

## ALPINE NOTES.

**MOUNTAIN EXPLORATION IN AFRICA.**—The Council of the Royal Geographical Society will send out to Zanzibar at the Society's expense early in next year Mr. Thomson (the young Scotch traveller who on Keith Johnston's death succeeded to the command of their last expedition), with instructions to explore the snowy mountain region between Victoria Nyanza and the Indian Ocean, which contains the ultimate sources of the Nile. Mr. Thomson will be directed to proceed from the coast *vid* Mount Kilimandjaro to the lake, and to return, if the road is open, *vid* Mount Kenia. It is possible that a naturalist may accompany the expedition as far as the mountains and remain there to make collections, while Mr. Thomson pursues the geographical objects of his journey in the district sloping towards Victoria Nyanza.

**SIGNOR COSTA'S LANDSCAPES.**—It is bold, perhaps, in these days for simple plain-spoken people, such as Alpine climbers, to meddle with art. The modern art-critic, or connoisseur, has, as a rule, but a poor opinion of one who is content to say, 'I give my judgment, such as it is, from my immediate perceptions without much fatigue of thinking; and I am of opinion that, if a man has not those perceptions right, it will be vain for him to endeavour to supply their place by rules, which may enable him to talk more learnedly but not to distinguish more acutely.' Since, however, Sir Joshua Reynolds—the sentence we have just quoted is his—thought thus, we shall not further apologise, even though we lay down few rules, show less of our own thinking than of the painter's, and fail altogether to talk learnedly—as others use—of 'methods of coloration' and 'intonation of colour.'

For those who love Italian mountains it is a notable fact that Italy has produced a modern master who paints her scenery, including her mountains, as it has never been painted before. And it is fitting that the fact should be recorded in a journal which in past years has had some share in introducing Englishmen to the scenery of the Apennines, and of those Apennines in particular which Signor Costa most frequents, the marble mountains of Carrara.

The painter, whose works, known long since to a few in England, were first collectively introduced to the London public last summer, in the 'Fine Art Company's Gallery,' in Bond Street, is by birth and residence a Roman. He was senior to his friend and fellow-student, the late George Mason, over whose artistic career he had great influence. His deliberate and observant style is never violent or vulgar—which is perhaps what the young person who writes for the 'Spectator' meant by telling us 'that it reminds us in its limitations of an old maid's talk.' Consequently it is diametrically opposed to the hurried and garish cleverness of the modern Hispæo-Italian school, and such followers as Costa has are to be found among English artists resident in Italy, rather than among his own countrymen.

Of the sixty pictures exhibited in Bond Street, five-sixths were landscapes, and to these we confine ourselves. Signor Costa can draw

excellently the human form, but (in this respect reversing the practice of his friend Mason, who, in his later works at least, made scenery subordinate to figures, and dwelt most on the human interest and story in the foreground) he keeps the figures introduced into his pictures in a secondary place, letting them fall in, like the birds he plants or poises with singular and delicate precision exactly in the right spot, as parts of the landscape. How far he can be carried by this feeling is shown, almost grotesquely, in one of the most beautiful of his pictures, a view of the Carrara Mountains seen in the lustrous air and deep colour of early dawn from the beach at Gombo. Down among the sand-heaps and wiry grasses of the shore a figure lies stretched, no fisherman weary of his work, but (we recognise him by his hoofs and ears) the 'great god Pan' himself.

The Alpi Apuane, or Carrara Mountains, are, as we have said, the painter's favourite subject. From the neighbourhood of Rome we have the Alban Hills, the Volscian Mountains seen across the Pontine Marsh from Porto d'Anzio, or Ardea—Ardera the effusive catalogue printed, and all the critics repeated, forgetting Turnus and falsifying Virgil—

Locus Ardea quondam  
Dictus avis, et nunc magnum manet Ardea nomen.

Then we are carried to where the Umbrian Apennine rises and falls in long blue waves, where the solitary convent sleeps under its olives, or the hamlet scattered along some breezy spur looks down over the farms and villas of the upper valley of the Tiber to the distant towers of Perugia or Assisi.

Another sketch takes us to the Venetian lagoons, above whose water-channels rise the miniature crests of the Euganean Hills. And at last we come back, in two of Signor Costa's latest and most important works, to the waves breaking on the beach at Gombo, to the noble forms of the northernmost of the Alpi Apuane, the Monte Sagro and Pisanino, seen from near La Spezzia, bathed in sunshine—'the noon of autumn's glow'—and crowning a spacious and nobly-composed landscape, which seems to summarise Central Italy.

These pictures impress us as much by their simple truthfulness as by their breadth of sympathy and delicacy of observation. The painter is clearly an earnest student of nature, one who has his fancy firmly under control, and is content to reproduce the beauties his study reveals to him. While there are a few landscapes in nature—the remark was made to us by a poet, but holds good for ordinary men—such as the view of Monte Rosa from Ponte Grande, which satisfy our ideal, as a rule we feel as if we could add something to the romance of what we see out of doors. But it is dangerous to try to carry out our day-dreams on canvas. The improvements—even of great hands—are apt to be incongruous. Turner's glorious pictures of Italy are marred for many by the certainty that some of their features come from no more distant spots than Hampton Court or Hampstead Heath. Signor Costa is subject to no temptations of this sort. He does not confuse Umbria and Liguria, much less England and Italy. It is interesting to notice how

the purity of his Umbrian scenes recalls Raffaele's backgrounds, the resemblance being obviously due not to conscious imitation, but to the old and modern master having gone to the same source. An intimate knowledge of the varieties of Italian atmosphere and scenery teaches the traveller how much that is sometimes set down to 'subjectivity' in the manner of old masters, was really reflection, or copying, from the nature nearest them. Titian never forgot Cadore, or Cima Conegliano.

Signor Costa's little pictures have some of the fulness of nature herself. We find in them, as we look, touches of detail unobserved at first, delicate perception of aerial effects, lovely tones and exquisite gradations in the skies, a warm haze in the hollows of the hills, a figure in the distance. We go on making discoveries, they grow on us as a natural landscape does when we live with it.

We may seem to be describing a literal art. In one sense the charge is true, but the literalness is that of an artist who seizes the most beautiful and characteristic aspect of the scene he paints, who has comprehended its spirit. Signor Costa's pictures are literal as Shelley's lines on the Euganean Hills are literal. Local facts are given, but in subordination to a controlling impression, or rather they contribute to produce it. Here he has overcome a great perplexity of modern art. English painters too often lose all sentiment and suggestiveness for the sake of a crowd of conscientious but crude details. French painters, on the other hand, will sacrifice everything for one harmony—as if a fog effect were the form of beauty best worth study. A few examples of Signor Costa's work will be shown at the Winter Dinner.

ALPINE PHOTOGRAPHS.—Mr. Donkin's example has found a number of followers, chiefly among the members of the Italian Alpine Club, though we are of opinion that he has nothing to fear from any of his foreign rivals. The most successful of these is Signor Vittorio Sella, of Biella (the conqueror of the Matterhorn in March), who has during the past two summers taken no less than eighty-seven successful views from elevated points. They may be obtained from him at moderate prices given in his published catalogue. The specialty is the endless number of pictures of the Matterhorn from nearly every conceivable point of view. Among them are panoramas from the Grauhaupt, the Grand Combin, the Breithorn, the Mont Vélan, the Château des Dames, the Col du Géant, and Mont Blanc. Those which have struck us most are the view of the Combin from the Vélan (No. 26), and a series of views (Nos. 70-77) of and from different points on the Italian side of the Matterhorn, particularly Nos. 74-77, which give the panorama from the top of the Pic Tyndall, including the highest peak of the Matterhorn itself. A short article in No. 2 of the new 'Rivista Alpina Italiana' (the monthly organ of the Italian Alpine Club) gives a list of other photographs taken by Signori Gonella, Palestrino, and Casanova, those of the former being mainly views of the Italian face of the Mont Blanc chain, those of the two latter representing the peaks of the Cogne and Levanna districts. A photographer of Lanzo (Signor P. Bruneri) has published a set of twenty-six views of the valleys east of the Levanna, more especially of the peaks named the Bessanese and Ciamarella. There are besides very pretty views of rushing streams,

picturesque forests, romantically situated bridges, which should serve to attract the attention of English climbers to that district, scarcely known as yet except to our Italian colleagues.

MEETINGS OF THE FOREIGN ALPINE CLUBS.—An "International Alpine Congress" will be opened at Salzburg on Friday evening, August 11. Next day will be devoted to the discussion of various Alpine topics, *e.g.* maps, glacier phenomena and the necessity of observing them, huts, &c. The 13th will be taken up with the consideration of the different means for securing future international meetings (it is proposed that the 1884 meeting should be held at Turin), and generally of fostering good feeling between, and promoting the common action of, the various Alpine societies. The 14th will be occupied by the General Meeting of the German Club, and the proceedings will be wound up by a grand banquet. The following days will be devoted to joint excursions. In connection with the Congress there will be an exhibition of objects connected with climbing and the Alps in general.

The Congress of the Italian Club will take place on August 29 to 31 at Biella, winding up with excursions to Oropa and Gressoney Saint-Jean. It is understood that the President of the Club, Signor Quintino Sella, is preparing several interesting and important communications for the Congress.

The French Club meet this year at Clermont Ferrand, in Auvergne, in the first days of August.

The Swiss Club holds its annual meeting under the auspices of the Diablerets section.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

### GUIDE-BOOKS, OLD AND NEW.

*The J. E. M. Guide for Switzerland. The Alps and how to see them.* Edited by J. E. Muddock. (Simpkin, Marshall & Co. 2s. 6d.)

The manufacture of Alpine guide-books has almost ceased to be a British industry. London publishers have failed adequately to recognise that guide-books to be permanently successful must not only be thoroughly framed but assiduously corrected; that money and energy must be spent in keeping them up to date as much as in original publication. Consequently they have allowed valuable properties to be impaired by neglect, while a series of guides of foreign origin, in some respects inferior, has through the praiseworthy industry of those concerned in their publication command of the market. Is it yet too late to hope that Mr. Ball's 'Alpine Guide' may be abridged in some points and enlarged in others, and republished in sections? This might be done by a committee of the Alpine Club; while as to inns, the changes in which no foreigner can follow, an arrangement might probably be made for an exchange of information with some native writer.

It is the appearance of the twenty-fourth edition of our Honorary Member Herr Iwan von Tschudi's admirable 'Schweizerführer,' which