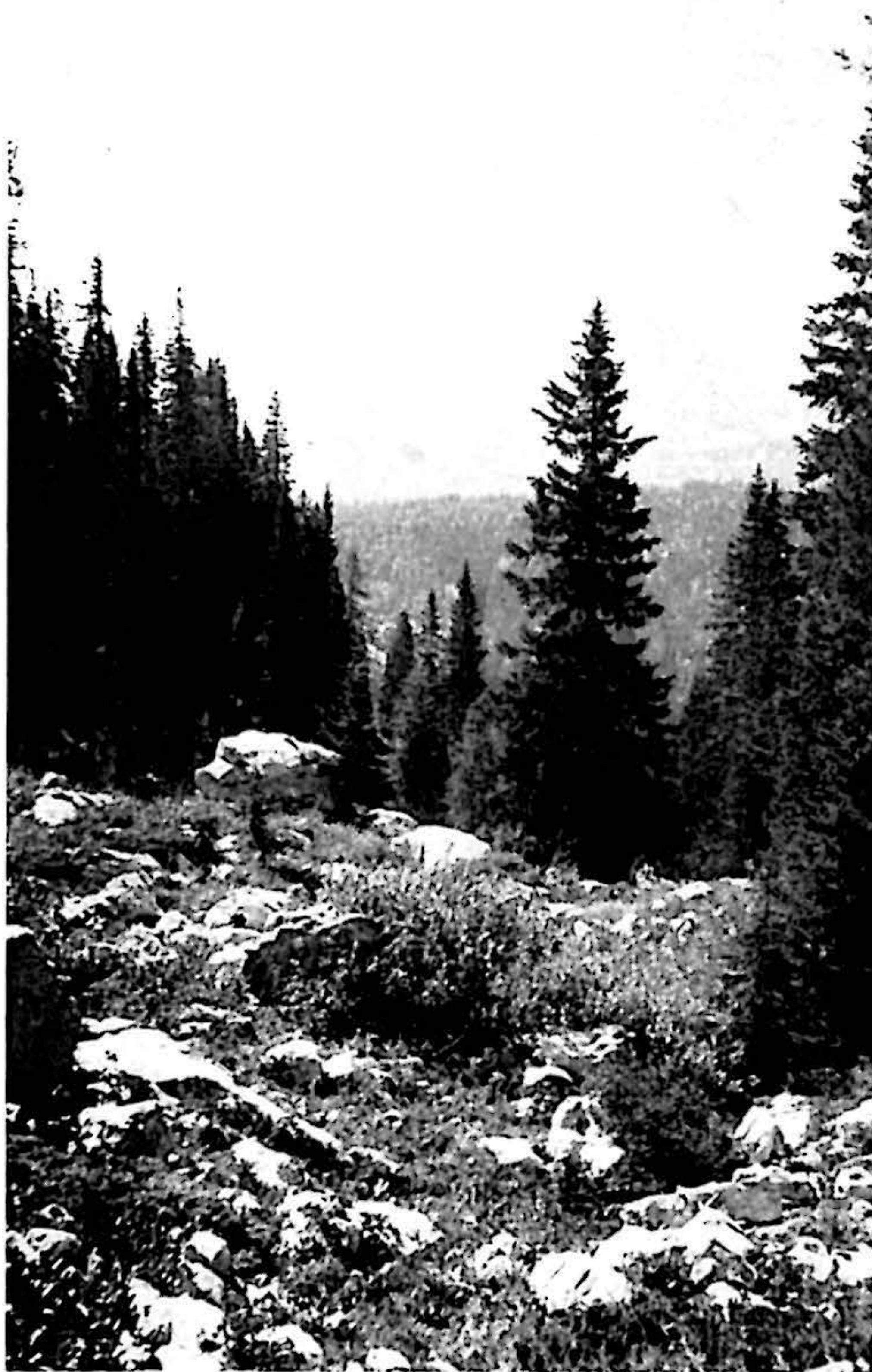
THE LAKE OF BLED.



Photo, W. Bellows.]

THE VALLEY OF THE SEVEN LAKES.

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Photo, W. Bellows.]

VIEW ABOVE WOCHEIN LAKE, TRIGLAV.



Photo, W. Bellows.]

TRIGLAV, FROM S.

Triglav, to the Vršic Pass. But the finest side of the range, both from the point of view of scenery and of climbing, is to be found on the Yugoslav side, and there is plenty to be seen and done there without crossing a frontier which the Italians keep very jealously closed.

I confess I fell a victim to the charm of the Julians at once, and mean to lose no time in revisiting them. It is a charm in which atmosphere, colour and outline are all peculiarly blended. The peaks themselves are strikingly bold, and the N. wall of Triglav, though not much more than 6000 ft. at most in total elevation above the valley of the Vrata, is one of the most impressive rock faces in the whole of the Alps. The valleys are beautifully wooded, with a much greater proportion of deciduous trees, chiefly beech, than in the northern Alps, often with spacious park-like glades, and the contrast between their warm colouring and the limestone crags towering above is very effective. The streams are crystal clear, except where the pools are deep enough to turn an exquisite blue. The lakes, smaller than the Bavarian or Austrian ones, have much the same charm.

For those who have to park non-climbing families who crave for other amusements, Bled has all the up-to-date 'attractions' of a Riviera resort, while Lake Bohinj is no less beautiful, but as yet unspoilt and a wonderful centre for mountain walks. At the head of the lake is a rock wall some 1500 ft. in height, from the middle of which the southern branch of the river Save gushes out in a sheer drop of 200 ft. into a lovely blue pool before tumbling down in a succession of cascades through beautifully wooded heights. Behind this wall a desolate region of tumbled rock and a chain of romantically secluded lakes leads up to the S. shoulder of Triglav, the monarch of the Julians. This wild region was once, according to Slovene legend, the lovely garden of the fairies, guarded by Zlatorog, a white chamois with golden horns. His wounding by a daring hunter, intent on the treasure to which Zlatorog alone had access, led to the fairies destroying their garden and departing. Triglav itself means three heads, and is so called, not because it has three summits, for at most it can claim two, but after an ancient Slav divinity.

Many of the huts, especially Aljaž at the head of the exquisite Vrata valley and Erjavčeva at the head of the Pišenca glen, are gloriously situated. Incidentally they are comfortable, provided with bedrooms, clean and well *bewirtschaftet*. It pays even for a short visit to join the Slovene Alpine Club (Aleksandrova česta 1, Palaca Viktoria, Ljubljana) in order to secure the reductions in charges allowed to its members. These huts really afford the

best local climbing headquarters. As centres for a somewhat wider district the best are Kranjska Gora and Mojstrana. Both Longstaff and Tyndale will, I expect, agree with me in praising the Hotel Triglav at Mojstrana, owned by a once mighty hunter, now completely spherical, Mr. Rabić, but in fact run by three charming daughters, one of whom, Minca, incidentally also teaches the village school and is a fine rifle shot, climber and champion ski runner.

From Mojstrana two valleys lead up to Triglav. The eastern or Krma valley, well wooded and walled in by fine peaks, but waterless, leads up to the hut on the eastern shoulder of Triglav and offers the easiest hikers' route to the mountain. It is a great valley for chamois and I believe offers a splendid ski run all the way down from Triglav in winter. The western, or Vrata valley, is one of the loveliest in the whole Alps. Passing the Peričnik Fall, gushing like the Savica straight out of the face of a cliff, two hours of walking up its open glades bring one to the Aljaž hut, so called after a fine old Slovene priest who was the father of mountaineering in these parts. The hut, which has its own bakery, dairy and chapel, lies in a pleasant park-like flat right under the N. face of Triglav, glorious in its massive symmetry. The change of colour on it the evening we arrived, from gold to rose and mauve, was something unforgettable. Hardly less fine are some of the other peaks surrounding the valley, especially Škrlatica. I had brought with me as guides Jože Čop (pronounced Chop), a charming curly-headed boyish fellow, who has done many fine first ascents, and an older companion, Škantar, more of a walking and chamois-stalking guide, who was to carry our boots up the gully at the E. end of the wall while we did the face.

It was my first climb, except for training walks, so I contented myself with the so-called Slovene route,³ the shortest of the main routes up the face. We began with a chimney slanting up to the left, leaving it from time to time to zigzag up the face, eventually bearing to the right and so, after four hours of interesting but not really difficult climbing, on to the Triglav Glacier, where Škantar met us with our boots and hot tea from the hut. We crossed the glacier to the hut and lunched, and so with Škantar on to the actual summit. After all the facilities provided for me by the courtesy of the Italian Embassy, I felt I ought to go down the Italian side at least once. So we descended the 7000 ft. or more into the Trenta valley, held up again and again by military posts, whose courteous suspicion usually took some time and

³ A. J. 39. 137.

much careful study of our documents to overcome. The Italians have constructed a military mule path zigzagging up the whole mountain face, admirably graded but with a surface of loose stone which provided an excruciating descent. Reaching the bottom well after nightfall, we found ourselves in the middle of large scale army manœuvres, troops camped in the woods everywhere, and strings of ammunition and pack mules cannoning into us in the dark. At the end of an eternity of this we found a dingy little *albergo*, where a sad but amiable young woman explained that the military had eaten everything. In the end, however, a boy secured the corner of a loaf and some eggs from a neighbour.

Next morning, with a cheery young Fascist militiaman attached to guide and, no doubt, also keep an eye on us, we walked up along the crystalline Isonzo past the pretty church of Sta Maria in Trenta with Jalovec ⁴ boldly dominating the valley. Presently we turned uphill to the right for the Vršic Pass, first under the shade of a great cliff and then through lovely beechwoods with open patches full of raspberries and with glorious views back over Rombon, Srebrnjak and other mountains looking incredibly steep when one thought how the Italians had fought their way up them in the war. No wonder they insisted, regardless of self-determination, to secure a frontier at the top of all the passes. All the last part of the way to the pass was bristling with fortifications and troops, and, of course, closed to all ordinary tourists, a complete contrast to the other side, where a trio of Slovene boys in a small guard house constituted the only military force, while five minutes beyond we descended to the peaceful comfort of the Erjavčeva hut to enjoy a lunch of *Wiener Schnitzl* and salad, accompanied by ice-cold beer and followed by fragrant Turkish coffee which could not be bettered anywhere. This hut, situated in the wooded gap between the great mountain masses of Mojstrovka and Prisank and looking down the valley across to Škrlatica and the Martuljek Peaks, runs the Aljaž hut close both for beauty of situation and comfort. And so down the lovely Pišenca glen to Kranjska Gora, a most picturesquely situated centre.

A couple of days later we came back up the Pišenca, branching off up the Krnica valley ⁵ to the hut of that name, beautifully situated under the N. face of the Škrlatica ridges. From here we did Razor by the N. face, on August 25, descending on the Italian side and circling round and down by the steep precipice

⁴ See illustration, *A.Ž.* 40. opp. 179 (from N.E.).

⁵ See illustration, *A.Ž.* 41. opp. 75.

of the Križ. On the 26th we went up past the Erjavčeva hut to do a new pet climb of Jože's on Mojstrovka, but were headed off by too much snow in the gully leading to it, and found instead a new way up the S.E. face of a smaller peak called Rupe. This was a day of glorious views towards Venediger and Glockner as well as back towards Škrlatica. This was our goal for next day, so we returned down to Krnica and then climbed, a weary grind, for several hours after dark up to a little semi-cylindrical red tin hut of the Nissen type perched on a ledge just opposite the N. face of Škrlatica.

This we did next morning by what is known as the Kugy route, more or less following the line of a big fissure running vertically up the face and thence on to the main N.E. ridge and so in about six hours of actual rock work to the top—a fine sporting climb. We had had no water except melted snow at the hut or on the way, and I arrived on the summit desperately parched, to watch two sturdy Austrians who had come up the hikers' route passing a large water-bottle backwards and forwards till one of them turned it up empty. I can assure you I made up for it at the Aljaž hut a few hours later. So ended three good days, involving about 40 hours going, in glorious weather and lovely scenery. My one regret was that I had no time left to spend a few days on the Martuljek peaks, but I believe Longstaff has camped in the enchanted valley⁶ at their feet and can tell you something about them.

I am afraid I have not been able to tell you anything of any note or new interest from the purely mountaineering point of view. But I hope I have at any rate persuaded you that much enjoyment of the beauty of the mountains, as well as plenty of hard exercise and fun, can be got in these outer regions of the Alpine world.⁷

⁶ See illustration, *A. J.* 39. opp. 139.

⁷ For illustrations, see Dr. Kugy's *Die Julischen Alpen im Bilde*, *A. J.* 46. 237.