

has a minute acquaintance with, the topography of any Alpine district may do much in this way, as local knowledge is of the highest importance in this matter. He ventures to hope that the preceding sketch may be considered to have contributed in some small degree to the advancement of so good a cause, and that it may encourage others to take up the subject and work it out more fully.

THE SARACENS AT SAAS. By the EDITOR.

THE readers of the 'Alpine Journal' will, I am sure, be grateful to Mr. Coolidge for the very interesting and almost exhaustive paper he has contributed on a subject which, though of special interest to Alpine travellers, has hitherto (in England, at any rate) been treated only in a fragmentary and incomplete manner.

Of the three conclusions Mr. Coolidge seeks to establish, the first I imagine to be undisputed and indisputable. For the second, Mr. Coolidge has been able to produce what appears to me to be convincing historical evidence of the visits of Saracenic marauders to Eastern Switzerland, evidence which no longer leaves in my mind any room for the doubts which, without an intimate knowledge of the original authorities, it seemed to me reasonable to entertain and express.

With respect to Mr. Coolidge's third conclusion, however, with the best will in the world to believe in a colonisation which would add a new interest to one of the noblest of the northern valleys of the Alps, I must confess that I remain unconvinced, and that, if anything, I am rather hardened in my scepticism by the failure of so competent an advocate either to bring forward any new evidence, or materially to strengthen the old evidence. Mr. Coolidge is far too fair and cautious as an historian to allege that this evidence amounts to proof. The difference between us, fairly stated, amounts to this: that the conjecture as to the settlement of the Saaethal which he considers the most probable of any, I look on as possible, but, as far as we yet know, highly improbable.

'Fontes Rerum Bernensium' (vol. ii. 1877), we find repeated mention of the Lower Grindelwald glacier, in 1146, 1220, 1273. In 1246 and 1247 both glaciers are mentioned, and the alp between them, 'qui dicitur Metenburch;' in 1252, 'mons qui dicitur Scheitecca.' In 1180 we hear that the church at Grindelwald had formerly been built of wood, but had now been rebuilt of stone. Similar instances may be multiplied without end.

It is, I think, universally admitted that the story of a settlement of Saracens at Saas was set going (probably by Engelhardt) through the impression made by the name Monte Moro on a mind prepared by a perusal of Reinaud's work to entertain a belief in the 'à priori probability' of such an occurrence. The next stage in the construction of the theory was to examine the local nomenclature for traces of Arabic—that is, with a predisposition to find such traces. Apart from this 'à priori probability' (which I will advert to again), the direct evidence as it now stands is, in fact, this name Monte Moro, and the assumed Arabic character of three or four other names in the district. Now, as to the Alpine names in 'mar,' 'mor' and 'mur,' I am quite ready to give one or two derivations for each and every one of them which shall be at least as plausible as the 'Moor' derivation. But I shall certainly not give in every case the same. With regard to Monte Moro itself, it appears, as Mr. Coolidge allows, first in history as Mons Martis and Muntmar, and it seems to me, therefore, of all the Alpine 'Moros' the one for which it is most difficult to claim any Moorish connection.

With regard to the argument from traces of Arabic words in the local nomenclature, Mr. Coolidge talks of its 'cumulative' force. But his heap is surely rapidly falling to pieces under his eyes. He himself eliminates Alphubel, Distel and, it would seem, Balferin. We are left, then, with a heap composed of three—Allalin, Alalein, or Alalain,* Almagell, and Mischabel. Now, when I find in the Zermatt valley a Lei See, and elsewhere in the Alps Val de Lei, Surlei, Allée Blanche, Allée Noire, Pigne de l'Allée, Alain, Aléfroide, I conceive myself bound to see if I cannot trace some connection between these names, or some of them, and to exhaust the chances of likely European tongues, Celtic or Romance, before I go to Arabic for an explanation. I do not pretend to any knowledge of the niceties of philology, nor am I skilled in applying what Gibbon calls 'the tortures of etymology,' but I am open to suggestions from any likely quarter, and they are not wanting. Mons. Durier tells me there is a Celtic word 'lei,' an enclosed pasture. We find 'Combe' in the Alps as well as at home. Why not Lei too? Again, in our own country we have the Scotch 'Allan' and the Cornish 'Alan,' words which Mr. Taylor tells us mean 'the white water,' a most appropriate name. There is another possible explanation of the name,

* 'Allalin' in the Federal Map. But, according to Engelhardt, 'Alalain' represents the local pronunciation.

the simplest of all, which certainly deserves full consideration. 'Lai' and 'Lei' are common Romance forms of 'lacus.*' The addition of a final *n* is usual enough, as in the neighbouring Egginerhorn, in old books simply the Egge.† Alalain may be simply 'at the lake,' as Surlei, in the Engadine, is 'above the lake.' Will any competent witness come forward and tell us Alalain cannot be derived from any of these sources?

Almagell, or rather its old form, *Almengall*, will lend itself to many derivations, German or Italian, and many have been suggested for it. It does not seem to me so clear how it can be deduced from 'al mahall' or 'al maschal.' I am not prepared to endorse *Mist-* or *Misch-gabel*, plausible as they sound in some ways, particularly when compared to the 'abode of the whelps,' or the 'lioness and her cubs,' of the Arabic professors. And here I must add that what is philologically improbable must depend on how far local pronunciation has been correctly reproduced in the written name. The Federal engineers did their work so well that one would not willingly find faults in it. But in rendering local names they had some sleepy moments; witness *Dent d'Hérens* for *Dent de Rong*, and *Zardezan* for *Cià del Cian*.‡ Murray's 'Handbook' states, I know not on what authority, or with what truth, that *Mischabel* is locally pronounced *Mi-gebel*. There is a *Gebelhorn* and *Thal* near the *Simplon*. *Mittel-Giebel* (the middle gable) would be appropriate, and, as a mere guess, may be offered.

The whole *Saasthal* heap has now been examined §—not, it is true, the whole heap as presented by the professors, to whose authority we are at the last referred. One of them believes that *Distel* is 'clearly an Arabic name, and can be explained in no other way.' The rest differ widely in their interpretations, and have not apparently taken any pains to be sure of the most ancient forms of the words they are dealing with, or of the history of the district they come from. With all respect I cannot but feel that their evidence has more than the usual weakness of the evidence of experts, and is entirely unfit to decide the question at issue.

Next as to 'historical evidence.' *None* has been brought

* See Swiss Ordnance Map *passim*.

† Engelhardt, 'Monte Rosa,' p. 21.

‡ This may not improbably be derived from 'Gias del Ciamp' (the châlet of the pasturage), a name which occurs in the undecayed form in the Maritime Alps.

§ I do not think any philologist will care to dwell on such names as *Calasca* and *Ceppe Morelli* in *Val Anzasca*.

forward of the presence, much less settlement, of Saracens either at Saas or in any other part of Ober Wallis. The 'Vallis maximæ ubertatis' of Ekkehard, if he is trustworthy in this instance, cannot have been the Saasthal; the description is too inappropriate. Of good documentary evidence, such as Mr. Coolidge has been so successful in procuring for Eastern Switzerland, there is here apparently an utter lack. The 'à priori probability' seems, therefore, to be really nothing more than what arises from the fact of the convention of 842 and the marauding excursions of Saracens in the Western Alps and Graubünden which followed it, coupled with the existence of 'minor passes' into the Saasthal.* An 'à priori not-impossibility' would be, I think, the phrase nearest the truth. Moreover, if the etymological evidence is of any weight at all, it is as proving a *settlement*. No marauding bands could have affixed for ever names to peaks scarcely visible, certainly far from conspicuous, from the main track down the valley. This important point has hitherto been passed by.

I have now said something of the 'à priori probability,' the 'historical evidence' and 'etymological evidence' advanced by Mr. Coolidge. There remains only his phrase, 'not contradicted by any distinct fact.' This I cannot admit. The most prominent fact in the case, as it strikes me, is that no local evidence from the appearance of the people, their speech, buildings, mode of life, ancient traditions or records, though the latter were carefully collected by a man of intelligence, and inspected by Engelhardt himself, has yet been produced to support the theory of a Saracenic settlement. Any presumption there might be in its favour is, to use Mr. Coolidge's own words, 'refuted by the absence of evidence of the presence of the race in question in the immediate neighbourhood.' It is not altogether impossible such evidence may still be found. At any rate, I will do my best to promote a careful enquiry on the spot by a competent observer, and thus to settle the question once for all. If what, to my regret, still seems to me but a pretty fancy should turn out an historical fact, I shall be the first to congratulate Mr. Coolidge on the triumph of his

* I must add here a piece of evidence telling in favour of Mr. Coolidge, but which I came too late to give him. Simler, in his 'Descriptio Vallesis' (1533), states that the 'frequentiora itinera' in the time of Julius Cæsar were the 'Mons Bernardi, Martis, Sempronius, Griessius.' This somewhat weakens my deduction, drawn from the silence as to the Moro of the five or six ninth-century chroniclers cited by Mr. Coolidge as to the unimportance of the Saas passes in ancient times.

faith and industry. But for the present I must continue to hold that there is nothing whatever in the local nomenclature of the Saasthal which the position of the valley on the frontier, between a Romance- and German-speaking population, who at one time, as proved by historical documents, were joint possessors of it, does not fully account for, and that the supposition of a Saracenic settlement there is at once superfluous and improbable.

What was the origin, and what were the limits, of the non-Teutonic inhabitants of Valais, are questions beside the main issue. But in commenting on one of the suggested derivations of Alalain Mr. Coolidge has touched on this separate question, and in so doing has laid down one or two propositions, which are in no way borne out by the books I have consulted. In the first place he says that 'the Saas valley was distinctly within the limits of the Teutonic Upper Wallis.' I believe it to have been on the W. (as well as on the S.), on the frontier between the German and Romance districts. The other Vispthal was undoubtedly originally Romance. Zermatt was first known as Praborgne, St. Niklaus as Chauson,* corrupted afterwards into Gasen, whence the whole valley was anciently called the Gasenthal, a name still surviving in Gasenried. Engelhardt, who states these facts, adds that the Augstbord Pass shows signs of more common use in ancient times, as if it had been a route for intercommunication between the upper valleys, and alleges that the houses and churches of the Vispthal resemble those of the non-Teutonic parts of the Canton.

It cannot, I think, be disputed that the same race which now prevails in the Val d'Anniviers and Val d'Hérens once prevailed also in the Zermatt valley. That this race was of Celtic origin is, if not universally allowed, at least held by many excellent authorities.† But I do not care to press an argument for the Celtic origin of names, which the intimate connection of the Saasthal with the Italian valleys sufficiently explains.

I have still, I find, some notes to add on matters of detail. The sale of 1300 A.D. was a sale by the local lord of all his rights, not in the 'upper pastures,' but in the whole valley. The sale is expressed to include all above the Martinswald;

* Engelhardt's 'Natuerschilderungen,' p. 157.

† See Engelhardt's 'Natuerschilderungen,' p. 115; Simler's 'Hist. Vallesisæ,' p. 77. It is curious that Arrian (cited p. 138 *supra*) should compare in height Elburz and the 'Celtic Alps.'

and the Martinswaldbrücke below Balen, of Engelhardt is identical with the Mattwaldbrücke of modern guidebooks — a warning to etymologists.

On one or two minor points I do not follow Mr. Coolidge. The passage cited (p. 263) from St. Odilo, if it is worth anything, seems to me to prove that in the writer's opinion the Saracens only got as far as (*usque ad*) the frontiers of Italy and 'the Province,' and to the Pennine Alps, not beyond. The mention of the 'Juliae Alpes,' 'through' which the Saracens came, proves nothing, for we find that some early writers identified the 'Juliae Alpes' of a passage in Livy with the Cottian Alps.* Again, the argument on p. 279, that 'Moro' cannot be derived from Mor = great, because the Moro is 'not a high peak but a pass,' appears unsound. Like must be compared with like. Chamonix guides speak of the Col du Géant as 'le grand col,' though it is not an aiguille. The Moro would be 'the great pass' to wanderers approaching it over the southern spurs of the main chain.

Dr. Ludwig, of Pontresina, informs me that Pontersin is found in a document of 1338, and Puntarsina in later documents. Herr Pallioppi considered these forms, pointing to the very acceptable derivation 'High Bridge,' more trustworthy indications than the Latin forms 'ad Pontem Sarisinam' (1139), and 'De Ponte Sarraceno' (1296). In Latin documents, he adds, local names are often strangely deformed.

It has not yet been noticed in this discussion that Mr. Wills speaks of the people of Fée as different in type from the other inhabitants of the valley. I do not think the characteristics he describes are Arabic, and I am not at all sure that they are Celtic.†

P.S.—Since the preceding papers were in type, an interesting article has appeared in the 'Jahrbuch' of the Swiss Alpine Club on 'The Saracens and Hungarians in the Alps,' by Dr. Düby of Bern. It goes over much the same ground as Mr. Coolidge; but, so far as the Saracens are concerned, seems to me to add nothing to his information, except a strange attempt to identify the Acqui of Liutprand, 40 or 50 miles from Pavia, with Bormio!

Dr. Düby believes in the Arabic origin of the Saasthal nomenclature,

* Simler, 'De Alp. Com.' p. 273.

† The natives are to all appearance totally distinct from those of the valley of Saas and the adjacent districts. The men are more manly and independent, the women finer and more shapely and good-looking than any in the neighbourhood. Their short faces, small noses, white teeth, determined air, good-humoured mouth, full cheeks, blue eyes, and light hair make them easily distinguishable from the natives of any other valley in the district.—Wills's 'Wanderings,' p. 123.

and sees in the 'wonderful names' of the Saasgrat peaks a proof that the wanderers had not lost their 'oriental imagination.' As he refers to the Eien Alp as Arabic, I may add that there is another Alp of the same name at Zermatt. Like most writers on the subject, Dr. Düby takes no notice of the thirteenth century documents quoted by Mr. Coolidge, which show us the men of the Vallis Solzæ (Saas), Zauxon (St. Niklaus), and Prato Borno (Zermatt), on the one side, making a treaty (A.D. 1291) with the men of Macugnaga and Val Anzasca on the other, or of the earlier deed by which in 1250 Peter de Castello granted to Count Godfrey Blandrati certain men in Val Anzasca, with leave to transport them into the Vispthal. Gingins la Sarraz ('Archiv für Schweizerische Geschichte,' ii. 21, note), considers the names Vinelet, Almagell, Randa, and Saas, to have come from this colonisation.

ASCENT OF SIKARAM, ONE OF THE PEAKS OF THE SUFFAID KOH RANGE, AFGHANISTAN.

The following note has been received from Mr. W. Simpson, F.R.G.S., and a member of the Club :—

Suffaid Sung, Gundumuck, June 1, 1879.

'Sikaram, the supposed highest peak of the Suffaid Koh Range, has been reached. Mr. George B. Scott, of the Indian Survey Department, has the honour of being the first European to accomplish this feat. He came back to camp last night, and he has given me a few details which I think will be worthy of a place in the 'Alpine Journal.' Suffaid Koh means the 'White Mountain'—that is, the Persian; in Puchtoo it is Spiu Ghar—these words having the same meaning, *Spin* being white, and *Ghar* a mountain. This range separates the Jellalabad Valley from the Kurrum Valley, and it runs very nearly east and west. The first sight I got of the Suffaid Koh was from the hills at Daka, that was at the end of November last, and at that date there was very little snow on them to justify the title of Suffaid, or 'White.' It was not till January that the snow began to come down, and all through February and March it fell heavily, whitening at times the lower ranges far down towards the plains. We had very little rain in the Jellalabad valley during the winter, indeed we had nothing worthy of the name of a shower till the 1st of March, yet often we could see heavy clouds over the Suffaid Koh, and when they cleared off, the range was evidently whiter from the extra fall which it had received. Up to the present this mountain range has been a magnificent sight along the southern side of the Jellalabad valley. From our camp there we could see the glittering peaks extending from near Pesh Bolak on the east to away beyond Gundumuck on the west.

On the old and very uncertain maps of the past there was a peak, named 'Sikaram.' While we were at Jellalabad the officers on the Survey Department could get no information about this mountain; no one seemed to be familiar either with the peak or with its name. Some began to think that the correct name ought to be Sitaram; * a word

* From Rama and Sita, the hero and heroine of the Ramayana.