



- A. VENTINA GLACIER.
- B. MONTE VENTINA.
- C. SISSONE GLACIER.

----- ROUTE OF MESS. PRATT-BARLOW & STILL.  
 ——— D<sup>o</sup> ..... D<sup>o</sup> ..... HULTON & PILKINGTON.

**MONTE DELLA DISGRAZIA FROM THE SELLA PASS**

THE  
ALPINE JOURNAL.

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AUGUST 1883.

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THE MONTE DELLA DISGRAZIA FROM THE NORTH-EAST.  
By EUSTACE HULTON. (Read before the Alpine Club,  
April 3, 1883.)

ON the afternoon of the 3rd of August last we—that is, Mr. C. Pilkington, his brother, Mr. Lawrence Pilkington, and myself—arrived at Pontresina, after having passed three or four days in the neighbourhood of the Albula Pass, a successful ascent of Piz Kesch being our only trophy from that district.

At Pontresina we had the good fortune to meet our friend Mr. Stafford Still, and in conversation with him the Disgrazia was mentioned as one of the mountains we hoped to ascend during our stay in the neighbourhood. He at once urged us to make the attempt by the north-eastern face. The suggested expedition had the charm of novelty, for, as far as could be remembered, the Disgrazia had been but twice before attempted from the upper part of the Val Malenco—the first time by Messrs. Stephen and Kennedy in 1863, when they gained a point on the western arête from the Sissone Glacier, and were only prevented by want of time from completing the ascent the same day.\* In making the first successful ascent a few days later from the Baths of Masino, they passed the point on the western arête they had already attained from the Sissone Glacier, and from thence reached the top; a line which has been closely adhered to ever since. The second attempt from this side was that of Messrs. Still and Barlow in 1875, when they gained the eastern peak from the Ventina Glacier, and effected a passage along the arête connecting the eastern with

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\* This was a different point from the Passo di Mello, discovered by Mr. Tuckett's party in 1865, and used since as a means of joining from the east the Val di Mello route up the mountain.

the highest peak. The experience and information gained by Mr. Still on this occasion, the benefit of which he kindly placed at our disposal, materially assisted us in making our own attempt. The Disgrazia, however, was the last of the peaks of this district we intended to try, so that before committing ourselves to this particular ascent we expected to have opportunities of inspecting the north-eastern face for ourselves from various points from which we should command a view of the mountain.

On August 4 we started up the Rosegthal, and took up our quarters at the chalet at the foot of the glacier, intending to attack the Piz Roseg the following day. The next morning was, however, threatening, and by the time we reached the point where it is usual to leave the Roseg Glacier, and take to the steep hanging glacier on the left, the entire line of cliffs had become masked by a thin light curtain of mist. The wind had increased in force, and there was evidently a heavy gale on the top. A halt was called, to give the weather a chance of improving, but at the end of half an hour the weather was decidedly worse, and on consultation it was agreed that the expedition should be given up for the day; for though we could have ascended to the lower peak, it was thought that with the heavy wind the passage between the two peaks would involve us in a risk we had no right voluntarily to encounter.

The day, however, was not lost, for ascending to the summit of the Sella Pass, and then descending a short distance to some conspicuous rocks which gave shelter from the cutting wind, a glorious view of the Disgrazia was obtained. One of our first discoveries was that the Federal Map was very incorrect.\* So Charles Pilkington made a careful sketch of the mountain, and then the glacier and cliffs were minutely scanned through the telescope in order to choose the most feasible line of attack. On our return to Pontresina the sketch was submitted to Still, and we were pleased to find that the line we had selected and that which he had suggested were identical.

The weather, which had shown signs of breaking, took up again on Sunday evening, and at 1.15 on the morning of the 7th we were once more under way for Piz Roseg. We

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\* This unusual statement requires a word of explanation. In representing the frontier ranges outside the limit of Switzerland, the Federal Staff depended not on their own admirable work, but on the Surveys (in this case Austrian) then in existence. An excellent new Government Survey of the Italian Alps is in course of publication. (See p. 230.)

drove up to the foot of the glacier and then retraced our steps of the previous Saturday. Soon after daylight, just when we were about to round the corner of the Agagliouls rocks, we discovered that a party of three was following us. We jödeled, but obtained no answer. We soon lost sight of them, as they kept close to the moraine on the right bank, whilst we took a course more in the centre, or if anything nearer to the left side of the glacier. On leaving the Roseg Glacier we found the snow on the hanging glacier in excellent order, and our progress was rapid. On arriving at the summit of the lower peak at 8 o'clock, we had the satisfaction of seeing that the arête leading to the highest peak was undisturbed by footmarks. Without loss of time we made our way to the foot of the arête, Charles Pilkington leading, which position he held until near the top, when a change of front was effected and I completed the few remaining steps which required cutting. The summit was reached at 9.15. Here the wind was so bitterly cold that we were glad to take shelter from it on some rocks a few feet below the peak. On these rocks two little cairns were built, beneath each of which were deposited our names and a pennypiece. Owing to the presence of mist on the western face nothing could be seen of the Disgrazia. The views of the Bernina and the Morteratsch were, however, very grand. The return down the arête was safely effected, and about half-way up the slope to the lower peak we met the party we had seen on the glacier. It was thus only by about an hour and a half that the honour of making the first ascent of the season of Piz Roseg was secured. The rest of the descent was without incident. The glacier was cleared a little before 2 o'clock and Pontresina reached in good time in the afternoon.

The following afternoon found us at the Boval hut, and next day a very successful ascent of Piz Bernina was made. On this occasion, and this occasion only, had we the benefit of following the steps of some predecessor; it cannot therefore well be charged against us that we were in the habit of waiting for ascents to be made, and then taking advantage of the work of others. A report to this effect, I have heard, was spread by some of the Pontresina guides after our departure. The weather was magnificent, and a long stay was made on the top, which was gained at 9 o'clock. Of course our attention was principally directed towards the Disgrazia, and a most superb object it is as seen from this point. After a long and careful examination it was decided that an attempt should be made on the north-east face. The ice-fall of the Ventina Glacier seemed very formidable, and after that was passed, and a snow-

field of the upper part of the glacier traversed, a steep slope, which might possibly consist of ice, would have to be cut up before we could gain a well-marked arête dividing the Ventina and Sissone Glaciers, and which ran a long way up the mountain face, until it lost itself on the cliffs directly under the highest peak. The cliffs themselves looked absolutely perpendicular, but we hoped to turn them by what seemed to be a ledge running from somewhere near the point where the white snow arête disappeared on the black-looking cliffs in an easterly direction, until it joined the eastern arête some distance from the summit. We got back to Pontresina in good time in the afternoon. After a day's rest we said farewell to our friends at Pontresina, and on the morning of the 10th drove to the inn at the top of the Maloja Pass, arriving there early in the afternoon. Should anyone have a few hours to spare at Maloja a visit to an exquisite little mountain tarn, the Lago di Cavlocchio, will amply repay him for the trouble of the walk. It is situated high up on the left bank of the valley coming down from the Muretto Pass, a short hour's walk from the inn.

The next day, the spirit of idleness being upon us, we engaged two porters to carry our sacks, &c., over the Muretto. Shortly after leaving the summit of the pass the Disgrazia came in view, and I do not hesitate to say that there are but few mountains in the Alps which present a more magnificent appearance. Frequent halts were made during the descent, and our hopes for the next day rose and fell as the rocks appeared more or less practicable as we changed our standpoint. The last view we had of them, as they sank behind Monte Ventina, was of such a hopeless character that, had I even suspected the nature of the quarters we should spend the night in at the Ventina Alp, I should have done my best to invent some plausible excuse for going down the valley to the comfortable inn at Chiesa. Chiareggio was reached in due time. Starting again, we walked up the valley until we came to the stream descending from the Ventina Glacier, when we turned up to our left, mounted the glen, and in a short hour and a half arrived at that beautifully situated spot, the Ventina Alp.

Messrs. Still and Barlow in 1875 found the Alp unoccupied; we were not so fortunate. Of the four sheds—I cannot call them *châlets*—one was devoted to the cattle; another was used as a store-room for the milk and cheese; a third was in ruins, and contained the bodies of two sheep in an advanced state of decomposition; the fourth, occupied by the owner, was a hovel built against a large boulder-stone,

and measured about 15 or 16 feet each way. The ordinary inhabitants were the owner and his wife, and six children varying in age from two to seven years, two herdsmen, and a female domestic. The interior of the hut was simply loathsome; but I must do the owner justice to say that he received us with the greatest hospitality, brought out quantities of excellent milk, and despatched the two herdsmen to collect moss to make our beds for the night. Later on, when we had given him the remains of our soup, he was most anxious that we should share with him and his family the polenta they had cooked for the evening meal. In course of conversation he gave us the somewhat startling information that three years ago a body of about two hundred soldiers had visited the alp, and while there had made the ascent of the Disgrazia. Not having heard any report of this remarkable military movement we questioned him closely, and eventually elicited from him that none of the soldiers had got to the top, but that some had got as far as the glacier!

Soon after dusk we stowed ourselves away for the night. Of the next four or five hours I will say nothing beyond stating that to the oft-described miseries of such places was added a perpetual howl kept up by the children, effectually banishing any chance of sleep. It was, therefore, with feelings of intense relief that about 2 A.M. we heard the men begin to move, rake the fire together, and prepare coffee for our breakfast. After a most cordial farewell, general hands-haking, and all manner of good wishes for our success, we got off just as day was breaking, at 3.20.

The weather promised well, and in the clear fresh morning air we soon forgot the horrors of the past night. Crossing a plank bridge close to the châteaux, we groped our way in the dim twilight through the moraine débris, and then worked along the moraine on the left bank of the glacier until it was practicable to get on to the glacier itself. Once on the ice, but little difficulty was met with. We mounted rapidly, still keeping to the left side, until forced towards the centre to avoid the séracs and crevasses formed as the glacier comes round the shoulder of Monte Ventina, and in about an hour and a half we came in sight of the peak of the Disgrazia itself, already glowing in the morning sun. Our first view was most encouraging; with the light full on them the upper rocks looked much less forbidding than they did under the midday sun, and we agreed that, once the foot of the rocks was attained, we should find nothing but what was well within our powers. Our attention was, however, soon turned to

difficulties nearer at hand. The glacier rose steeply in front of us, the slopes culminating in a formidable ice-fall, which stretched across the entire width between Monte Ventina and the base of the slopes of the eastern peak of the Disgrazia. Almost midway across the ice-fall, or, if anything, nearer the eastern peak, lay a patch of steep-looking rocks. Between us and the foot of the rocks the glacier presented but little difficulty. Remembering the troubles Messrs. Still and Barlow had encountered in trying to force the ice-fall under Monte Ventina, we determined to make use of the rocks as far as we could, and to trust to finding a passage through the séracs above them. These rocks are possibly the same Mr. Barlow was unable to pass over, as the approaches to them were then swept by avalanches. We only saw very slight traces of avalanche débris. The rope was now put on, Lawrence in the middle. Continuing the ascent of the glacier, we gained the foot of the rocks with comparative ease, and finding a stream of deliciously cold water, we halted for half an hour. After breakfast we scaled the rocks, which proved to be granite, and, though steep, could not have given better hand and foot hold. We thus succeeded in escaping very many difficulties in the lower part of the ice-fall.

Passing again on to the ice, we soon found further progress in a direct line barred by an enormous crevasse and ice-cliffs. We therefore bore away through the séracs to our right in the direction of Monte Ventina. For a considerable time we seemed to gain but little or no height, and were more than once in situations in which further advance was stopped by a deep crevasse, and a change of front had to be made, the last man on the rope having to take the lead. The work was most interesting, and I need not add that the magnificent fragments of ice amongst which we threaded our way were beautiful beyond description. The last difficulty was at length overcome, and we emerged on to the upper plateau of the glacier, with nothing now between us and the arête, by which we hoped to complete the final part of the ascent, but a gently rising snow-field leading to its foot. Though it was still early in the day, the snow had had the benefit of the full effect of the sun, and was already soft and yielding, so that the passage across the plateau, which fortunately did not take long, was very fatiguing. Crossing the bergschrund without much difficulty at its narrowest point, we found the snow above in a very treacherous condition, and the greatest care had to be taken to cut steps through the upper snow-crust into the solid ice below. A very short slip would have deposited the party

in the crevasse below. Slowly but surely we worked our way up, the angle of the slope decreasing the higher we got, and at 9.30 the crest of the ridge connecting Monte Ventina with the Disgrazia was attained, and we were looking down on the wonderfully crevassed Sissone Glacier. Finding a most conveniently placed table-like rock, we halted again for half an hour, thoroughly contented with the progress we had made. For the first half-hour after starting again we kept on the crest of the arête, cutting, and when possible kicking, steps. The arête gradually narrowed away to an absolute knife-edge. The slope on our right fell precipitously to the Sissone Glacier, many hundreds of feet below us. The slope on our left, though steep, was more broken, and was dotted here and there with projecting pieces of rock. Finding that the hard, firm covering of snow became thinner and thinner the higher we got, and that if we kept on the crest we should have to cut steps in ice on the perilously sharp ridge, it was determined to abandon the actual crest and continue the ascent on the face of the slope to our left. This involved another and final change of front, and Charles Pilkington took the lead. For some time we worked along the slope almost at a level, taking advantage of the patches of rock wherever we could, and gradually getting further away from the crest of the ridge, which now ran sharply up the mountain face. Ascending a short steep snow-slope, the cliffs were gained at a very much lower point than we had originally intended. Though the rocks were very steep they were broken, and being of granite gave firm and safe hand and foot hold. For some considerable time the climb was hand over hand, now twisting to the right, now to the left, to turn some impassable bit of rock, making much use of a rib of rock which helped us for a long way. Indeed, the whole climb was as good as it is possible to find in the Alps; for, though the rocks presented difficulties sufficient to keep one's faculties on the stretch, and at the same time to bring most of the muscles of the body into play, they could, in the state we found them, in no way be termed dangerous. Our progress was rapid, and in about an hour from our last halting-place we had gained a height on a level with the point where the arête we had been on loses itself in the cliffs.

The ledge we had thought we had discovered from below, and by which we had intended to complete the ascent, proved a reality, and if not easy was certainly practicable. But the rocks directly in front, though steep, appeared, as far as we could see, to offer no greater difficulties than we had already

overcome, and it required but a moment's consultation to agree that it would be very much more 'in consonance with the traditions' of the Alpine Club to go straight for the summit from where we were than to make use of the ledge, which would involve us in a considerable *détour* to our left. The rocks proved as firm as those below. I do not recollect a single piece of loose stone being disturbed during this part of the climb. Nowhere was there any absence of hand and foot hold. On one occasion Charles Pilkington, fearing to trust his weight on a piece of rock that looked rather unsafe, called Lawrence up to him, and, mounting on Lawrence's shoulder, reached the next ledge, and then pulled Lawrence up by the rope. Having no one below me I tested the shaky rock, and found it bore my weight safely, and a moment afterwards rejoined the others. The work was most exciting. One's whole attention was engrossed by it to such an extent that I entirely forgot to relieve Charles of the sack he was carrying, our rule being that the front man should have the lightest load possible. It was not until the difficulties had become less, which they did in about twenty minutes, that I had time to look about. Halting for a moment while those in front were going on, I had the intense satisfaction of seeing the eastern peak and *arête* well below us. I knew then that the summit could not be far off. A minute or so afterwards a shout from the front announced that the summit was in sight, and, in answer to my question, I was told it was quite close. A few moments' more climbing and I found we had struck the eastern ridge, two minutes' scramble along which brought us to the peak itself at 11.25.

The mountain was perfectly clear of cloud. So still was the air that the match which was used to light the one pipe of the party—two of whom were fearful examples of that 'awful darkness which lurks amidst our boasted civilisation'—required no protection. Though there were no clouds on the peak, we were on a level with the cloud-plane; and the entire range of peaks, with the exception of the Bernina group and one or two other mountains, was masked by clouds of the most beautiful and fantastic forms. For more than an hour we lay basking in the hot sunshine, watching the ever-changing and ever-lovely panorama of clouds, below which on one side we saw deep down into the Val Masino, and beyond that into the Val Tellina, and on the other side into the Val Malenco. At last we started for the descent, which was accomplished first by the rocks and snow-slopes of the western *arête*, and then across the glacier at the head of the Val Sasso Bisolo, keeping

near the rocks which divide it from the Pioda Alp. Shortly before leaving the glacier, while descending a slippery piece of ice, a slight tug of the rope pulled me off my balance. I fell on my axe, and before I could disengage it I was in a small crevasse. Lawrence's steadiness prevented any chance of an accident, had one been possible, as the rope tightened before I was well in the crevasse.

Clearing the glacier and relieving ourselves of the rope, we traversed the wild and desolate upper part of the valley. Stopping for a few minutes at the highest *châlet*, we consumed bowl after bowl of milk, to the astonishment of the natives, and then, much refreshed, pushed on down the valley. The shades of evening were already gathering by the time the highroad to the Baths of Masino was struck at Cattaeggio, when a halt for a few minutes was called, to finish the remains of our provisions, with the help of a tap of very fair red wine of the country. In spite of the pace, the great highway down the Val Tellina to Morbegno was not attained until some time after dark. Along that dusty and apparently interminable road we pounded, finding the hot, sultry atmosphere of the valley most oppressive. Indeed, the only agreeable reminiscence of this part of the day's work is that not one of us lost his temper, or even indulged in the luxury of nagging. At last we heard a church clock strike ten, and though the sound seemed to come from far away down the valley hopes were expressed that at last we were within a 'measurable distance' of Morbegno. They proved well founded; we got in at 10.20, just in time to escape a heavy thunderstorm which broke over the place a few minutes after our arrival.

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THE ALPS IN WINTER. By C. D. CUNNINGHAM.

THE photographs of Chamonix in winter which may be seen in the shop windows at Geneva give but a very faint idea of the actual appearance of the place. It is true they show the snow-covered roofs, the great heaps which have been cleared from the side-walks, and all have the icicles hanging from the eaves. But it would be hard indeed for any picture to convey that air of dreariness which seems to hang over the little town. The hotels are all closed; the gaudily-painted signboards are taken down. The pebble ornaments and crystals are stored away, and their place in the shop windows is filled by sheets of brown paper. There is little sign of life in the main streets, and even the jingle of sleigh bells brings few faces to the café windows.