

NOTES AND QUERIES.

THE KING OF ITALY AND THE ALPINE CLUB.—The King of Italy has conferred the Order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus on Messrs. J. Ball, W. Mathews, and F. F. Tuckett, in consideration of their scientific and geographical investigations in the Alps. Mr. Ball has contributed more than any man alive to the acquisition of that extensive knowledge of all parts of the Alps now possessed, and the two other gentlemen have been the most persevering and successful explorers of the Graian and Tarentaise groups. Their labours, with the assistance of other Englishmen, have evolved order and accuracy out of the chaos of the old Sardinian maps, executed in the days before a chamois hunter was king. His Majesty, whose favourite hunting-grounds were fully described by Mr. Tuckett in 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' is probably as well able as any of his subjects to appreciate the value of the explorations made by Englishmen in his dominions: and his finance minister, Signor Sella, is also a zealous mountaineer. We are sure that all English mountaineers will fully appreciate the compliment, and will agree in thinking that the King of Italy has selected the gentlemen most eminently deserving to receive this graceful mark of honour.

ALPINE BYWAYS: X.—*The Faldum Pass, from Leukerbad to Kippel.* Mr. Hayward, of Edinburgh, and myself, with our guides Blatter and Andermatten, made, on September 8, 1864, this beautiful, useful, and easy pass. We desired to get into the Lötsch Thal, en route for the Bell Alp by the Birchfuh, without passing through the Dala and Rhone valleys, which we well knew. Failing to obtain any information as to the Schneidschnur Pass (Central Alps, p. 40), we determined to ascend the Torrenthorn, and thence to find our way somehow to Kippel. We started late, we dawdled much in the great heat, and it was 1 o'clock before we reached the peak. It was 2.30 when we left; we kept for the first ten minutes on the Leukerbad path, and then turned sharply due S. beside a new-born slender rill that made its way through and among the vast bed of very steep débris of which the whole hill-side seemed composed. Keeping to this till we could get round the flank of the Torrenthorn, we turned again at right angles due E., in which direction the whole of our subsequent course lay. After the descent mentioned, we kept as nearly as possible on a level, and as close to the base of the wonderful red spires and obelisks which form the actual 'horn' of the Torrenthorn as we could with safety; but the large beds of débris showed how dangerous it would be to hug them too closely. On our right, due S., the ground between the hills which bound the Lötsch Thal on the E. and the Dala Thal on the W. was gently scooped out, the slopes to either range being very gradual; and in this elongated basin we saw for a long time five chamois. I should suppose that the descent hence into the Rhone valley would be easy, for we could see the southern hills to a point not much above their base. What we thought our col was soon visible: it lay between two rocky peaks, with a green hillock between them; and except for the débris, of which we had to cross four beds,

the walking was most pleasant. The real col was, however, beyond, and lay between the Laucherspitze N. and the Faldum Rothhorn S. We rounded the S. slope of the hillock, and after another mass of *geröll* we soon reached it. The descent lay at first over a vast smooth pavement, spreading from hill to hill, and sloping gradually, over which the water trickled anyhow—that is to say, in no stated channel. This pavement was broken in a few places by huge steps; but ere long we found a track upon the left side of the stream formed by this water when collected. In about an hour from the col we reached the large and thriving Faldum Alp, and thence descended rapidly through a forest of fine trees. Our path was on the side of the hill, much above the stream: indeed we crossed the lowest slopes of the Faldum-grat into the parallel valley on the N., and did not join the main path of the Lötsch Thal until we were close to Ferden. Our actual walking was, to the Torrenthorn, 3 hours; to the col, 2 hours; to Ferden, 2 h. 10 m.; and Kippel is but 10 m. farther on: 7 h. 20 m. in all.

Beautiful the pass certainly is; for not only is there the almost un-equaled view from the Torrenthorn, but from a little below the col the whole of the Lötsch Thal and its glacier to the very Lücke are visible, bounded N. by the Petersgrat, and S. by the magnificent chain of which the Bietschhorn is chief: useful also, for it saves that longer route, which all men know, through the hot and dusty valleys. It is no less certainly easy, for from the Torrenthorn it is all down-hill: that peak is 9,679, the Laucherspitze is 9,311, and the Rothhorn 9,399. Between these last the col lies, and it is very much below them.

The Pfarrer at Kippel, Holzer by name, has a very comfortable house, built only in the spring of 1864: he is very hospitable and attentive, as indeed he is bound to be by his cousinship to the Seilers of Zermatt. Mr. Crossman (A.C.) slept at the village inn on the same night, and did not complain of his quarters; but it is true that the valley has no fresh meat.

THOMAS BROOKSBANK.

EXPLORATIONS IN THE GESCHENEN THAL.—Those who know the portion of the St. Gotthard between Altdorf and Andermatt will doubtless remember the little village of Geschenen, situated just below the commencement of the defile of the Devil's Bridge, at the entrance of a valley running upwards in a WSW. direction, at whose head a fine snowy range is visible. This is the Geschenen Thal, one of the least-frequented valleys of the Alps, and the mountains at its head are the Winterberg and some neighbouring summits of inferior height, which immediately overlook the fine Dama glacier and the huts or pastures of the beautiful Geschenen Alp at its foot. Crossing the Grassen pass from Engelberg to Wasen viâ the Mayenthal, and proceeding up the St. Gotthard road, I reached Geschenen on the evening of July 15, and took up my quarters at the Rösse, which I can highly recommend to future comers. I was aware that a pass existed at the extreme NW. angle of the valley between the Sustenhorn and Thierberg, by which the head of the Gadmen Thal might be reached viâ the Stein glacier; but as this was well known to the natives, and had been crossed, if I am not mistaken, by at least one member of the Alpine Club, the object I proposed to myself was to effect a passage to Mühlestalden

by crossing the W. boundary of the Geschenen Thal and striking the Trift glacier on the opposite side, not far from the Triftgletscher Joch. So far as could be judged from an examination of all the maps with which I was acquainted, my course would lie up the Dama glacier and across the ridge at its head to the N. of the Galenstock, from which it was represented as descending.

I left Geschenen at 3.30 A.M. on the 16th, with Christian and Peter Michel of Grindelwald, and, after a charming walk through lovely scenery and amidst magnificent specimens of glacier action, found myself at 6.20 at the little collection of houses called the Geschenen Alp. Here the curé was taking his morning walk, and I took the opportunity of a halt for breakfast to have a little chat with him. He assured me that the pass at the head of the valley, which here bends round nearly at a right angle in a NW. direction, was quite easy, the ice being reached in one hour, and the summit of the col in three more. He also stated that the Alp was inhabited all the year round; that last winter had been 'a remarkably mild one, as the snow had only lain 25 feet deep, instead of covering the chapel altogether, and rising above the eaves of his house, as usual.' He further mentioned that there was a pass in a S. direction, by which the Furka might be reached in three hours, but knew nothing of any previous attempts to effect a passage either to the Rhone or Trift glaciers. Finally, in reply to my enquiry how soon the Galenstock would become visible, he intimated that I should see it rising above the head of the Dama glacier a little higher up the valley. We wished him good morning at seven, and sure enough in ten minutes more a fine peak, previously concealed, came out on the left in the position indicated both by the curé and the maps. It scarcely, indeed, looked so high as the summit on the right, which, as I supposed, corresponded with the Winterberg; but it was impossible to know how far this was due to perspective, and we therefore scanned the ridge to the right for the most favourable point of attack. A selection being at length made, we entered upon the glacier by its right bank at 7.30, and, proceeding leisurely upwards, with occasional halts to search for crystals in which its medial moraine is uncommonly rich, reached the foot of the steeper portion at 8.35. The crevasses were here pretty numerous, but they presented no serious obstacle; and at 11.45, after crossing a bergschrund, we halted for a quarter of an hour at the foot of the rocks which alone separated us from the arête. They were excessively steep and slippery, and this, with the caution necessary to prevent a smash of the barometer, rendered our progress so slow that it was 1.30 when we stood on the ridge. Here a most unexpected discovery awaited us. Instead of gently undulating snow-fields leading, as I had expected, to the upper portion of the great névé from which the Rhone and Trift glaciers descend in opposite directions, the cliffs fell away quite precipitously in our front for a depth of some hundred feet to a great glacier evidently flowing down in the direction of Realp, and on the farther side of which, at a distance of about half a mile, the grand mass of the Galenstock was seen towering upwards far above us. Its N. ridge, dividing the névé of the glacier at our feet from that of the Rhone or Trift,

appeared to unite with that on which we stood rather behind the fine peak, which I have assumed to be the Winterberg, though it may possibly be only an outline of that mountain. We were therefore utterly cut off by a gigantic trench from the Triftgletscher Joch; and as I had no wish to descend to the Furka, and the rocks immediately beneath us on the W. appeared entirely impracticable, nothing remained but to turn back and derive all the comfort and consolation possible from the reflection that the expedition would at least dissipate the erroneous belief which others as well as myself, misled by the maps, had previously entertained—that the Galenstock was situated at the head of the Dama glacier, and consequently overlooked the Geschenen Thal. We commenced the descent at 2.30, quitted the rocks at 4.30, and the glacier at 6.45, and arrived at Geschenen Alp at 7. Here I left a note with the curé, putting future comers on their guard against repeating my mistake, and recommending that future attempts should be made between the Winterberg and Thierberg. I believe that such an attempt was subsequently made by my friends, Messrs. Stephen and Macdonald, but that they failed to effect a passage in this direction, and made, instead, a new and perfectly easy pass to the Furka by the SW. angle of the Dama glacier and the great ice-filled valley to the E. of the Galenstock. Later in the season they were followed by Mr. Jacomb, who crossed the ridge at a point not far from that which we had reached. At 7.35 we bade adieu to the curé (who was very hospitable, and furnished us with some excellent wine at a very reasonable price), and, proceeding down the valley at as rapid a pace as the increasing darkness would allow, reached the friendly Rösse at Geschenen at 10.25, just as the moon rose above the bounding mountain and flooded the deep valley with light. F. F. TUCKETT.



The sketch map inserted above has been drawn from Mr. Tuckett's observations, and agrees well with Sheet XIII. of the Federal Map which

has just been published. The Geschenen Thal that was selected by the Swiss Alpine Club for their special explorations in 1864, and a map prepared for them on a much larger scale, will appear in their Jahrbuch for 1865. But as the Swiss Club waited until late in the season before they could commence operations, the honour of actually accomplishing the chief pass of the district was carried off by an Englishman, as above mentioned. Besides Mr. Jacomb's Dama Pass, the passage from the Stein Alpe to Geschenen was made by Mr. Brooksbank, for the first time certainly recorded. Want of space compels us to defer the publication of that gentleman's account of this very beautiful expedition.

THE ALPS AND THE PICTURE GALLERIES.—*To the Editor of the Alpine Journal.*—SIR,—A word on the picturesque view of the Alps as illustrated by the Picture Galleries now open. Is it that Truth, residing at the bottom of a well, can never be raised to the altitude of the High Alps, or for what other reason, that the pictures in the Academy and the two Water-colour Galleries, which profess to be of Alpine scenery, bear so little resemblance to nature? Noticeably, this is the case at the Old Water-colour Exhibition. In many cases the foreground is well and accurately drawn, and the picture only spoilt by an impossible peak inserted in the distance. We might forgive an overabundance of snow if the shapes of the peaks were faithfully reproduced. That they are not so is the more unpardonable, considering the excellent photographic views of most of the Swiss Alps, which should certainly enable the artist to preserve some likeness to the outline of the mountain he draws. Take, as two examples from the Old Water-colour Gallery, No. 221, a good picture spoilt, to anyone acquainted with the locality, by the insertion of a mountain in the background, taken from I know not where, and substituted for the reality; and No. 246, in which are two unrecognisable peaks, called in the catalogue the Eiger and the Jungfrau. This exhibition abounds in pictures of Alps, the least preposterous of which is No. 211, a view of the Via Mala on the Splügen Pass. A notable exception to this rather sweeping condemnation is No. 480, in the Academy, which is a view of the Maritime Alps and the Valley of the Paglione near Nice. If other artists were as truthful in representing nature as Mr. Carrick, and drew less on their imagination for their facts or peaks, we might shortly hope to find among them a worthy rival to Mr. Elijah Walton, with whose exquisite drawings, now on view at the German Gallery in Bond Street, I presume most of your readers are acquainted. Those who are not so, and who desire to see the Alps rendered truthfully and beautifully, should certainly visit this Gallery. The view of one picture alone, 'Sunset on the Aiguille and Glacier de Trient,' would amply repay a visit by every
LOVER OF HIGH ALPS.

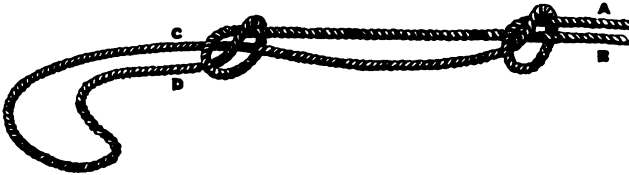
KNOTS FOR ROPING TRAVELLERS.—In the report on ropes and axes presented to the Alpine Club last summer, attention was called to the importance of avoiding all superfluous knots in ropes used for alpine expeditions, and of taking care how the necessary knots were made. As this report was not published till late in the season, it is probable that its contents were never made known to the very persons who ought to know them best, the guides, who in practice arrange the rope

for a party. It will be a great advantage if mountaineers during the coming season will impress on their guides the main facts, that

1st. Every knot weakens a rope more or less, and the tighter the knot the greater is the mischief caused by it—

And 2nd. Permanent knots are especially injurious, since they keep up a continual unequal strain—

and will also teach them some simple and effectual mode of fastening, such as that of which a diagram is appended.



This knot has been found by experiment to weaken a rope least of all. It is commonly used for tying together two ends, and when used in this way, or for making a loop at one end of a rope, it has hardly any appreciable weakening effect. It can be made in the middle of a rope, as shown in the diagram by (1) making an ordinary loop or slip-knot, and (2) making a second similar loop in that side of the loop which slips through the knot on the other. It can be drawn tight or loosened simply by pulling—to tighten, cords *B C*, or those which run through the knots—to loosen, cords *A D*, or those which form the knots. And though, for a loop to affix to a spring hook or pass through a belt, the ordinary single loop is better, as causing less strain to the rope, yet this loop is especially suitable for tying round the waist of any traveller without a belt, as it can easily be shifted and drawn as tight as necessary; and when once made, it cannot possibly be tightened by any jerk or pull on the rope, thereby saving the traveller from any risk of the sensation of being cut in two, so unpleasantly familiar to those who allow their guides full discretion as to the mode of roping. I do not of course wish to maintain the absolute superiority of this knot over all others, though I have never found one so generally useful: and I shall be very glad to receive communications after the summer from any mountaineers who have practically tried other knots, and will aid me in discovering the best safeguard against accident from this most universal risk of weakening ropes, never much stronger than is absolutely necessary to resist a strain that may occur at any moment.

H. B. GEORGE.

* * * In the September number of the *Alpine Journal* will be published a summary of all new ascents and remarkable expeditions made during the summer, to as late a date as may be found possible. For this purpose the Editor requests mountaineers to furnish him, at their earliest convenience, with short memoranda of any such expeditions. He would also be glad to receive notes of any new *Alpine Byways*, by which are intended expeditions practicable for ladies, or at any rate for moderate walkers, which are not described in the guide-books.