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TO THE CIMA DI PIAZZI AND BACK.

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MOST mountaineers, doubtless, have found at some time or other that an Alpine range or district which they had hitherto regarded with indifference, not to say more, becomes suddenly interesting and attractive in their eyes. This has happened to me several times, but in no case was the change of opinion more complete than as regards the region enclosed between the roads over the Bernina, the Stelvio, and the Ofen Passes, of which the culminating point is the ice-clad *Cima di Piazza* (3,499 m.=11,283 ft.). In 1895, when I was exploring the mountains to the N. and N.W. of the Lower Engadine, I must often have looked across the Inn valley to this tangled mass of peaks and glaciers. But I have the very dimmest recollection of having seen them. Yet scarcely a year later this district became the subject of my Alpine studies on paper, and in 1897 of my explorations on the spot. A very severe illness in the autumn of 1896 was not unnaturally followed by the orders of my doctor not to do much high climbing or undergo any great exertions in my Alpine campaign (if one was indeed possible) of the next summer. I therefore cast about for a district which would meet these requirements, and gradually my attention was drawn to that crowned by the Piazza, as the peaks seemed not too high and the distances not too great for my semi-invalid condition. I soon heard that the Swiss Alpine Club intended to make the Swiss portion of this region its 'Champ d'Excursion' for 1897-98, and wanted information as regards it.* I found, too, that I could kill

* The *Itinerarium* (published in the autumn of 1898), by the competent hand of Herr Ed. Imhof, contains much valuable
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another bird with the same stone, for I could not lay hands on anyone to revise the text of Mr. Ball's 'Alpine Guide' relating to these parts. Hence I little by little formed the project of visiting this district myself. In carrying out the more difficult portion of this plan I was enormously aided by the courtesy of Signor Giorgio Sinigaglia, of Milan, a young Italian climber (whose premature death is announced as I write these lines) who had devoted himself to the minute exploration of the Valtellina, and had visited nearly every nook of the Val Grosina, the little-known glen at the head of which rises the Piazzi. I, of course, read up all I could find in print as to my proposed field of action, and, indeed, with the help of Signor Sinigaglia, drafted a very rough 'Climbers' Guide' for my own use.

Thus it was that on July 18, 1897, I and my faithful friend and comrade, Christian Almer, the younger, arrived at Zernetz in the Lower Engadine, the point at which the road from the Ofen Pass reaches the Inn valley. We had been out just a month since our start from Grindelwald, and had made a most devious and crooked journey before we arrived in the Engadine. But the intense heat from which we had long suffered now gave way to cold and bad weather, and as I had been told to avoid wet and damp above all things, we were detained nearly a week in Zernetz. A pleasant distraction was provided one day by the passing through of the reigning President of the A.C., with his penultimate predecessor, and party. On another, Almer and I mounted painfully up steep slopes to a shoulder of the Munt della Baseglia; but—perhaps because our wits were confused by hail, snow, and an icy wind—we jumbled up the topography of the Spöl gorge and the road over the Ofen Pass in a most horrid way. At last the weather cleared, and on July 24 we took the diligence up to the nice little Ofen Wirthshaus, which now offers very comfortable quarters—a great improvement, no doubt, on its predecessor, which is mentioned as early as the second half of the sixteenth century. The scenery on the way was most striking, and we could well believe that the *commune* of Zernetz is the richest in Switzerland so far as regards forests, and therefore naturally of live bears. Next day, profiting by a hint of Mr. Leaf's in these pages,* we went up the *Munt la Schera* (2,589 m. = 8,494 ft.),

information as to the district, though naturally the Italian portions are described less in detail than the Swiss.

* Vol. xvii. p. 231.

the peaklet which makes such a show to the S. of the inn. And we were more than rewarded for the stroll of a good two hours past the Schera huts, and up the stone-strewn W. slopes of our hillock. For the view was cloudless, and the whole district 'Between the Bernina and the Stelvio' lay not at our feet, indeed, but before our eyes. The grim and stony range N. of the Ofen inn we were perfectly willing to abandon to Mr. Leaf, for we felt that in years gone by *we* had done quite enough stone-wandering (not the same thing as rock-climbing) in Dauphiné and elsewhere. The Vadret on one side reminded us of our doings of 1895, but the Bernina peaks on the other left me as cold and unsympathetic as they always do. It was a great surprise to look right up the Spöl gorge to Livigno itself, one of the churches in which, with some houses, was visible, so that our topographical difficulties were soon solved, although the ridges cross each other in the most complicated way—nowhere worse than in Fraële, of which anon. But the 'clou' of the panorama was the sight (our first glimpse) of the Piazzi, far away, yet towering up above the intervening ridges, and streaming with two fine riven glaciers. It of course attracted our special attention, for was not the main object of our whole journey the ascent of this mysterious summit, which, though conquered thirty years ago, and overhanging the Baths of Bormio, has yet remained, save to a few Italian and German climbers, one of the least known monarchs of an Alpine district? Two hours soon sped by in the study of all these novelties. Then, after descending to a N. promontory of our *Munt* in order to look at the Ofen inn just below (but not visible from the summit), we wandered eastwards over many stone-strewn slopes, and finally regained the Ofen road at the 'Cantoniera' or 'Wegerhaus,' just beyond the Buffalora huts.

I was engaged to meet Signor Sinigaglia at the Eita Club hut on July 28, so that in consequence of our unexpected detention at Zernetz we had to make straight for that point. Hence on July 26 we threaded those really astonishing and amazing gorges of the Spöl to Livigno. Hardly in my life have I ever passed through more impressive scenery—rock precipices on either side, thick forests, wild torrents, yet a good mule path all the way, though not a single living being was met *en route*. We halted for a while at the hut just beyond the Italian frontier and the bridge over the Gallo torrent (flowing from Val Mora and the Fraële Pass), wondering at the intense solitude and at the effect that would be produced on it if these astonishing gorges were in

'La Suisse Connue.' After issuing from the gorges the path gradually expands into a rough cart track, and the *very* gradual ascent up to the inn at Livigno (opposite the chapel of St. Antonio, the central of the three churches of the valley) was trying. The inn (the 'Pensione Alpina') was far better than I had been led to believe, though very Italian, and an excellent dinner, with some really wonderful Veltliner, soon put us into good humour again. A German-speaking waitress, a most merry host, Signor Silvestri, who is at the same time the *chef*, and an unexpected meeting with one of my numerous friends-by-letter, who had come up from Zernetz that very morning, soon made us feel quite at home. The necessary touch of comedy was afforded by an Italian student, who was the solitary *pensionnaire*, and had come hither to read high mathematics (as far as we could see, he solved his problems by running madly round and round a meadow), and had brought his bicycle, the first seen here, with him. But I must reserve for a while my general impressions of Livigno itself, for we had only one day left (rain having kept us at Livigno all the 27th), and in that day we had to cross no fewer than three ridges in order to reach the Eita Club hut.

So, next morning (July 28), we set off at 6.30 for our long journey, Eita being regarded at Livigno something like the Bernese Oberland—as a most distant and very queer place. Luckily the cold wind which had bothered us so much at Zernetz came to our help, for it blew steadily in our backs all day, thus pushing us forward and cooling us at the same time. Our first ridge was the grassy down seen from Livigno and crossed by the *Passo Dheira* (2,209 m. = 7,248 ft.), by which, in $1\frac{1}{4}$ hr., we gained the first church of Trepalle, the highest permanently-inhabited village in the Italian Alps (2,069 m. = 6,788 ft.), though it is beaten by Juf (2,133 m. = 6,998 ft.) in the Avers (Switzerland), while L'Ecot, near Bonneval sur Arc (2,046 m. = 6,713 ft.), is a good third, and holds the record for France. From the church there was a fine view of the Piazzì, as also of the nearer and very imposing Monte del Ferro. So far our route was clear. But now we had to leave the ordinary track to Bormio by the *Passo di Foscagno* (over which the post comes daily to Livigno), and strike out into regions as to which we had no information save that supplied by the map. From that it was obvious that in order to attain the *Passo di Verva* (which leads direct to Eita) we must reach the Val Viola Bormina at a point about midway in its course. Hence, at Trepalle we

turned due S., and ascended the grassy Vallaccia glen, bearing round with it to the S.E. so as to gain the pass of that name at its head (2,619 m.=8,593 ft.) in 2 hrs. 35 min. from the Trepalle church. Here we were greeted by an unexpected view *en face* of the surprisingly snow- and ice-clad Lago Spalmo range, while the black Corno di Dosd  towered up to its right. Soon the track from Mr. Freshfield's Zembrasca Pass of 1866 (the Colle delle Mine of the new Italian map) was joined, and the Funera huts seen on the opposite bank of the stream. Then, bearing steadily to the left through a pathless forest and past the Campo huts, we crossed (1½ hr. from our pass) the torrent in the Val Viola, here very narrow and wooded. It was now high time for dinner, which we felt we had justly earned by our two passes, even though small ones, and we enjoyed it thoroughly, in full view of the Corno di Dosd , which makes a grand show at the head of the valley. Then came a steep and hot ascent of 25 min. to the first Verva huts, on the left bank of that glen, whence we caught a glimpse of the fields of Semogo and of the chapel on the pass of the Scale di Fra le. Our way lay along that bank, and in 40 min. the upper Verva hut (2,123 m.) was seen on the opposite bank. In a long hour more (or two good hours from the bridge in the Val Viola), over endless stony but gentle slopes, we attained our third pass, the *Passo di Verva* (2,314 m.=7,592 ft.), and felt that we had won the day. But it was a great disappointment to us that driving mists concealed all views of the Piazzi, just on the E., save an occasional glimpse of the jagged Corni di Verva on its N.W. ridge, whence black precipices fall towards our glen. On the pass we found traces of civilisation in the shape of a leaden 'plaque' of directions as to the way to Eita, placed there by the kindly forethought of the Italian Alpine Club, which has also marked the track by splashes of red paint here and there. The descent to Eita is *very* stony, and does not become interesting till the path mounts high above the right bank of the torrent, and, on turning a corner, reveals the fair grassy basin of Eita far below. I knew that the Club hut was near the chapel, so that we soon identified our resting-place, which we were glad to gain in 1½ hr. from the pass, or just 9 hrs.' walking from Livigno, though the total absence of snow made this journey far more fatiguing than it appeared in itself.

No one was at Eita to greet us, and the door of the Club hut was fast shut. But a woman soon came to our aid, and managed to make us understand that we were expected.

But no provisions, no wine ; nothing but bare walls !! However, two hours later we heard joyous cries, and soon there appeared Signor Sinigaglia in person, followed by several 'portresses' (for the men of the valley migrate in summer), bearing eatables and drinkables of many excellent kinds. So we passed a merry evening, and I for one slept well after our long 'traverse' from Livigno.

The wind rose in the night, and blew with such indefatigable vigour and bitterness that for two whole days we were practically imprisoned in the Club hut, occasionally venturing out to get a breath of air on the sheltered platform before the house and chapel. But the time passed pleasantly in conversation on Alpine subjects, and in the preparation and consumption of splendid dinners and suppers, the *menu* of one of which (including no less than nine courses) lies before me.

The 'Casa d'Eita' (1,703 m. = 5,587 ft.), as the house is officially called, and the chapel to which it is annexed, stand a very short distance from the Dosso d'Eita chalets, on a sort of bastion which projects into the centre of the glen, and command a fine view of the lower Val Grosina, in which the Eita huts are nearly the highest chalets. The position is most picturesque—though none of the high peaks in the neighbourhood are visible hence, the Piazzis being concealed by the imposing mass of the Monte Maurigno—and deserves to be better known. On the W. side of the chapel is the 'Casa,' a stone, two-storied building, constructed at the joint expense of the commune of Grosio, in the Valtellina (the owner of the valley, and 2 hrs. distant by mule-path), and of the Milanese Section of the Italian Alpine Club. On the ground floor, the right-hand room is the sacristy, which during the week serves as the dining-room, while opposite is the kitchen. Upstairs, the priest's bedroom is over the sacristy, while above the kitchen is a room reserved by the Milanese Section for travellers, furnished with six sleeping-places (arranged in berths), with mattresses, pillows, blankets, &c. The whole house is very snug and substantial, and, save on Saturday nights, when the priest comes up, is entirely at the disposal of the travellers—alas! as yet but very few—who find their way hither. The local guide, Pietro Rinaldi, resides in one of the neighbouring houses, and acts as caretaker, being authorised to charge every traveller 1 franc per night here and at the Dosdè Club hut (of which later). Signor Sinigaglia had most kindly brought a supply of tinned provisions from Milan for me, but generally it is necessary to give notice

beforehand to the innkeeper, Signor Gilardi, at Grosio, and he will send up provisions, wine, &c., as ordered or required. Rinaldi, too, has a small stock ready in case of necessity, while he procures wood, eggs, cheese, &c., from the chalets close by, and has the keys of both Club huts.

The best and fullest account (with bibliography, map, illustrations, &c.) of the mountains at the head of the Val Grosina is that by Signor Sinigaglia, which appeared in the 'Bollettino' of the Italian Alpine Club for 1897. A monograph in the fullest sense of the word, it has been supplemented by another article in the following volume, which describes his explorations of 1897. I must refer to the latter (pp. 2-5) for the account of the one expedition we made on July 31 all together, the *Colle di Lago Spalmo* (3,150 m. = 10,335 ft.), between the second peak (3,340 m.) of the Lago Spalmo group, and the point 3,228 m. (of the $\frac{25000}{100}$ Italian map) on the E. My friend made the first complete traverse of this fine glacier pass, but I only went with him to the summit, as then I was so tired (it was my first glacier expedition since my great illness) that I returned to Eita by the way we had taken on the ascent. Apart from the very pleasant recollections of this excursion, and the numerous photographs of our polyglot party—which used indifferently no less than four tongues—there are two interesting topographical results to note as regards it. One is that we seem to have been the first travellers ever to actually visit the little Lago Spalmo, which is set in the midst of a grim, rocky amphitheatre, and has given its name to the three chief peaks that rise around it. The other is that we cleared up to our satisfaction the route taken by the first English party* which explored this group, but which, of course, was much handicapped by the badness of the maps then in existence. They seem from the Dosedé huts to have reached the Passo di Dosedé ('west' of the Cima di Saoseo being a misprint for 'east'), then to have attacked the true highest summit (the Cima Viola of to-day) by the very jagged S.W. rock arête (a high wind preventing them from bearing over the glacier on its N.W., which would have led them easily to the top); but, beaten—and no wonder—by that ridge, they descended on to our little Lago Spalmo glacier, crossed it, and then gained, by steep ice slopes, a point probably rather higher than our Colle di Lago Spalmo; thence a difficult rock climb led them to the summit of the second peak of the group

* A. J. ii. p. 408.

(3,340 m.), the descent being made direct to the Dosedé huts. This expedition illustrates the difficulties encountered by early explorers, who usually have bad maps only at their disposition.

Next morning (August 1), Signor Sinigaglia, who had most kindly made a special journey to Eita to meet me, had to leave early, but neither of us knew that this our first meeting was also to be our last on earth. The day was absolutely perfect, while the combination of Alpine air, mountain scenery, and Italian surroundings left nothing to be desired. It was Sunday, and throngs of gaily-dressed peasants came in from all sides for mass, so that the little chapel was unable to hold them, and many had to kneel outside around the door. Far away to the S. rose the jagged blue crests of the Bergamasque Alps, while nearer all was still and quiet, save in the chapel. We passed the day lazily, sauntering and resting, and drinking our fill of the wonderful beauty of our mountain abode.

The weather was not quite so perfect on the morning of August 2, the day fixed on for our ascent of the Piazzi. We two started at 4.50 A.M., and mounted a path past the Cassavrolo huts (1,938 m.), and up the Riacci slopes, keeping a N.E. direction. We had been led to believe that there was a short cut over the ridge S.E. of the Monte Maurigno, which would help us much. But this could not be seen from Eita, and it was not till we had traversed much grass and many stones that we gained a glimpse of a snow couloir (visible from Fusine in the lower Val Grosina), which led up to the desired ridge. Half-an-hour more sufficed to bring us to that ridge just between the Pizzo Campaccio (3,148 m.) and the point 3,029 m. (marked on the $\frac{1}{250000}$ Italian map only). This was a new pass (*Colle Campaccio*), being separated by the point 3,029 m. from Signor Sinigaglia's Colle Maurigno, just S.E. of the Monte Maurigno. We had come pretty fast from Eita (3½ hrs.), and made a long halt on our col, mainly to examine our position. The Piazzi rose opposite, but was separated from us by a great basin or hollow, into which it was clearly necessary to descend—much to our disgust. But there was no other course open to us, so, after leaving our names in a bottle (found a fortnight later by Signor Sinigaglia), we went down the S. Verva glacier, and then made a wearisome traverse, as high as possible, at the foot of a rock ridge on the right hand, till (1 hr. from our pass) we gained the left-hand bank of the N. Verva glacier, a little below its miniature icefall. We had lost nearly 1,000 ft., so that short cut, like so many others, proved a failure, and

should be carefully avoided by future travellers. Our way was now simple and direct. An easy walk up the glacier, and around the icefall, led us to the foot of the rocky barrier which divides that glacier from the upper *névé* slopes on the S.W. flank of the Piazzi. We mounted this barrier rather to the right of the point (a snowy gully) at which it is usually passed; but there is not the slightest difficulty anywhere. Long, soft snow slopes followed, and tried me much. But at last they brought us to the main S. ridge, along which we walked past a first cairn, and then up a very pretty snow cone, with a second cairn on the left, and a great crevasse on the right. And finally, quite easily, we gained the highest delicate snow crest of the Piazzi, having taken 2 hrs. 20 min. slow walking from the point at which we struck the left bank of the N. Verva glacier. But a more energetic party would not require more than 1½ hr., if so much.

As might be expected, the view was very fine, for the Piazzi is the highest summit between the Ortler and the Bernina groups. Bormio was at our feet, the church of Trepalle glittered far away in the sunshine, as did the lake on the pass of Le Scale between Bormio and Fraële, while the lower Adda valley meandered thousands of feet below towards the Lake of Como. (The highest (3,315 m.) of the rock towers, or 'Corni di Verva,' which stud the N.W. ridge of the Piazzi has been appropriately named 'Corno Sinigaglia,' as my lamented friend made the first ascent on August 18.) But to me the mere fact of having conquered the Piazzi was more than the view or anything else. And this not because the ascent offered any great difficulties, but because this summit is so little known, save to a very few Italian and German travellers, the average number of ascents annually seeming to be about two.

As far as I can ascertain, it is first mentioned in the very useful work (Turin, 1845) entitled 'Le Alpi che cingono l'Italia,' but both on the map and on the 'Profilo Geometrico,' as well as in the text,* it is confounded with a minor summit on its N. ridge, the Corno di San Colombano, this name and the height 3,030 m. alone being given. That minor summit was ascended in 1864 by Professor Theobald, and in his narrative of his expedition † the first distinct

* P. 858, No. 82.

† Theobald and Weilenmann, *Die Bäder von Bormio*, St. Gallen, 1868, pp. 26-7; the passage is translated in the *Bollettino del C.A.I.*, No. 18, p. 306.

notice of the higher and snow-clad Piazzi is to be found. Mr. Freshfield, in the course of a rapid dash through these regions in 1866, lays stress upon the fact that the Piazzi is their culminating point.* One or other of these allusions probably led to the first ascent, effected from a chalet (close to the wide depression in the ridge N. of the Pizzo San Colombano leading over to the Val Buccianna) about $2\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. above Bormio by way of the Corno di San Colombano and the N.E. ridge of the Piazzi by Herr Weilenmann on August 21, 1867. † On the return the party struck N.W. from the lower portion of the N. ridge, and descended by the easternmost of the two glaciers on that flank of the Piazzi, and the rock ridge between it and the more westerly glacier, thus gaining the Val Burrone or Elia. On the second ascent, made in 1868 by a mysterious Mr. Clarke, the same route, up and down, was taken as that followed by Herr Weilenmann. But the third party ‡ gained the S. ridge from the Val Campaccio on the E., and descended by the S.W. flank to the Verva Pass. These are the three main routes up the peak, for the variations made by later parties in striking the S. ridge farther to the S. (even at the Colle dei Piazzi, which resembles nothing less than a col or pass) are of topographical importance only. But now that there is a Club hut at Eita the necessity of starting from Bormio itself, or of sleeping in chalets, is done away with, and the S.W. route (which we took on the descent) is by far the best and shortest.

During the ascent it had been warm, not to say very hot, but on the top a cold breeze greeted us, so that we soon turned to descend, after leaving our names in the bottle in the higher cairn. It took us only a little over half an hour to regain the N. Verva glacier. We had not the slightest desire to ascend to our morning's col, so down that glacier we went, keeping close under and to the left of the huge moraine. Below, we went over stones in a S.W. direction, passed the considerable Lago Maurignino, and by more stones and grass reached the Passo di Verva in 2 hrs. from the top of the peak. The way is stony and monotonous, but as easy as possible. That steep and rough path down to Eita was not more enchanting than it had seemed a few days before, and required 1 hr. 20 min. We had thus taken 6 hrs. 50 min. up, and 3 hrs. 20 min. down. A faster party could, no

* *A.J.* ii. p. 406, and *Italian Alps*, p. 115.

† See the German work referred to above, pp. 68–85.

‡ Signor Damiano Marinelli, in 1876: see *Bollettino*, 1876, pp. 482–4.

doubt, go from Eita to the Piazzi by the Verva Pass in $4\frac{1}{2}$ –5 hrs. or so, while of course if it were not desired to return to Eita it is simple to go down the Verva glen to the Val Viola Bormina. I may add that looking down from the summit we saw no reason why a well-equipped party should not attain the Piazzi direct from the N. or N.W.; neither of the two glaciers on that side should be impassable to good ice-men, though the last snow slope from the common head of these glaciers direct to the summit of the peak is very steep. But this suggested route is certainly worth a try, and if I were younger and stronger I would have attempted it myself. Rinaldi, the caretaker of the 'Casa,' greeted us warmly on our return, remarking, with perfect justice, that I was *molto stanco*, for this was my first considerable ascent since my great illness.

A good night in the quiet 'Casa' put everything right, and next morning (Aug. 3) I was ready for a fresh start. We had not very far to go, for we intended to spend two nights in the Dosedé Club hut, which is on the crest of the pass of that name (2,850 m. = 9,351 ft.) and so midway between the two summits we intended to climb. Rinaldi accompanied us with his small daughter, Maria, aged seven, and his donkey. We wandered slowly up the Val Vermolera, and halted for dinner at the upper Avedo lake. Here the *bestia* was unloaded and turned loose to graze, while Maria, whose first mountain expedition this was, was divided between the good things to eat and the delight of throwing stones into the lake. On the way the Piazzi towered up finely, while at the head of the valley there rose the long snow-crowned ridge of the Cima di Saoseo. Maria and the *bestia* returned from the Lago Negro, Rinaldi, in a most obliging manner, coming on to the hut (four hours from Eita) and then hastening back to Eita. Almer and I then proceeded to settle ourselves down in the hut, which is small, but very comfortable. (Rinaldi is entitled—as at Eita—to charge a franc a night per traveller.) Yet it is very rarely used, not more than one or two parties sleeping there every year. On the N. the rocky Corno di Dosedé rises grandly, and to the S.W. a slender rock obelisk, the Corno di Lago Negro, later climbed by Signor Sinigaglia; while, half hidden by a minor rocky point, the rounded summit of the Cima Viola is seen to the right of the lower and more distant peak, 3,340 m., the second summit of the Lago Spalmo group.

Next morning, Aug. 4, in $1\frac{3}{4}$ hr. we climbed the Cima Viola (3,384 m. = 11,103 ft.), by the glacier on its N.W. slope,

and were lucky enough to reach the summit before the light Italian mists arose, so that the very fine view could be thoroughly enjoyed. Since 1894 no one seems to have visited this point (first climbed in 1879), a fact which would be surprising were not the entire district so neglected by travellers. But it is well worth the slight trouble involved, and is perhaps the most favourably situated of all the neighbouring peaks. We came back to the Club hut for early dinner, and in the afternoon went up, in 1 hr. 50 min., the *Cima di Saoseo* (3,277 m. = 10,752 ft.) on the W. of the pass and hut. This was only the second ascent, but unluckily mist hid the view, and a thunderstorm drove us down quickly. I do not ever remember coming back to a Club hut between two ascents on the same day, but it is a very pleasant arrangement, though there can be few spots so well adapted for such leisurely proceedings as the Dosedé hut.

It was past 8 o'clock on the morning of August 5 when, having cleaned up and carefully fastened the door of the hut (it has the Club lock of the German and Austrian Alpine Club), we started off once more on our wanderings. Our destination was La Rōsa on the Bernina road, and at one time we had had ideas of taking the Corno di Dosedé on the way. But it had too stony a look, so we simply went over a smugglers' pass, the *Passo del Corno*, crossed by an English party in 1866,* which traverses the ridge S.W. of the Corno just at the point where the Siegfried map places the figures 2,932 m. (9,620 ft.). A short descent towards the Val Cantone di Dosedé enabled us to traverse below a gigantic slope of stones and the Saoseo glacier, and so to reach the stony basin below the Corno. Hence a faint track led us high up on the left hand along a grassy shelf (with a rock precipice on the right) at the end of which some steps cut in the rock brought us to the pass (under 2½ hrs.' leisurely walking from the Club hut), which is the left hand of two depressions in the jagged rock ridge. Here we dominated the head of the Val Viola Poschiavina, and looked across the Bernina road to the peaks of the Bernina group. We knew from the published accounts that on the other side of the pass there was a curious fault or crack in a steep rock wall or slab, on the right, and this bit was accomplished all right. But then we were uncertain whether to go right or left, a succession of smooth rocks below barring the direct way. At last we hit on the smugglers' track, which turns sharp to the left and

* See *A. J.* ii. pp. 407-8.

traverses for a considerable distance, before descending to the highest lake, 2,489 m. (1 hr.). A little above it, a passing shower compelled us to take refuge under a great overhanging boulder, where, to our amusement, we found the remains of a smugglers' fire, and their *cache*. The track now rapidly improved, and led through a charming forest, in the midst of which, in an admirable setting, are the small Saoseo lakes, a little below which, near the Ruggiolo chalets, we joined the path from the Passo di Val Viola (2 hrs. 10 min. from our pass). A short hour more brought us to the little cantine of Sfazzù on the Bernina road, whence after light refreshments we toiled up the zig-zags (absolutely declining the stony short cut) to the hospitable inn of La Rōsa. Here we found ourselves once more in full civilisation, and had to answer many queries on the part of the landlord as to the Club hut and our pass, both of which excited his curiosity greatly.

After our week out from Livigno, it was delightful no longer to have to content ourselves with tinned provisions. So we spent the 6th quietly at La Rōsa, watching the numerous travellers who passed through in the diligences, in private carriages, or on foot.

On the 7th, we went up the highest and central summit of the *Corno di Campo* (3,305 m. = 10,844 ft.), by way of the Carten ridge (crossed at the point 2,685 m.), and the Val Mera Pass (5½ hrs. up, 3 hrs. back). Mists seized us when high up, so we saw nothing from the top. The ascent is of the easiest description, but there is a tiresome descent (an ascent on the return to La Rōsa) from the Carten ridge to the foot of the last slope leading up to the Val Mera Pass; and we regretted that we had not brought our knapsacks with us so as to descend direct from the pass to Livigno. Next day (Aug. 8), after dinner we walked over the *Forcola* (now traversed by a fair char road) to Livigno (4 hrs. 35 min.). It is a dull pass, but the easiest means of reaching Livigno from any side. One incident *en route* disturbed the quiet tenour of our way. Some Italian shepherd lads came to beg for a few centimes, but after some jokes they found out that we were hard-hearted; so one of them drew his knife upon us, and the band had to be dispersed by means of brandished ice-axes!

Livigno seemed quite home-like, and grass was pleasant after our wanderings among stones. One writer has contemptuously spoken of Livigno as a 'remote tub,' while another calls it a 'fat upland valley.' But I must say that the descriptions I had read gave me very little idea of what the valley is really like. At its upper end it is an ordinary Alpine

glen, while its lower portion is formed by the splendid gorges of the Spöl, of which I have spoken above. It is the central bit of the Livigno valley which is most characteristic and quaint. I should be almost tempted to describe it as an improved form of the Rhone valley between Martigny and Brieg. The swamps are wanting indeed, and the pale-faced inhabitants also. But there are uniform grassy hills on either side, that enclose wonderful meadows through which the Spöl glides silently, while on its left bank the dwelling houses and the three churches stand on either side of the char road, almost like a street. A few hay barns are seen on the grassy slopes above, while to the S. the view is closed by the mass of the Monte Vago (the only snow visible from the valley), which seems to summon visitors to its summit (I am not aware whether any one has yet answered this mute appeal), and on the N. by the Munt la Schera and a bit of the Monte del Ferro. None of the higher peaks of the district are seen from the valley itself. In summer most of the inhabitants are away hay-making in the Val Federia round the corner, and the traveller can thus re-echo the words of Sprecher, writing early in the seventeenth century, who calls Livigno an 'amoena solitudo.' There were no fewer than 837 inhabitants in 1889, and their chief means of communication with the outer world is over the Dheira and Foscagno Passes (over which the postman comes daily) to Bormio; but provisions come largely over the Forcola from the Bernina hospice or from Zernetz in the Lower Engadine. The remoteness of the valley from Bormio, and the tangled nature of the ranges which enclose it, are no doubt the reason why it is allowed to pay a fixed money contribution to the Italian Government, and in return to enjoy freedom from customs duties and their natural consequences. For it must never be forgotten that the valley is at a great elevation for one that is permanently inhabited. The inn stands about the middle of the more level portion, and is 1,819 m. (5,968 ft.) high, while, as I pointed out above, the grassy spur over which runs the track of the Passo Dheira leads to Trepalle, the highest village in Italy. Lying between the great valleys of the Inn (of which the Spöl is a tributary) and of the Adda, it is hard to say with which Livigno should most naturally be grouped. Historically it (like Fraële) has always formed part of the County of Bormio. Hence in the Middle Ages it was tossed to and fro between the Bishop of Como, the Bishop of Coire, and the Duke of Milan; but in 1486 it passed into the possession of the Three Rätian Leagues, which only lost it in 1797.

Then it became part of the Cisalpine Republic, and in 1805 of the Kingdom of Italy. In 1814-15 the Rætian Leagues in vain pressed for its restoration into their hands, but it was given to Austria, and naturally in 1859 became part of united Italy. The chief event in the history of the valley is the great fight which there took place in June, 1635, when the French troops under Rohan drove out the Imperialist troops—an incident in one of the oddest episodes of the Thirty Years' War.* Nowadays its peace is undisturbed save by the travellers who find their way thither. These are more numerous than might be imagined, for I reckoned that annually 150 to 200 enter their names in the 'Travellers' Book' at Signor Silvestri's inn, though not very many of these are English.

I had made a sort of half arrangement with some Swiss friends to meet them in Livigno about August 9 or 10. So on the 9th we took a holiday, and on the 10th, as in duty bound, visited the *Casana Pass* (2,692 m.=8,832 ft.) (over which troops passed in 1499, 1620-22, and above all in 1635), and climbed the *Piz Casana* (3,072 m.=10,079 ft.), to its N. The view was, of course, extensive; but I seem to recollect most vividly countless stones, a deceptive arête between the pass and the peak (it is best to descend on the Swiss side and reascend), and a horrible descent down the Saliente glen. Going very leisurely we took 3 hrs. from Livigno to the pass, 2½ hrs. more (owing to our bad route) thence to the peak, and 2 hrs. 20 min. back to Livigno. We waited another day for my friends (who, as we learned later, had given up their idea of returning to Livigno, having been fascinated by the Bernina group), but at length, on August 12, took farewell of Livigno, which had quite grown upon me. Our destination was San Giacomo di Fraële, and that was

* The late sixteenth-century description of Livigno in Ulrich Campell's *Rætiae Alpestris Topographica Descriptio* (Basel edition of 1884), pp. 135, 146-7, is curious; see, too, Sprecher's *Pallas Rætica* (originally published in 1617), pp. 395-6 of the 1633 Elzevir edition. The best and fullest modern notices are to be found in Mr. Freshfield's *Italian Alps*, pp. 107, 115; Pfarrer Leonhardi's *Das Poschiavinothal* (1859), pp. 24-6, and *Das Veltlin*, (1860), pp. 70-3; and in the *Guida della Valtellina*, published by the Sondrio Section of the Italian A. C. (second edition, Sondrio, 1884), pp. 339-343. The mediæval history of the County of Bormio is given in detail in P. C. Planta's most useful and painstaking work, *Die cürratischen Herrschaften in der Feudalzeit* (Bern, 1881), pp. 78 sqq.

most easily reached by way of the *Alpisella Pass* (2,285 m. = 7,497 ft.). But despite Mr. Leaf's express warning* we mistook the way just as did his party. It may therefore help future travellers to know that when they have reached, by a fair path, the junction of the Torto (or Trepalle) and Alpisella glens, and find themselves on a grassy shoulder just above the united streams, they should (despite all appearances) bear *due N.* by a faint track, which leads straight up to the foot of the cliffs of the Monte del Ferro, and then turns E. over the pastures high above the stream. The result was that we took 3 hrs. from Livigno to the Alpisella chalets (2 would probably be more than ample), whence 1½ hr. more brought us past the lakes which are the sources of the Adda to the Fraële hollow. Here we put up at Pietro Trabucchi's little inn (a Cantoniera), close to the chapel of San Giacomo; the entertainment was homely, but fair, the wine good, and also the beds, of which there are now eight in four rooms, while the prices were low. A traveller who is not too exacting might well spend several days here, save in the autumn, when the house is filled with hunters.

The chapel is said to be mentioned as early as 1287, while there are vague tales of a great slaughter of Arian heretics here in the fourth century, relics of which have been found in the shape of swords and gigantic bones. In the seventeenth century Fraële was celebrated for its iron mines (no doubt this is the origin of the name of the Monte del Ferro, which dominates the hollow), while in October, 1635 Rohan followed up his success at Livigno by a second and crushing defeat here of the Imperialist troops, the story of which can only be fully appreciated by one who has himself seen this most astonishing and interesting spot.†

My attention had been drawn to Fraële by Mr. Leaf's glowing description, and I can warmly endorse his recommendation to penetrate (it is not difficult to do so) to this quaint and curious place. In itself it is but a picturesque pasture basin or hollow, shut in by rugged dolomitic peaks. But it is shut in very completely and securely. One would

* *A. J.*, xvii. p. 228.

† Descriptions of Fraële may be found in Campell (*ut supra*), p. 419; Sprecher's *Pallas Rhetica* (1633 Elzevir edition), pp. 394-5; Leonhardi's later book, pp. 68-9; Theobald and Weilenmann's *Die Bäder von Bormio*, pp. 33-6 (translated in the *Bollettino del C.A.I.* No. 18, pp. 309-10); the *Bollettino del C.A.I.* 1877, pp. 348-9; the *Guida della Valtellina*, pp. 329-34; and Mr. Leaf's article in *A. J.*, xvii. pp. 228-30.

naturally expect to follow the course of the Adda direct to Bormio, but the river flows through a gorge said to be impassable, so that the mule track from Bormio to San Giacomo (4 hrs.) has to ascend a bit of the Val Viola Bormina, and then mount by a series of steps cut in the rock ('Scale di Fraële') to the chapel of Sant' Antonio on a low pass, and so gain this secluded basin. Leaving on one side the Trela Pass, also leading from the Val Viola, and some high smugglers' passes giving access to the Münster Alpen (of which more anon), we have the easy Alpisella Pass by which we had come from Livigno. But *the* pass of Fraële (called, indeed, *Passo di Fraële* by the $\frac{1}{25000}$ Italian map, which attributes to it a height of 1,950 m. = 6,398 ft.) lies 10 ft. only above the chapel, and its summit level is a sort of rolling plain, covered with stones and low brushwood. Here, too, the singular topographical character of the region is fully maintained. A short distance beyond the pass there opens on the W. the Val Bruna, watered by a stream flowing from the Monte del Ferro, which receives a tributary from the Val Mora on the N.E. The united torrent takes the name of Gallo, and joins the Spöl in the great gorges, as I pointed out when describing our walk from the Ofen inn to Livigno. But, as in the case of the Adda, the lower portion of the Gallo glen is also impassable, so that the track to the Ofen inn mounts high above the torrent, and passes over the pastures of Schera at the W. foot of the Munt la Schera, mentioned in the earlier part of this paper. Thus *the* Fraële Pass (sometimes wrongly called *Passo di Val Mora*) presents the very strange peculiarity that the ordinary way on either side does not follow the streams flowing from either side of the watershed, but is forced to cross a side shoulder to an entirely different river-bed. I gained some idea of all these topographical curiosities whilst wandering about in the afternoon in the face of a high wind. They struck and interested me very much, so that I quite changed my plans for reaching the Münsterthal. We had had some thought of attacking the Monte del Ferro, but the sight of its stones was too much for us; then we thought of crossing to the Münster Alpen by a high smugglers' pass (3,028 m.) N.W. of Monte Cornacchia, and climbing that peak, though I was aware that it had been climbed as far back as 1883 by Signor Guarducci (who the same year climbed the Cima di Plator), and by at least one other Italian party since. But my afternoon's stroll raised so many interesting topographical questions in my mind that I decided on taking a route which, as it turned out, offered

nothing but a purely historical interest. This was by the Val Mora, the Münster Alpen, and the Dössradond Pass.

Our host could give us but the vaguest ideas of the time required for our proposed round, so we started off at 8.15 A.M. on the 13th, in order to be able to take it easily. In a few seconds we had gained the summit of the Fraële Pass, unmarked by even a pole, and then followed a faint track till, in 25 min., we reached an Italian military sign post, at the point where the paths to the Ofen Pass and the Dössradond Pass divide. Here we turned to the right, and soon entered the desolate Val Mora. Presently the path led over a bluff above the left bank of the stream, and this seems to be the frontier line, though no pole, no cairn, no douanier, nothing greeted us on our return to Switzerland. The track then descended to the left bank of the torrent, which it henceforth followed. From time to time there were signs of an old paved road, now ruined and covered by loose stones. Gradually it dawned upon me that here was the solution of a puzzle that had long troubled me. Campell, writing in the second half of the sixteenth century, mentions several times * an old pass from the route of the 'Juga Rætica' (i.e., the Ofen Pass) by Fraële to Bormio. This he names 'Jugum Planum,' and tells us that it passes over the 'mountain of Pes Fallaria' (i.e., Buffalora). Now, between our Val Mora and the Ofen road the Siegfried map marks a pass called 'Giufplan,' which leads over to the Buffalora Alp, and was traversed by Mr. Leaf's party.† Its proper name (at any rate, on one side) is the Buffalora Pass, and I had long been perplexed when trying to trace out the exact line followed. (In some books the name Buffalora Pass is applied to the Ofen Pass.) But this paved track cleared up all my difficulties. I now saw that we were on the old path which led over this mysterious pass. Starting from the Ofen route (near the present 'Wegerhaus'), the way lay over the Giufplan to the Münster Alpen, in the Val Mora, then descended that valley, bore S.E. over the Fraële Pass to San Giacomo, and thence attained Bormio by the Scale di Fraële. The route thus traversed three ridges, and described many twists and turns. But in old days this pass was of great commercial and practical importance, for it connected the Lower Engadine with Bormio and the Valtellina, just

* Pp. 147, 241, 266, 419. See, too, Sererhard's (1742) *Einfalte Delineation aller Gemeinden gemeiner Dreien Bünde*, part I. pp. 74, 108 of the 1872 edition.

† A. J. xvii. p. 230.

as the Umbrail Pass joined together the Münsterthal and the Valtellina. So this small discovery of mine was a first reward for my topographical curiosity.

The Val Mora is very wild and stony, and the path seemed, as may well be the case, to be completely abandoned. The bridge marked on the Siegfried map was represented by two ancient piles only, so we had to wade across the stream. On the other side the walking was better, and after passing through some brushwood we gained (2 hrs. 5 min., including the delay in wading across the stream, from the military signpost) a point directly under the huts of the Mora Alp, past which the path from the Buffalora Pass winds down to the level of the glen. Our way now turned to the S.E., and lay over the pastures of the Münster Alpen (so called as they belong to the great nunnery whence the Münsterthal takes its name). The ascent over stone-strewn slopes was very gradual, the track soon becoming a rough char road. On the S. the dolomitic peaks which divided us from Fraële rose up boldly, displaying here and there some snow and ice. But otherwise the glen is dull. As we proceeded the pastures became more and more scanty, but it took us far longer than we had fancied to reach, over a swampy down, the watershed of the *Dössradond Pass*, not far from the hut marked 2240 m., (7,349 ft.) on the Siegfried map (1 hr. 10 min. from under the Mora Alp chalets, or 3 hrs. 40 min. from San Giacomo). Hence the way down into the Münsterthal was obvious, and I now understood far better than before how and why the Imperialist troops in 1635 used this route from the Vintschgau to Fraële, hoping to block Rohan in Fraële, and again on their hasty retreat after the great defeat inflicted on them in Fraële by Rohan, who burnt all the houses in that glen so as to do away with the possibility of another such attempt to outflank his forces. The first bit of the way down, along the left bank of the torrent, was steep and very stony, but after crossing to the Vau hut matters became better and the road lay mainly through forest. Soon Santa Maria in the Münsterthal appeared, and was reached in $1\frac{1}{2}$ hr. from the pass, or 5 hrs. 10 min. from San Giacomo. Here were inns, the Ofen high road, a Federal diligence, &c., but we were made to feel that we had come out of the wilds when we found that no one in the inn had even heard of Fraële, whence we had started but a few hours previously.

We spent the next day (August 14) in an excursion through the Val Muranza to the *Umbrail Pass*, and up the *Piz Umbrail* (3,084 m. = 9,955 ft.). The sole interest of the pass

lay in the fact that till the Stelvio road was built, about seventy-five years ago, it was the usual means of communication between the Vintschgau and the Valtellina, and so is often called the Wormserjoch or Bormio Pass; the Swiss Government are about to construct a carriage road across it, which will be the highest in Switzerland, as the pass is 2,512 m. (8,242 ft.) high, but there seem to be some absurd difficulties made by the Austrian Government about allowing a foreign state to build a road over the grassy slopes which lead down to the 4th Cantoniera on the Stelvio road, but eighty-nine feet below the Umbrail Pass. There is a made path up the final rocks of the Piz Umbrail, which is a very common excursion from the 4th Cantoniera, and is much better taken thence than from Santa Maria (Münsterthal). Unluckily the fine view of the Ortler was overclouded at the time of our visit.

Letter-writing and rain kept us two days at Santa Maria, and we were not sorry to get off on the morning of August 17. We followed the Ofen road towards the pass for 50 min., till a sign-post warned us to turn off to the 'Scarl Pass.' We then mounted in the heat through Lussai to the magnificent pasture plateau where is the village of Lü (55 min.) which almost shouts for a great hôtel, so well is it suited to become an 'air cure.' Hence the path (we took the uppermost) brought us through a forest and round a mountain shoulder to the Champatsch pastures, up which we wandered, at the last by steep zig-zags, to the faintly marked watershed of the pass (2,251 m.=7,386 ft., 1¼ hr. from Lü or 3 hrs. from Santa Maria) which is sometimes called Costainas Pass from the pastures on the other side. We were more or less surrounded by unknown and not very interesting peaks, but there was no hurry, so we spent several hours lying on the grass. A very fine succession of Alpine pastures dotted with many chalets is traversed on the Scarl side, and a pleasant saunter brought us in 1 hr. 25 min. to the junction of our path with that coming over the Cruschetta Pass from Taufers. The glen now narrowed and became much wilder, but it was not till we were close to the village that the few houses of Scarl came into sight, 35 min. having been taken from the junction, or just 5 hrs. from Santa Maria. I have visited many lonely hamlets in the Alps, but I cannot recollect one which seemed to me more lonely and desolate and stony than Scarl. La Béarde itself is green and fertile by comparison with this lost hamlet sunk in the stoniest of hollows, and dominated on all sides by bare and savage peaks. Its only

raison d'être was that hither the ore from the neighbouring silver and lead mines (of which we hear as early as 1317) was brought down.* Nowadays it is one of the ordinary excursions from Schuls.

We had intended to stay several days at Scarl in order to explore the adjacent peaks, Piz Lischanna, Piz Pisoc, and Piz Sesvenna. But the inn (Edelweiss—a new hôtel was being built at the Schuls end of the village) was very rough (though the prices were low), while the provisions were very nigh exhausted, partly through the ravages of a Swiss party which had recently managed to spend five days there. So the next morning (August 18), we fled through the very striking gorge of the Clemgia down to the fleshpots of Schuls, and regained the Inn valley, which we had left on July 24.

And so ended our journey to the Cima di Piazzi and back. It had led us through much interesting and quaint and curious country. Eita, Livigno, and Fraële will long remain in my memory, for each has a charm of its own, though each is very different from the others. But all three are spots which I should like to see again, and they have the additional attraction of being off the beaten track. For tourists have scarcely as yet discovered the region I have been describing. Even at Livigno we never saw more than eight or ten travellers at one time (save the Celerina boys' school one night), at Eita there was but Signor Sinigaglia's party and my own, while two Germans at Santa Maria seemed quite a crowd after and before the complete solitude of San Giacomo di Fraële and Scarl. It will be a further attraction to energetic climbers to learn that many peaks and ridges in the district are practically unknown, while several others are known to but a most select minority of wanderers. Perhaps this paper may do something to attract hither a few of those who have found out by personal experience how many nooks and corners of the Alps, and indeed of Switzerland itself, remain to be 'discovered.' The more I travel, and the more I read, the more am I amazed at the amount left in the Alps for our successors to explore and to enjoy. And yet one had imagined that the past and present generations of Alpine climbers and wanderers had not been shamefully idle!

* On Scarl see Campell, pp. 4, 201-2; Sprecher, p. 340; and Sererhard, Part i. pp. 95-6, 105.