

## ALPINE NOTES.

**AIGUILLE DU MIDI.**—In consequence of observing in the 'Alpine Journal' of November an ascent of the Aiguille du Midi, made by Messrs. Horace Walker and Foster in 1869, mentioned as the second ascent of that mountain, I am anxious to add to the records of the Alpine Club an ascent of the Aiguille du Midi made by me, with Jean Balmat and Édouard Cupelin, of Chamouni, on the 29th of August, 1865.

As I had not the honour of being elected a member of the Club until the following year, I did not send a notice of my ascent to the Editor of the Journal.

Leaving Chamouni early on the morning of the 28th, we proceeded up the Glacier du Géant, and after passing Les Rognons, turned to the right up the glacier descending from the Col between Mont Blanc du Tacul and a ridge of the Aiguille du Midi, until we reached the hut erected by some Courmayeur guides to facilitate the ascent of Mont Blanc from the southern side. This we found half full of snow, and two-thirds of the roof and the door blown away.

After passing a bitterly cold night there, we started at daybreak for the final climb, but lost the first hour and a half by attempting to reach the summit by an impracticable ridge running towards the south-west from the main peak.

Retracing our steps along the ridge, and proceeding along the glacier until we were apparently immediately below the Aiguille, we recommenced our ascent by mounting a steep snow slope, in the middle of which we found a bergschrund. Crossing this, the slope became much steeper, and at the top of the slope we found a couloir, which we mounted. Above the couloir we had a very steep ice-slope, and rock work of a very difficult nature, by which we successfully arrived on the summit of the Aiguille du Midi in four hours from the time we left the hut, including the time lost on the impracticable ridge. The summit we found to be very sharp, and in consequence of the cold wind blowing we only remained on it a quarter of an hour—a sufficient time, however, to erect a small flag, which was blown away on the following evening, and to be seen by several persons at Chamouni, who were on the watch for us. Our descent to the hut occupied two hours and a quarter, in consequence of the difficult nature of the rocks, although we used as much expedition as we dared prudently to use. The conspicuous position which the Aiguille du Midi holds in the view from Chamouni and the Brévent, and the fact that no account of an actual ascent has been published, makes me hope that Messrs. Horace Walker and Foster, who have so recently made the ascent, purpose to write some account of it in the 'Alpine Journal.'

D. J. ABERCROMBY.

**ASCENT OF THE BREITHORN FROM THE NORTH.**—On the 14th of September, 1869, Peter Knubel, Gregory Rüppen, and I were returning to the Riffel Hotel, after having attempted without success to ascend

the Lyskamm. A bitter north wind was blowing, which by its intense cold had made the final arête impracticable. As we sat sunning ourselves on the rocks at the foot of Monte Rosa, sheltered from the wind by the ridge of the Gorner Grat, Gregory proposed that next day we should try to ascend the Breithorn from the Riffel. While we returned to the Hotel we examined the northern slope of the mountain, and laid out the route which next day we followed. The morning of the 15th of September was still and clear. At 4.30 we set out by the path for the Theodule, till we got on the Gorner glacier, when we went straight across it, for the grassy slopes called in the Federal Map, Triftje. We reached there at 6 o'clock, and ascended along the grass and rocks at the edge of the Breithorn Glacier till we came to the snow, when we stopped for breakfast; then turning a little towards our right, continued the ascent by the slopes of snow and ice which come down to the Triftje, from a small level glacier lying under the final slope of the Breithorn. A good deal of step cutting was necessary, but we met with no difficulty, and worked straight up till we reached the glacier I have just spoken of. It supplies at each end the glaciers of the Breithorn and the Kleine Matterhorn, and was divided by two very large crevasses running parallel to the ridge of the Breithorn. These we turned by descending a little towards our right, down the slope at the head of the Kleine Matterhorn Glacier, and when we had passed the crevasses, went to our left, being separated from the final slope of the Breithorn by a bergschrund of no great size, which diminished almost to nothing at the place where we crossed it, at the foot of a snow couloir, or rather hollow in the snow formed by the angle between the main ridge and a spur that runs out towards the Triftje. Here for a few minutes we had an impending cliff of frozen snow just over us, from which blocks had lately fallen, and were perhaps for a little while in some danger. This might have been avoided had we crossed the bergschrund sooner, but at a wider place. However we soon were free from the cliff, and at the top of the snow valley which I have before mentioned stopped to eat, and to rest the guides, who were tired with step-cutting. While they had been hard at work I had had plenty of time to look about me and admire the glorious view; the sky was cloudless, every peak stood out distinct and clear, and though we were on the northern side of the mountain, it was not cold. When we started again, a little step-cutting brought us to the arête which runs east and west and leads towards the summit. Turning to our right we walked along it. It is narrow, but the slopes on each side are not very steep, and for a while it was nearly level; it then rose somewhat, and Knubel had to cut a few steps in the ice on the northern slope. At a quarter past 12 o'clock we reached the well-known rounded snowy summit of the Breithorn. The view was superb; and after enjoying it for an hour, we returned by the ordinary route of the Theodule Glacier, and reached the Riffel at 5 o'clock. The ascent of this mountain from the north had not been before made; I can recommend it as an interesting and not very long or difficult excursion, combining magnificent scenery with the varied excitement of rock, snow, and ice-slopes, and an ice arête at the end.

ROBERT FOWLER.

MONTE DELLA DISGRAZIA.—*To the Editor of the 'Alpine Journal.'*—DEAR SIR,—IN a paper by Herr Siber-Gysi, describing an attack on the Disgrazia, which appeared in the third volume (1866) of the 'Jahrbuch' of the Schweizer Alpenclub, the attainment of the final peak of that mountain by Messrs. Kennedy and Stephen, as narrated by the former in the first number of the 'Alpine Journal,' was called in question. Having myself effected a successful ascent in 1867, in company with Melchior and Jakob Anderegg, I was requested by my friends to confirm the accuracy of their statement so far as my experience enabled me to do so. I accordingly appended to a short notice of my own expedition in the 'Alpine Journal' for May 1868 (vol. iv. p. 49), some remarks in the sense desired, but the erroneous inference of Herr Siber-Gysi having been subsequently embodied—at least by implication—in a passage at page 17 of the fourth volume of the 'Jahrbuch,' I was requested by the committee of the Alpine Club to endeavour to procure the insertion of a rectification in a future volume of that well-known and admirable publication, by privately representing the case to some of my fellow-members of the Schweizer Alpenclub. The result was a protracted correspondence with my friend Mr. Ph. Gosset, of Bern, as well as between the section to which he belongs and that of Zurich, the editor of the 'Jahrbuch,' the Central-President of the S. A. C., &c. which for some time failed to bring about a satisfactory settlement of the question at issue. However, in a letter which I intended to be final, after summing up the points at issue, I concluded in the following words, with the hope of imparting a conciliatory tone to the controversy, in which, I am happy to say, I was not disappointed.—'If satisfied of the correctness of our reclamation, I think that the editor (Professor Theobald) can hardly object to insert a correction of this sentence (at page 17, vol. iv. referred to above) at least, in the forthcoming volume—a course which would, I believe, satisfy Messrs. Kennedy and Stephen, since it would remove the sort of editorial and official sanction apparently given to the erroneous statement of Herr Siber-Gysi. As respects the latter gentleman, if the reasons I have already urged do not suffice to convince him that he is mistaken, he cannot be expected to withdraw his imputation, and it is useless to prolong the discussion with him; but if, whilst admitting their cogency and his own error, he is of opinion that the *manner* in which they were first brought forward by me in the "Alpine Journal" precludes his making an amende without loss of dignity or self-respect until I meet him half-way, I can only say, in all frankness and friendly feeling towards himself and the Schweizer Alpenclub, of which we are both members, that I regret that there should have been anything in the tone of my remarks calculated to hurt his feelings;—that I fear I may have expressed myself somewhat sarcastically under the influence of annoyance at the implied doubt of the statements of a personal friend;—and that I tender to him my apology for not perhaps sufficiently bearing in mind that truth and not triumph should be our object in every controversy. He will, I am sure, believe that I had no other aim than to maintain the accuracy of the claim of my friends, Messrs. Kennedy and Stephen, to have completely effected the (first) ascent of the Disgrazia, and that I should

not have put myself forward in the matter at all, *but for the failure of a previous attempt* (addressed to the editor of the "Jahrbuch") *by Mr. Kennedy himself*, and at the special request of the committee of the Alpine Club, who agreed with me in thinking that the case was one which could be more quietly and pleasantly settled by a private negotiation between members of the respective clubs than by formal communications of an official character. As it is, I fear that much trouble and annoyance have been caused to yourself (Mr. Gosset) and my other good friends at Bern, as well as to distinguished members of the S. A. C. elsewhere. I trust that the course I have now taken with a view to remove all personal annoyance on the part of Herr Siber-Gysi, may be met by him in the same spirit, and the internal harmony of the various sections of the Schweizer Alpenclub, as well as the pleasant relations which have hitherto subsisted between its members and those of the English Alpine Club, be restored and maintained.

The letter, from which the foregoing is an extract, was I believe submitted, or at any rate its purport communicated, to Herr Siber-Gysi, and produced on the part of this gentleman an admission of the incorrectness of his inferences, and a promise that a rectification should, if possible, be inserted in the next volume of the 'Jahrbuch.' This promise has been fulfilled in the following notice, which appears at page 652 of the recently published vol. v. (1868-69); and, in finally taking leave of the matter, and thanking Herr Siber-Gysi for his loyalty in redeeming his pledge, I desire to renew to him through this more public channel the assurance, already conveyed in my letter to Mr. Gosset, of my regret that I should originally have expressed myself in a manner trying to his feelings, and calculated in his opinion to render more difficult, rather than to facilitate, the step he has now taken, with which I trust that all parties will rest satisfied.

It is far from my wish to prolong a controversy which has thus, let us hope, been finally and amicably disposed of, but as a paragraph, signed, 'DIE REDACTION,' which follows Herr Siber-Gysi's explanation, would lead it to be supposed that the particular summit of the Disgrazia reached by the guides Jenni and Flury, in 1866, was not the same as that attained by Messrs. K. and S., and subsequently by myself, I must be allowed, in the interests of topography, to point out that this is not the case. The peak ascended by the well-known Engadine guides is clearly identified by the *steinmann* which they erected, and I, at least, can speak to finding this, whilst Melchior Anderegg, who accompanied Messrs. Kennedy and Stephen as well as myself, most positively assured me that on both occasions the same point was attained, and appeared perfectly familiar with the details of the Kamm, of which it is unquestionably the highest tooth.

Apologizing to yourself and the readers of the 'Alpine Journal' for the length of this somewhat personal explanation, of which, however, I must particularly beg the insertion,

I am, dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

F. F. TUCKETT.

Frenchay, near Bristol: April 7, 1870.

MONTE DELLA DISGRAZIA.—[Translation].—“The readers of the Year-book of the Schweizer Alpenclub will perhaps remember that in my description of the ascent of this mountain (p. 229, &c. of the Year-book for 1866), I expressed doubts whether Messrs. Kennedy and Stephen of the English Alpine Club, whose footsteps I had proposed to follow, had really reached the highest summit, and founded my doubts in the very first place upon this circumstance, that it was *not possible* to reach the highest summit from the Forcla di Pioda in  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hr. as Mr. Kennedy would have it; that is, in about the same time as that which I had employed in returning from the second highest summit at quick time along a carefully prepared way. I was strengthened in this supposition by the circumstance that I found and saw no trace of a cairn upon the summit reached by me, nor from it (which was not impossible), upon the neighbouring and higher summit, and that my observation was right was confirmed by the guides Jenni and Flury of Pontresina in October 1866.

In presence of experienced climbers such as Messrs. Kennedy and Stephen, I expressed my doubts both in form and substance so as to prepare a way for an understanding. A correction however was only conceivable, if the depression distinguished by the Englishmen as Forcla di Pioda was different from, and lying nearer, to the highest summit than mine. Where the nomenclature is so perplexed as in the Italian Alps, where too the question concerns a ridge of remarkable roughness and dislocation, it might well be that my Forcla di Pioda was a different one from that of the Englishmen, and that as soon as this could be proved my conclusions would fall with my premises. It is now a pleasant duty to me, after the correspondence which has taken place with the interested persons, to be able to establish that the point which Mr. Kennedy describes as the Forcla di Pioda, must be another depression lying nearer to the summit (the description must at all events be topographically inaccurate), which might well allow him and his companions to reach the summit in the short time assigned by them, and I therefore do not hesitate to admit with much pleasure their priority in ascending the highest point, which at the same time, I never claimed for myself.

“G. SIBER-GYSL.”

‘To end this history definitively, it is remarked that the notice as to the ascent carried out by Flury and Jenni on October 21 was received as it was reported from the Engadine, without the slightest suspicion that anybody would be aggrieved at it. The summit of the Disgrazia is a tolerably short ridge, consisting of three or four rocky pinnacles of nearly equal height divided by narrow depressions and a few minor points. As nobody has yet said that he has been upon all of these, we are very willing to believe that they too were first upon theirs, as well as the other gentlemen, each on his own special point. If the Engadine men believed that theirs was rather higher than that of the Englishmen, that is their affair. In such cases mistakes are easy, and in order to be quite certain all the points would have to be measured again.’

‘DIE REDACTION.’