

NEW GUIDE BOOKS.

1. *The Ortler Group*.*—It is interesting to compare this handbook with Mr. Tuckett's article in the first number of this Journal, and to see how a 'terra incognita' has become a playground. Except that the Italian survey of the south-western flank of the group is not yet issued, little remains to be added to our knowledge, and Herr Meurer was well advised in thinking that the time had come for a special guide to the Ortler Group.

On one point we are not sure that we agree with Herr Meurer. He has filled out his volume to the regulation size by adding at the end a hundred pages of general matter—personal narrative or sketches of early ascents. It is all interesting enough, and, as he suggests, may be torn out by those who do not wish to carry the extra weight. But to have to rend one's pocket companion into pieces is a harsh necessity. Doubtless many handbooks are far too rigidly practical, and leave out altogether that critical appreciation of scenery which is the first requisite of the intelligent traveller. But 'omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,' and we hold that the model guide-book writer is he who spreads his jam. At any rate he spares his critics the temptation, we had nearly succumbed to, of eating it first.

The 'Guidebook' is, as might be expected from Herr Meurer's reputation, admirably done. The general traveller is shown how to approach his district, while mountaineers will find here all the information they need as to peaks and passes, hotel tariffs, and huts. Of the last there seems almost a superabundance, considering that there is no peak in the group which cannot be comfortably climbed in a twelve-hours' day (all halts included) from a good hotel. The only point where we can find any omission is in the routes west from Rabbi. The Venezia Spitze may be climbed from there better than from Pejo, and the glorious and singularly unlaborious high-level route which connects that summit with Monte Cevedale, and thus places Rabbi in direct connection with Santa Catarina in a day of thirteen hours (without halts), is not noticed.† It is one of the most delightful walks in the Alps. Again, as to Santa Catarina, we must protest against Herr Meurer's description of it as 'sumpfig und heiss.' By what standard he condemns this charming spot, and praises Pejo as 'sehr schön,' we are quite unable to understand. These, however, are minute criticisms. The guidebook is essentially a good one. It is provided with a first rate map, and a quantity of illustrations of the most diverse quality, ranging from some of the very worst woodcuts to some of the best and most delicate reproductions of photographs, by one of the new processes, that we have yet seen.

In the second part justice is first done to the early explorers, P'sseyer Josele, the Bulmat of the Ortler, and Dr. Gebhard, its De

* *Illustrierter Special-Führer durch die Ortler-Alpen*. Von J. Meurer, Präsident des Oesterreichischer Alpenclub. Hartleben, Vienna, 1884.

† See *Alpine Journal*, vol. vi. p. 302

Saussure. So firm was the disbelief of the Tyrolese in their ascents that they had to make a bonfire on the upper snow plateau to convince their countrymen of their success. Herr Meurer then proceeds to give a lively description of his own ascents of the Königspitze by the ordinary route and by the Suldener Grat.

2. *Carinthia*.*—Since Messrs. Gilbert & Churchill wrote English readers have not heard enough of this country. It is true it has been touched on in Colonel Malleson's recent work; but that was not of a character to catch the public ear. Some day the facts that one of the most charming railway routes to Venice lies through the heart of Carinthia, that it contains smiling lakes, that the limestone peaks that cluster about Tarvis render that village a second Cortina, will be more widely known. For the present the only corner of the country within British ken is Heiligen Blut, and the stray climber who wanders to the Gross Glockner feels an additional sense of his remoteness from his flock on being told by a boundary post that he is in Kärnten. Those who wish for fuller and more recent details as to this part of the 'Eastern Alps' than Mr. Ball gives them will find all they need in Herr Rabl's handbook, a work of the size of Bädeler, provided with a good map and some fifty woodcuts.

3. *The Tuscan Apennines*.†—This is one of those compact pocket, almost waistcoat-pocket, companions which the Italians have made a speciality. In the last ten years they have learnt their own good fortune in having hills to fly to in the summer heats, and this book is a list of cool spots with practical information as to situation, inns, lodgings, excursions, and mineral waters. It is addressed rather to natives than to foreigners. But the latter, if they find the Apennines hardly bracing enough in July and August (the Italian season), may get useful suggestion of charming halting places for the long days of June, when the hills are a flower garden, or during the bright, dry clearness of a southern October. The healthiness of one of these hill villages is naively demonstrated by the fact that the commune has to subsidise its 'farmacista' to the extravagant amount of 8*l.* per annum to induce him to keep his shop open.

4. *Miscellanea*.—We have received the twenty-sixth edition of that excellent work Von Tschudi's 'Tourist in der Schweiz,' which is also to be had in the form of six District Guides.

Val Maggia ‡ is happy in being within the Swiss frontier; and, since the senseless and mischievous conduct of the Italian government in inflicting quarantine on travellers from the north has rendered the *Italian* lakes practically inaccessible, Signor Balli may fairly hope that the valley of which he writes with patriotic but not exaggerated enthusiasm will receive its fair share of visitors this season, and that the new inn at Bignasco (of which we hear the best reports), may obtain the support which those who have made so charming a spot available as a halting place fully deserve.—D. W. F.

* *Illustrierter Führer durch Kärnten*, von J. Rabl. Hartleben, Vienna, 1884.

† *Le dimore estive del Appennino Toscano*, da E. Bertini. Niccolai, Florence, 1884.

‡ *La Valle Maggia*, da F. Balli. Candeletti, Turin, 1884.