

## ALPINE NOTES.

ALPINE DISTRESS SIGNAL.—In the *Times* of January 11, 1898, there appeared the following communication from their Zürich correspondent:—

*‘Accident Signals in Alpine Clubs.*—The Central Committee of the Swiss Alpine Club has addressed a circular to its different sections in Switzerland suggesting the need for a recognised system of alarm signals in all cases of mountain accidents. After considering the different reports handed in, the committee has decided to adopt the following code, which will no doubt be accepted by the Alpine clubs of other countries, and pass into international use. There are to be two distinct methods of giving the alarm and signalling to guides and rescue parties for relief. By daylight and in clear weather the signal will be a red flag or handkerchief, &c., waved in a half-circle upwards from the ground six times in a minute, with a minute’s interval between the call. The same signal with the same interval will be given by night with a lantern or lighted torch. In foggy weather, or in places where the above signals would be invisible, persons in distress are to raise a sharp, shrill cry, separated by the same interval of time from one another. Guides are, moreover, required to furnish themselves with a horn or alarm whistle for this purpose. The answer is to be sent back by the same methods of communication—by flag, lantern, or sound signal repeated three times in a minute, with a free interval of a minute between. These instructions are to be communicated to all foreign Alpine clubs and posted in all the mountain cabins and mountain stations in Switzerland.’

As the original proposal that a Distress Signal was desirable came from our Club, and all the details of the employment of the signal were worked out by its sub-committee, and as on reference to the ‘*Alpina Bulletin du Club Alpin-Suisse*,’ no allusion to the suggestion having emanated from the English Alpine Club could be found, the following letter was sent to the *Times* on behalf of the Club, and appeared in its issue of January 12:—

*‘Accident Signals in Alpine Clubs.*—SIR,—In the *Times* of to-day there is a report from your Zürich correspondent stating that the Swiss Alpine Club have just adopted a system of danger signals in the mountains which they think “will be accepted by the Alpine clubs of other countries and pass into international use.”

‘We should like to draw your attention to the fact that in 1894 a sub-committee of our club, after carefully working out the question and consulting with the various foreign clubs, settled upon a system of danger signalling in the Alps, exactly similar to that now put forward by the Swiss Club as their own invention; and this system has since been adopted by most of the Continental clubs.

‘The essential signal is the repetition of a sound, a wave of a flag, or a flash of a lantern at regular intervals, continued for one minute

at the rate of six signals per minute, and repeated in alternate minutes: the signal to be answered by a similar series of signals in alternate minutes, made, however, at the rate of three per minute.

'Our reason for calling your readers' attention to this matter is that we feel that the knowledge of this simple method of signals should be as wide as possible to make it of real use, and that tourists, perhaps oftener than mountaineers, may find themselves in difficulties within sight of help.

'We are, Sir, yours faithfully,

'CHARLES PILKINGTON, President of the Alpine Club.

'W. A. WILLS, Honorary Secretary.

'Alpine Club, 23 Savile Row, W., January 11.'

[The question of priority of suggestion, however, is of comparatively small importance. No doubt, the non-acknowledgment of the fact that the initiative was due to the Alpine Club is a pure oversight, resulting probably from change of executive in the S.A.C. The chief point is that the S.A.C. has definitely (if somewhat tardily) taken the matter in hand, and seems prepared to introduce the system brought under their notice in 1894 by our Committee. It is satisfactory to recognise that the form of signal originally suggested is universally agreed to. It remains only for the S.A.C. to make the method widely known in the country where it is most likely to be of use, and to ensure that all guides and porters, as well as hotel keepers, shall understand the system. A copy of the instructions should be furnished to every guide and porter to be pasted in their books. As all other Alpine Clubs have already signified their approval, there need now be no question of the system coming into international use, and by next summer the general adoption of the Distress Signal should be a *fait accompli*.—ED.]

DR. EDMUND VON MOJSISOVICS.—We are very glad to say that our report of the death of Dr. Edmund von Mojsisovics in the November number of the 'Alpine Journal' was founded on an error of the Viennese correspondent of the 'Geographical Journal,' and that our distinguished honorary member is in the enjoyment of good health, and follows with great interest the modern developments of mountaineering.

EIGER JOCH WITHOUT GUIDES.—On August 2, 1897, the Rev. Walter Weston and Mr. H. Somerset Bullock, with a porter from the Wengern Alp, left the hotel on the Kleine Scheideck at 2.45 A.M. Reaching the base of the Klein Eiger by the usual route, the party rapidly threaded the lower séracs of the ice-fall of the Eiger Glacier, always keeping well to the left bank until a steep snow slope gave access to the rocks. These were reached at 4.45, and climbed diagonally for a height of 500 ft., as far as a well-marked tongue of snow connecting the glacier with a prominent boss of rock on a level with the top of the ice-fall. Taking to the glacier at this point, at 6 o'clock, a straight course was steered for

the bergschrund at a spot immediately below the highest rocks of the arête between the Eiger and the Mönch. After breakfasting, and photographing, the ascent of the steep slopes began at 8.15 but as these soon turned out to be hard ice, steps had to be cut for nearly 5 hrs. without intermission. The rocks were reached at 1.30, and after a short halt for lunch a climb of 1½ hr. by loose disintegrated rocks and hard ice led to the crest of the ridge. Here a thunderstorm broke, and the various members of the party experienced electrical shocks suggestive of a powerful galvanic battery. The Joch was passed at 4.30 p.m., and after traversing the snow slopes at the base of the Mönch for a short distance a descent was effected directly by the ice fall at the head of the Grindelwald Fiescher Glacier without touching the Mönch Joch or the Bergli hut. Much time was lost owing to a snowstorm and the soft state of the deep snow, as well as to the senseless behaviour of the porter, whom the thunderstorm appeared to have demoralised. The descent of the Kalli in the darkness occupied some time, but the Bäregg chalet was reached eventually at 1 a.m.

PRESENTS TO THE CLUB.—The following presents have been recently given to the Club:—Mr. D. W. Freshfield: a Photogravure of Ushba by Signor Vittorio Sella. Mr. Sydney Spencer: an auto-type enlargement of a photograph taken by him, Mont Blanc from the Summit of the Aiguille Verte. Count Francesco Lurani: a Photographic Cloud Study.

CAVE EXPLORATION.—Attached to the article on Mountaineering, by Sir W. Martin Conway (noticed elsewhere), will be found a summary of what has been done, up to the present time, in cave exploration. Though the summary is of necessity brief, it contains an account of the tackle required, the signals generally employed, and the method usually followed. A sectional diagram of a 'pohole' is given on page 50, to illustrate the method of descent, &c. The authors of the article, Messrs. J. A. Green, E. Calvert, F. Ellet, and T. Gray, are all members of the Yorkshire Ramblers Club, which has already acquired a reputation for enterprise, not only in cave exploration, but in hill climbing generally. An article, entitled 'The Descent of Gaping Ghyll (Yorkshire): a Story of Mountaineering Reversed,' by M. E. A. Martel, the well-known enthusiastic exponent of the sport, will be found in 'Alpine Journal,' vol. xviii. pp. 120-5.

MONT BLANC: DÔME ROUTE.—It may be useful to warn climbers against an obvious and rather inviting-looking variation of this route. On August 7 my wife and I, with Matthias Zurbriggen, Querinus Schwartz, and a porter, left the Dôme hut at 4 a.m., intending to ascend Mont Blanc by the W. branch of the Dôme Glacier. On getting, however, to the foot of the ridge of rocks that divides the upper reach of the glacier into two branches we changed our plans and took to the rocks. These, if sound, would be easy enough, and would offer a good line of ascent; but they were terribly rotten, and in order to avoid danger we had to climb in and out and up and down in a most heart-breaking way. We were

forced to keep high above the glacier, and saw no means of escape to either branch of it, and from the foot of the rocks it took us 8 hrs. (with only two very short halts) to reach the Dôme-Bionnassay ridge. The Vallot hut was reached at 3 P.M., but the weather had become so bad that it was out of the question to go higher. Misled by the luxurious description in the 'Climbers' Guide,' we hoped to spend the night in the hut, and go on to the top next day; but the hut was floored and festooned with ice, and contained neither fuel nor provisions; and, as our own stores were almost exhausted, we were compelled to go straight down to Chamonix. Our route can only be recommended to those who enjoy unsound rocks, and are not particularly keen about getting to the top. Although a smaller and stronger party could, no doubt, very much shorten our time, I think that our ridge would always take longer than either branch of the glacier; and it would certainly be a very evil place in which to be surprised by bad weather.

A. F. DE FONBLANQUE.

*WINTER ASCENTS.—From Grindelwald to Rosenloui by the Wetterhorn Sattel.*—On January 8 Mr. Owen G. Jones, with Ulrich Almer and Joseph Pollinger, made an attempt on the Wetterhorn from the Gleckstein hut. Starting at 2.25 they reached the sattel by 7 o'clock, but bad weather and slight indisposition of one of the guides warned them against further advance. Heavy snow began to fall, and it was deemed safer to cross the mountain than to return by the line of ascent. The Dossenhutte was reached at 12.15, the rocks below it were not passed till 3 P.M., and the party reached the hotel at Rosenloui at 5.15 P.M. Conditions throughout were most unfavourable.

*Finsteraarjoch and the Strahlegg.*—On January 13, Messrs. Owen G. Jones and H. Foster, with Ulrich Almer and Alois Biner, left the Schwarzeggg hut at 2.25 A.M., and had an easy moonlight walk of 5 hrs. to the Finsteraarjoch. They descended the Finsteraargletscher, and crossed to the Strahlegg Firn by the lowest rocks on the left. The Strahlegg was reached at 2 P.M. by the ice gully and bad rocks to the left of the ordinary route. The journey back to the hut took 2½ hrs. of easy going.

*Engadine.—Piz Sella, 11,770 ft.*—On January 13 Mrs. Main and Messrs. Young and Cooke, with Schocher and Schnitzler, of Pontresina, made the first recorded (?) winter ascent of this peak. Some of the party went up to the Mortel hut on Canadian snow-shoes, which they found of great use; the guides were much impressed by the assistance they gave. Leaving Mortel at 4.90 A.M., they reached the summit at 9.30. The snow was in bad order, the wind high and cold, and the weather cloudless. Pontresina was regained at 5 P.M.

*Piz Palü.*—On January 19 Mrs. Main, Mr. Cooke, and the guides Schocher and Schnitzler went up this peak from the Boval hut. The heat on the arête was very great.

*Piz Zupo.*—On January 20 the same party ascended this mountain from Boval.

*Passage of the Wetterhorn.*—On Thursday, January 27, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Gardiner, with guides Ulrich Rudolf, Hans and Peter Almer, and Ulrich Almer the younger as porter, slept at Gleckstein, and next day (Friday, January 28) arrived at the top of the Wetterhorn at 3.20 P.M. The Dossenhutte was reached at 9 P.M., and on the 29th the party descended to Imhof by the Urbach Thal. The weather throughout the expedition was superb. This is believed to be the second winter ascent of the Wetterhorn by a lady, the previous one having been made by Miss Brevoort in 1874.

THE ROMANCE OF THE CAUCASUS.—Mr. Blackmore's last story, 'Darial, a Romance of Surrey,' ought to have been called a romance of the Caucasus, for his scene is laid mostly in that country; Suans and Ossetes move about in his pages; there are mountain princesses, native villains, and gallant young Englishmen, and, of course, adventures enough to satisfy the Christmas appetites of juvenile readers. The local colour is not very successfully laid on, and the incidents narrated are mostly impossible, having regard to the recent date assigned them.

As announcements are still occasionally to be read in newspapers about 'Brigandage in the Caucasus,' it may be well to mention that two of our members made extensive tours in the mountains last summer without meeting with any hindrance; in one case a lady was of the party.

FROM RIDDES TO FIONNAY. *July 19, 1897.*—I arrived at Riddes by morning train from Sion with Pierre Maitre and Pierre Georges, of Evolena, as guide and porter. We ascended to Iserable in leisurely fashion, so as to lunch there. As we reposed on a fine brow commanding both main and side valleys, we watched a man bringing down charcoal in a hand car with shafts, between which he sat trailing his feet on the ground by way of a drag down the rough incline, a little girl meantime following to hold on the bags. Iserable has a deceptively flourishing aspect, but on nearer acquaintance proves a poor place, the wooden houses having been replaced by stone in consequence of a recent conflagration. Failing to meet with entertainment at the curé's, we were conducted by his house-keeper, by a sort of tunnel under the church premises, to the signless inn close by. A girl was in sole charge, who showed us into a fusty room round which were grouped all the family beds. Prompt escape was made to the benches outside the door, where we had a comfortable lunch. The girl did not know whether to charge a franc a litre for very drinkable wine, and when questioned said that no travellers ever came there, and she did not know what travellers (*voyageurs*) were. A woman came by with a baby in a cradle on her head, who stooped to drink at a fountain, holding the cradle in position with one hand as she did so.

Our aim was the Alp Sachièrè, the proper course to which, missed by ourselves, is to descend from the village to the right, cross the stream, and then ascend by a track on its left bank till the plateau of the Alp is reached, when the stream is recrossed (at Pontet on the map). The scenery of the Alp is pleasing, the chalet folk were

friendly, and I was more comfortably housed than at any huts before. A *salle à manger* was devised for me in a clean room in a separate hut where *seracs* were stored, and a bed was afterwards arranged in the same place, where I slept in comfort. The people said we were the first visitors that had ever slept there.

The weather now changed, and rain delayed our departure till a quarter to eight. Some distance above the huts is the fine *Lac des Vaux*, into whose clear depths we could see far down. It is a striking spot; above rises Mont Gélé, and passes lead in either direction to Val de Bagnes and Val Nendaz. We ascended that mountain by the arête on our left; the weather turned out better than we hoped, but the view, which from the situation must be pleasing, was far from clear. A thunderstorm overtook us in the descent, which brought us directly down to Lourtier. After some welcome refreshment at the restaurant here, we walked on to Fionnay, where there are now hotels, and the children of pensionnaires sail toy craft in a tarn formed by the water of a beautiful cascade, which drops from a lofty cliff in vapour and spray.

In taking this route, Fionnay might be directly reached by descending to the Col de la Chaux, and gaining by a short reascent to the right the western Glacier du Mont Fort. The course then mounts to the Col of that name, which lies over the ridge of the mountain nearly at its W. termination.\* For the route from Fionnay to Sion by Val Nendaz, the lower passes of Louvie or Cleuson are probably preferable. For another exploration of a route to Arolla by Val Nendaz, see 'Alpine Journal,' vol. xi. p. 298.

A. CUST.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### SILBERHORN AND TELLISPITZEN.

DEAR SIR,—Will you be so kind as to insert the following rectifications in your next number of the 'Alpine Journal'?—

1. *Jubilee flag on the top of the Silberhorn*.—Mr. F. Gardiner, in his article 'Early Summer in the Oberland,' 'Alpine Journal,' November number, page 499, states that the flag planted by him on June 21 last on the top of the Silberhorn 'apparently did not meet the approval of some Swiss climbers who made the ascent shortly afterwards, as they removed it.' A party consisting of Dr. Rob. von Wyss, Mr. A. Bernoulli, and myself (without guides) ascended four days after Mr. Gardiner the Silberhorn from the Guggihut, traversing afterwards the Jungfrau to the Concordia, and nobody else can, therefore, be meant by the reproach of uncivility thrown by Mr. Gardiner upon his successors. The matter by itself is a very trifling one, but, although Mr. Gardiner's

\* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xi. p. 116.