

THE PIZZO D'UCCELLO AND THE SOLCO D'EQUI.

By F. F. TUCKETT.

'Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not. . . . That which we carry to it, the same we bring back more fairly illustrated in the memory.'—EMERSON.

MR. FRESHFIELD'S very charming description of the 'Alpi Apuane,' or Carrara mountains, and of his ascent of the Pania della Croce, in the 'Alpine Journal' for February 1876, had set me longing to see something of this lovely *massif*, and so it came about that, after a delightful month spent amongst Tuscan and Umbrian hill towns from Volterra to Urbino, I found myself with François Devouassoud, on the afternoon of May 15 last, ascending the path through the chestnut woods above Cansoli—where the carriage road from Serravezza ceases—to the little mountain village of Livigliani. Of our very interesting expedition on the following day over the summit of the Pania, it may suffice to say that the highest point was reached by a fine snow arête with as knife-like an edge as that of the Lyskamm itself, and a quarter of an hour in length, and that, as I wished to visit Barga in the valley of the Serchio, I chose a different line of descent from Mr. Freshfield, viz. that of the valley of the Torrite di Petroschiana, which debouches at Galliciano. To prevent future comers making the same mistake that we did, I may mention that, having glissaded down the snow slopes in an E.S.E. direction, we found ourselves, at a point 1,000 feet or more below the summit, cut off by what from above appeared an impassable precipice, and had laboriously to toil up again by the rocks on our left, until we came upon indications of a rough track which apparently led from the valley of the Torrite Secca across the ridge connecting the Pania with the Paniella, but was concealed by the snow where it traversed the head of the hollow down which we had at first struck. Thanks to this discovery, after a brief and easy *traversée* of the spur which runs down from the Pania to the S.E., we gained, by a short rock descent, the head of the Costa Pulita, as the steep slope is called which descends to the depression between the Pania and Monte Forato. From this saddle there is a fine view westwards into the upper basin of the Vezza Versiglia, after enjoying which for some time we made for the highest house of the Val Petroschiana, where we were most hospitably received and liberally supplied with milk. Half an hour further down Forno Volasco was passed, and the path then led through a succession of defiles and more open bottoms, which reminded me of the Val Angrogna in the

Vaudois country, though the scenery was perhaps of a still higher order of beauty and grandeur, and the vegetation nowise inferior. Every turn disclosed some fresh 'arrangement in green,' set off by contrast with rocks of picturesque form and colour, and, at one spot high above the left bank of the stream, a hermitage church nestling beneath an overhanging crag, and reminding me of a miniature Megaspelion, added a human interest to the scene. Gallicano (population about 3,000), in a hubbub with cattle, drovers, &c., passing through it to the fair at Castelnuovo, was reached at last by a charming path following the river brink, or, where the bounding hills fell back, traversing a rich, weil-cultivated alluvial flat, filled with the most vivid verdure, and finally developing into a road which traversed a narrow gorge. On its further side rose picturesque buildings which seemed to grow out of the cliff, whilst at one point an aqueduct with extraordinarily pointed Gothic arches traversed both road and torrent, the rocky walls of which were hung with pendent drapery of climbing plants in almost tropical luxuriance. An excellent light meal of soup, trout, salad, wine, and coffee, the charge for which was only one shilling ($1\frac{1}{2}$ lira) each, and a couple of 'hours' rest till the heat diminished, were very acceptable, especially as, after a month of churches, galleries, rail, and *baroccini*, I was not in the best possible training.

At 6.45 we proceeded on our way, crossed the wide bed and numerous channels of the Serchio by four or five plank bridges, and, sauntering up the opposite slope through lanes and vineyards, and lovely mazes of verdure flooded with the golden light of a glorious sunset, deposited our packs in the comfortable Albergo di Pietro Piacentini at Barga. Haeckel, in his recent charming volume on Ceylon, classifies inns as 'zoologico-botanical,' 'dubious,' and 'dynastic,' and, with professional bias or, at any rate, instinct, decides in favour of the first, connecting his 'saddest experiences' with the last, and objecting to the second as 'too miscellaneous for general rules.' Thus, according to this theory, whilst the 'Elephants,' 'Bunches of Grapes,' &c., may be taken on trust, the 'Kaiserin Elizabeths,' 'Erzherzog Karls,' and all their tribe are, at any rate, royally dear, whilst those bearing the name of the landlord, or some other 'dubious' appellation, must be approached with caution, and not taken for granted. Be this as it may, I can highly recommend Signor Piacentini's hostelry and the moderation of his charges—coffee, bed, and breakfast for both of us only amounting to 5.40 lire.

The next morning I visited the *Duomo*, standing isolated

in a space called *l'Arringhio*, and picturesquely placed above the town, of which, as well as of the Serchio valley and the sea of peaks beyond, including the perforated summit of Monte Forato, it commands a noble view. Architecturally it is highly interesting, and amongst the noteworthy details of the interior are the *intarsia* work of the marble enclosure of the choir, and the fine old Romanesque pulpit, supported on four marble columns resting on figures, evidently anterior to Niccolò Pisano—probably of the close of the twelfth century, and more nearly resembling that of Guido da Como (1250) in S. Bartolommeo at Pistoja. There are also two works of the Della Robbias, the Virgin kneeling before Christ, and a tabernacle with lovely angels. I next visited the Convent of St. Elizabeth, to see a lovely Della Robbia altarpiece—the Virgin with the *cinto'a* in the upper portion, with St. John the Baptist and St. Catherine of Siena (?) on the left, and SS. Michael and Francis on the right, whilst in front are a kneeling angel and monk. The faces are all coloured, and the drapery partly so. After breakfast I repaired to the Monastery of S. Francesco (dei Servi), now converted into a hospital (or almshouse?), in the choir of whose church is a large work in Della Robbia ware—the Virgin in glory, with four saints below on either side of an altar with flowers, two angels on each side with flutes, &c., and four above with trumpets, like Fra Angelico's. To the right and left against the wall are two statues of saints in glazed terra cotta. At an altar on the left wall is a St. Francis receiving the stigmata, with a view of Alvernia, and beneath it, *predella*-wise, the Virgin and Child with an angel and two saints (or donors?) supported respectively by male and female figures, some of which are of exquisite simplicity and delicacy of execution. Opposite this last is a St. Joseph and the Virgin kneeling over the Child (*presepio*), with St. Jerome on the right and St. Dominic (?) on the left, whilst above is a lovely angel with scroll of music and *Gloria in excelsis*, and beneath this last, but above the group, an angel with a flute, and another in the attitude of prayer. At the foot is a Christ in the tomb, with three kneeling figures on each side.

A light carriage with a smart little horse took us by a finely engineered road down to the valley of the Serchio and then up the true right bank of the stream, through varied and beautiful scenery—the verdant bounding hills most picturesquely sprinkled or capped with quaint mountain villages—to Castelnuovo in an hour and a quarter, a distance of 12 or 13 kilometres, at a charge of 5 lire. Here we hired a *baroccino* for 8

lire and set off again up the valley for Piazza (14 kilomètres), reaching in two hours an inn on the highroad above the village, and close to the episcopal villa of Sala, after traversing the Serchio di Sillano (or Soraggio), or N. branch of the stream, which, immediately below, dashes tumultuously through a chasm in a bold, dark mass of 'gabbro.' After luncheon we started on foot for Gramolazzo, at the foot of the Pisanino (2,049 mètres), the highest peak of the entire *massif*. There is an upper track on the N. slope of the valley, traversing several villages, but we took the lower and apparently more direct foot-path by the stream, and, from time to time, came upon more or less finished, but unconnected portions of a really fine new carriage road, which proved to be continuous in the upper part of the valley, and is carried over a low col due W. of Gramolazzo as far as Minucciano, situated on the head waters of the Aullella, an affluent of the Magra. The commune of Piazza has as yet failed to provide the funds for completing the lower section of the work which would connect it with the main road of the Serchio valley, but whenever the missing link is supplied, it will open up to 'carriage company' from Lucca and the Bagni the charming upland basin of Gramolazzo—spacious, sunny, verdant, with woods of beech and chestnut, and broad meadows—rich in beautiful and even magnificent scenery, and only needing a good inn to ensure its popularity as a resort for the *villeggiatura*.

Our pleasant walk had occupied just an hour and three-quarters, and, as we neared its termination and the valley opened out in our front, disclosing the noble mass of the Pisanino, with the Pizzo d'Uccello (1,782 mètres) further in the background to the right, the scene, *mutatis mutandis*, somehow brought back to my memory the approach to Ceresole from above the 'Scalare.' It was some little time before we could find any quarters for the night, but at length we were directed to the lowest or most southerly house in the village, commanding an uninterrupted view of the Pisanino with a foreground of meadows and wooded slopes; and here, *chez* Antonini, the brother of the priest who has retired from his official position to live on his means, though still voluntarily performing the functions of *parroco*, we were soon made welcome and comfortable, though, as our arrival was unexpected, our own provisions naturally furnished the principal items of the bill of fare.

The evening passed very pleasantly in chat, and, as the smoke from our cigars curled up into the still, fresh air, whilst we sat with our coffee on the broad stone terrace outside, and

watched the peasants and their flocks coming in, and listened to the light chaff and friendly greetings exchanged between them and their pastor, I felt that I, at any rate, could well dispense with a more pretentious and better provisioned *stabilimento*.

Partly to save time and partly to help carry—as a heavyish pack is rather oppressive at these comparatively low elevations and in a warm climate, especially when one is not yet in thorough training—we engaged Baracca, the local guide of the Pisanino, for the next day; but, though he did his part very fairly, we were not particularly impressed with his topographical knowledge of the district or general mountaineering capacity. Starting at 4.35 on the morning of the 18th, half an hour's walk along the fine new road brought us to the col above Minucciano, whence there is a lovely view of that village and a wide stretch of valleys and mountains beyond. Quitting the road here, we struck off by a path to the left and in another hour reached the picturesque Pian di Minucciano, passing through lovely beech glades between which the Pisanino towered up grandly across the gorge on our left and above the 'Orto delle Donne,' as the cirque at the head of the valley is called. Rocks, trees, turf, and flowers combined to form a foreground of great beauty, and a more tempting spot to picnic or camp out in under canvas for two or three days while exploring the district and climbing the neighbouring peaks it would be difficult to find. We now struck pretty straight up the slope on our right for the Foce al Giovo (or Giogo), as the pass is named which leads over to Vinca, halted there for breakfast at 7.30, and then, depositing our traps in a safe place, made for the rocky mass of the Pizzo d'Uccello, amongst whose crags, as seen from below, it is not very easy to decide upon the right track. However, Baracca put us at about the centre of it and the climb proved easy enough, couloirs, arêtes, and chimneys offering a pleasant variety and a sufficient amount of uncertainty to give zest to the work. An hour, or thereabout, sufficed to put us on the summit at 9 o'clock, in time to enjoy in perfection the magnificent view. As a panorama it is inferior to that from the Pania della Croce, but the fine cliffs of the Pisanino rising beyond the Pian di Minucciano, and the peep into the head of the Solco d'Equi, some 3,000 feet below at the foot of a precipice which would be remarkable even in the Alps, render the nearer surroundings more striking, whilst the chain of the Apennines, glittering with abundant snows, from the Rondinaja, above the Bagni di Lucca, to Monte Gotra, near the head waters of the Magra, the course of this

latter river, and, above all, the expanse of the Gulf of Spezia, where the ironclads 'Duilio' and 'Dandolo' and many other vessels of war could be clearly distinguished, offered features which equal in interest any equivalent portion of the view from the sister peak.

We lingered for 1½ hour, regained the Giogo in 40 minutes' easy going, said good-bye to our companion, and then dropped down as straight as we could go upon Vinca, which we reached in another hour, though we missed the path occasionally, and progress was rather impeded by the extraordinary number of artificial terraces which had to be jumped or turned. At Vinca, following the instructions of Bertini and Triglia's 'Itinerario,' we asked for Angelo Boni, the tobacconist of the village, but were, I suspect wrongly, directed to a cobbler (keeping also a sort of general shop), who took us in very readily, and at whose house you can have anything you bring and bread into the bargain. He made us really very comfortable in a rough and simple fashion, and did his best to entertain his unexpected guests. The special drawback of the establishment was the youngest son, a speechless little horror, whose affection for his father's heavy hammer, which he constantly dropped on his own and other people's toes, was evidently regarded by his admiring relations as a sure prophetic indication of future celebrity in his paternal profession.

We halted for a brew of our own pea-soup till 2, and then, leaving our *rucksacks* till our return at night, started for Equi—a walk of about 1¼ hour down the right-hand side of the fine valley beneath the cliffs of the Pizzo d'Uccello, by a noble *corniche* path, often cut in the solid marble, following the sinuosities of the ground and commanding superb views over the torrent nearly 1,000 feet below, and of the Monte Sagro (1,749 mètres), rising on the opposite side. Deep down in the gorge were many men busily at work, blasting the marble to form a new road to some valuable quarries dependent for their further development on improved means of communication; and, all the way down, the rocks close to our path had evidently been carefully and minutely examined with a view to being worked, numberless bright white patches, contrasting with the older weathered surface, showing where hammer or pick had been used to test the grain of the stone. Near the entrance of the valley, just above the village of Ponte di Monzone on the opposite slope, a picturesque old ruined castle (S. Gorgio?)—which had formerly, no doubt, closed all access to it on this side—was passed, and turning sharp to the right, round the spur which descends in a N.N.W. direction from the Pizzo

d'Uccello, we descended rapidly and, traversing the village of Ajola, reached Equi a little before 4. Crossing the fine stream of the Lucido, which boils up in numerous strong springs from beneath the marble base of the Uccello, 'shepherding its bright fountains,' we reached in ten minutes the entrance to the famous 'Solco,' and, the water being low and concealed from view as it percolated through the dazzlingly white pebbles of its marble bed, struck off to our right up the dry channel. The chasm almost immediately narrows to a width of 2 or 3 yards, and the rocks on either hand tower up to a height of some hundred feet, whilst, as the rift winds, further progress seems at times almost cut off. Soon, however, the cliffs recede somewhat, the stream appears, and a path mounts the true left bank and winds upwards *en corniche* to a considerable height above it, amidst trees, shrubs, and fantastic garlands of dependent greenery, whilst in the background the gorge is closed by the really magnificent precipices of the Pizzo d'Uccello, completing a picture which combines in a rare degree beauty and sublimity. By following up this track, crossing finally to the right bank of the torrent, ascending to the Alpe di Ugliano, and striking our route of the morning somewhere between the village and Pian di Minuciano, the summit of the Uccello may be reached from Equi or Ponte di Monzone, and a visit to the Solco d'Equi thus included. If then the return be made by Vinca, the expedition will combine a very large amount of scenery of a high order, and I should suppose that about nine hours of actual going would suffice for the entire round.

At 5.30 we returned to Equi, and were most hospitably entertained with coffee, &c., by a Signor Felice Tonelli and his excellent wife, evidently persons of consideration, and friends, as they said, of all 'Alpinisti.' The kind and lively old gentleman insisted on our visiting a fine cavern a stone's throw above the village, known as the '*Buca del Lucido*,' and accompanied us himself after sending a young fellow to procure some dry reeds as torches. Having made some inquiries about the distance to Fosdinovo, he told us that the Marchese Malaspina had spent 'un' orrore d'argento—forse cento mille lire'—in the restoration of his castle or palazzo there, decorating it with frescoes, and reproducing as far as possible the conditions existing at the time of Dante's visit, when he finished the '*Inferno*' there in 1308. It was 6.30 when we at last almost forced ourselves away from our genial friends, after repeated handshakings and showers of good wishes; but the moon lighted us as the darkness fell and, walking at a steady

pace, the ascent being trifling after passing the ruined castle, Vinca was reached at 8.15 and bed proved not unacceptable about 10.

After the day's wanderings I might reasonably have expected to 'dream that I slept in marble halls,' but a zoological carnival took place that night in the loft above me, and images connected rather with drains and that charming sanitary brochure 'An Hour with a Sewer Rat' were decidedly in the ascendant. Still, though sleep came slowly and late, we managed to effect a start at 6.40 next morning, and descending from a little above the village to the bottom of the valley, and mounting the opposite side to the N. of Monte Sagro (1,749 mètres) by a Gemmi-like path, soon gained a height of 1,000 feet or more at the summit of a broad sort of couloir. Then we turned sharp to the right, and wound along the mountain-side in a northerly direction at a great height above the torrent until, bending somewhat to the left, we passed over to the head of a fine ravine, descending very precipitously and opening into the main valley some distance below Vinca. Keeping round still more to the left, we dropped down into the upper and less savage portion of this hollow, and proceeded up it in a nearly southerly direction until we gained, at 9.45, the grassy ridge at its head W. of Monte Sagro, and halted for an hour to enjoy the strange and fine view, to breakfast, and to study the network of almost countless marble quarries which lay at our feet.

We were just at the head of the Canale di Torano, the most northerly of the three valleys debouching a little above Carrara, in which the principal quarries, or 'cavi,' are situated. There are upwards of 400 of these in actual operation, of which nearly a quarter are private property; the remainder are rented of the commune. Statuary marble is only met with in about fifteen. The sides of the valleys are scored from top to bottom with actual excavations, or covered with enormous slopes of snow-white débris, which lie at a high angle, and consist of blocks and fragments of all sizes, and scarcely a minute passes without the sound of explosions, blasts of horns to give warning, cries of workmen, and the roar of vast masses precipitated from some lofty 'cavo' high up amongst the crags. Taken as a whole the marble is distributed in three well-defined zones, the lower of which consists of a grey calcareous rock called 'tarso' at Carrara and 'grezzone' at Serravezza. The intermediate zone is composed principally of the various qualities of 'cipollino,' so called from the distribution of the lines in parallel laminae. The masses of the statuary marble,

traversed by dark blotches, form lenticular bands without continuous stratification, and are classed as amygdaloid from their almond-like form. The presence of discoloured patches, called by the quarrymen 'madrinacchi,' is an indication of the purity of the rest of the marble, and their origin is attributed to the aggregation of the various impurities from the surrounding mass, which is thus refined by their removal. The chambers for the blasts are now prepared chemically. A hole is made to the required depth, and then, by means of a guttapercha tube, muriatic acid is allowed slowly to penetrate in a thin stream to the inner end—an operation which sometimes lasts several days. The acid gradually eats out a spheroidal cavity called a 'fiasco,' into which, after it has been rendered dry by the introduction of tow, the explosive is inserted. I have seen no recent returns of the production, but in 1872 the quantity exported was 65,000 tons of grey and 1,780 of statuary marble, amounting in value to about 350,000*l.* The quarries, sawmills, workshops, &c., give employment to above 5,000 persons, of whom the quarrymen earn from 2½ to 3¼ lire daily, the sawyers 2¼ to 3½, the stonecutters 2½ to 3½, and the ornament makers 4½ to 6. The cost of quarrying, including delivery on the waggon, varies from 35 to 50 lire per cubic metre squared, or even, if the block be a large one, as high as 76. Accidents are, as might be expected, very frequent, the annual average being about 14 killed on the spot, 6 dying subsequently, and 4 severely maimed. Fractures of the arm, &c., amount to 50 annually, and a day rarely passes without some casualty. A railway now penetrates the Canale di Torano to a point half-way between the village of that name and the head of the valley, and, thanks to it, the labour of the toiling oxen has at least been greatly diminished, though they are of course still required to haul down the blocks to the station, and, in some instances, are even now employed to transport them to Carrara itself.

Before dropping down into the actual 'Canale' we had to descend for some distance along a spine of weathered marble rock cropping out through sparse vegetation, and anything so frightfully slippery I never remember in all my mountaineering experience. The surface was too hard and sharp to admit of our removing our boots, and we both had to creep like cats on walnut shells at so ridiculously slow a pace, although the inclination was by no means considerable, that in a quarter of an hour I do not think we accomplished more than some 300 yards. It was at first a relief to get upon the upper part of the talus of débris from one of the highest

quarries, but the footing was so rough and unstable, the heat so oppressive, and the glow so blinding, that we were thankful, when barely half-way down, to get behind a miner's hut and pant for a few minutes in the shade. In no human toil above-ground that I have ever seen have I been so struck by the mere brute pitting of muscle against gravity. Science—except so far as it is represented by the lever—seems ignored, and the poor quarrymen, streaming with perspiration, strain and bend until veins swell and tendons seem ready to crack. There are no tramways, cranes, windlasses, or capstans—nothing but sheer force of muscle, aided by crowbars and huge cables, which are passed over the big blocks and then round thick wooden posts buried deep in the ground, so as to check the impetus when the equilibrium of the unwieldy and ponderous mass is disturbed, and it turns over down the slope.

It was pleasant indeed to escape from the noise, dust, heat, and glare into the verdure of the lower valley and the rich basin of Carrara, and, still more so, on reaching the town, to get a most refreshing bath and a general scrub and brush, followed by a luxurious little dinner in the cool, shady restaurant of the excellent *Hôtel de la Poste*. In the evening I reached Leghorn, to join my friend, Mr. E. T. Compton, for a fortnight in Corsica, delighted with my five days in the 'Alpi Apuane,' and resolved to revisit them if an opportunity should occur.

ALONG THE FRONTIER FROM THE TUNNEL TO THE
LEVANNA. By the EDITOR.

IN my wanderings of late years I have often been much puzzled by the nomenclature of the line of peaks and passes on the frontier ridge between the Tunnel of the Alps and the Col du Carro, i.e. the district of the Mont Ambin, and that called from its best known, though not its highest peak, the Levanna district. With regard to the orography of this ridge the traveller is well armed, for on the French side he has the French Government map and that of Mr. Nichols, which appeared in vol. iii. of this Journal, and on the Italian side he has the *New Survey*, the publication of which has taken away a great reproach from Italian science. But when he comes to look into the nomenclature, this multitude of counsellors results in hopeless confusion, which is not much cleared up if he happens to be acquainted with the articles and notes which have appeared in the various Alpine periodi-