

ALPINE EXPLORATION IN NEW ZEALAND—PAST AND FUTURE.

By ARTHUR P. HARPER.

(Read in part before the Alpine Club, March 4, 1902.)

THE term 'Alpine exploration' has, I take it, a broad and a narrow interpretation. There is, firstly, the wider exploration of a mountain district as a whole, in which its general features are examined and recorded; and, secondly, the more minute examination of the individual features in detail. Minor exploration may go on for years in a mountain district after the main topography has been recorded and mapped.

The past work of exploration in the Alpine regions of New Zealand has been of both kinds, but chiefly of the broader description, and the future work will consist principally of recording minor information. The chief topographical features are now mapped and recorded, and this fact, of course, has been of the greatest advantage to those who have been carrying on the work of minor exploration. There is no doubt that to mountaineer in a district in which the general details are trustworthily mapped is more or less simple, in so far as there is a sufficient store of information to guide the climber in his choice of main routes. For instance, it is a much simpler matter to make a new pass when the country on both sides has been mapped than to push your way, not only over new ground, but into an unexplored district. On the one hand, you know where your route will lead you, and can therefore provide for the journey; on the other, you are in the dark as to your destination and probable difficulties. The result of the former is probably the recording of minor details, while the latter leads to the discovery of hitherto unknown and important topographical features.

Since Christmas 1894 the work in the chief districts of the New Zealand Alps has been of the minor description, for by that date the broader exploration was completed, and information could easily be obtained of the details of any proposed expedition, whether of peak or pass climbing. Of this class of exploration very little has really been accomplished, when the vast areas are taken into consideration. It is true that good and useful work of this sort has been carried out, and, considering how few have spent their energies in this direction, there is every reason to be satisfied with the results. But the fact remains that only a few peaks



TASMAN.

COOK, LA PEROUSE,
(LOOKING NORTH FROM RYAN'S PEAK.)

(Swan Electric Engraving Co.
LYTTEL'S PEAK.

and passes have been climbed, and these only by one route, whereas there are numberless new climbs to be done.

The Tasman district (that part of the Southern Alps embracing the watershed of the Tasman Valley) is the most easily accessible, and is therefore the most frequented, and here the best work has been done in the way of peak climbing. It is unnecessary to mention names in a paper of this kind, but it may suffice to say, in numbers and difficulty of ascents, the honours are equally divided between local climbers and visitors. Yet in this district alone there are at least twenty



MT. DE LA BECHE (10,200 FT.), FROM TASMAN GLACIER.

first-class peaks awaiting some enterprising man, within easy reach of the Hermitage Hotel, or one of the Alpine huts. I do not include, in this number, numerous 'pimples and warts' which will doubtless be considered worthy of names in the future when peak-finding and climbing are reduced to the scientific accuracy of present-day Switzerland. There is work in this part alone for several seasons, and the scene of operations can be reached very easily from Christchurch by rail and coach.

The road to the Hermitage is a good one, and often bicycled over. It cannot be called difficult, though it is not as perfect

as the highways of Switzerland. Unfortunately, travellers who have gone out to the colony have deemed it necessary to find adventure where none existed, and though this may be advisable for book-making, it is hardly just, for it gives intending travellers a most erroneous impression of the initial difficulties. When I state that twelve years ago I could leave Christchurch at 11 A.M. on one day, and be in my camp at the Tasman glacier before dark on the next (after a journey of over 150 miles), it will be seen that the difficulties are more imaginary than real. A large discount can be given to the initial troubles which are recorded as inseparable from climbing in this district.

The mountains in this locality, though unclimbed, have been so often photographed and examined from neighbouring peaks and glaciers that their details are accurately known. They have been reconnoitred with an eye to future ascents, and many of us have made up our minds as to the most likely routes.

This cannot be said of any other district, and there are many groups of good peaks untouched from a mountaineering point of view which lie both N. and S. of the Tasman country. These localities have been mapped and visited by a few enthusiastic pioneers, who have only had time to record the prominent features and perhaps do one climb. The mountains and glaciers in these districts are neither so lofty nor so large as in the Tasman, but nevertheless they will be found to afford fine climbing. A party could devote two or three seasons to each without exhausting their resources. Those situated to the N. of the Tasman are easily accessible, and supplies can be drawn from the sheep stations which lie at the foot of the ranges. Unlike the Tasman, there are no huts or hotels in these northern valleys, but a country home-stead would afford a good base of operations, and a camp would have to be formed only a day's march further up.

The Tekapo, Rangitata, Rakaia, and Waimakariri Rivers all present an easy access on horseback to the foot of the fine peaks and glaciers at their respective sources, and no one need fear disappointment as to the results of a season or two at the head waters of any of these rivers. On the contrary, he could feel sure of a most enjoyable expedition, and, with luck, a 'bag' of good first ascents.

Further south, however, lies the finest group of mountains, hitherto, I believe, unvisited by an Alpine climber. I refer to the Mount Aspiring group in the country behind Lake Wanaka. This lies about 80 miles S.W. of the Tasman.



Mrs. Tabor, Cook, and the Halcott Glacier (West Coast).
(Swiss Alpine Engineering Co.)

There is much more real pioneer work to be done here. It is rough and more difficult of access. In my opinion it ranks second to the great central group around Mount Cook. The main features have been mapped and explored, and information of great use to climbers can be obtained before starting, but the adjoining country is less populated, and camps would have to be further from habitation. Knowing the New Zealand Alps as I do for nearly their whole length, I cannot think of any district in which I would sooner spend a few summers. It has the extra charm of lying well out of the beaten track. Douglas, who explored this country, says it 'beats anything he has seen.' If it surpasses the country he and I explored together, it must indeed be grand.

I have confined myself, so far, to the eastern side of the Southern Alps. The western side, though leading to many of the same peaks, is too inaccessible and too rough for holiday work. The eastern approaches are through open and inhabited country, supplies are easily obtainable, horses can in every case be taken right up to the foot of the peaks and glaciers. The western coast, however, is the exact opposite. Dense forest covers the country up to 3,500 feet, the valleys are rough and narrow, and in hardly any case can a horse be used. For all practical purposes the districts on the west coast will not be open to travellers for many years. Supplies are difficult to get, and have to be carried on one's back, porters are not easily found, and it is a journey of several days to the base of operations. The chief effort is to reach your peak, not to climb it. I was two years in this country, and, though its scenery is magnificent and varied, its difficulties and hardships will more than balance the results of future expeditions. With us it was worth the trouble, as we were exploring the whole district, but if peak climbing and minor exploration is to be the only reward, then in my opinion 'the game is not worth the candle.' The easiest way to see the wonderful scenery of the coast is to make a pass across from the east and return as soon as possible. No one ought to climb in New Zealand without making such a pass, because the combination of forest, river, glacier, and ice-clad peaks will never be forgotten by those who are fortunate enough to see them.

It must be confessed that the weather is not good on the whole in our Alps. It is changeable, and frequently wet. However, from the middle of January to the end of March one can generally rely on long spells of good climbing weather. Visitors have had a great deal to say against our

mountain climate, and not without some cause, but they have been used to Switzerland, which is perhaps better than most mountain regions. I have seen ten weeks with practically no bad weather, but that, I admit, was exceptional. 'Every rose has its thorn,' and our weather is one of our thorns, but not such a bad thorn as to prevent one plucking the rose!

So much has been written in this Journal, and in the few books published on the subject of these Alps, that a general paper of this description must necessarily be largely a repetition of facts ascertainable elsewhere. Nevertheless, at the risk of going over old ground, I will shortly state the points to be noted in connection with future work in these localities.

Owing to the low snow-line (6,500 ft.) and the very temperate climate, the general activity is most noticeable—avalanches fall almost as much in the night as in the daytime, the rocks are not as a rule good, the glaciers are often very broken, the upper portions particularly so, and ice-falls have to be treated with greater respect than they are in Switzerland. Porters are expensive, and not always easy to find, but with local assistance they can generally be got. But, even with porters, I should advise a traveller to be prepared to carry something substantial himself. In all districts (except the Tasman) low camps will be found necessary, but on the eastern side can be packed on horseback, while high camps and bivouacs must always be looked for, owing to the absence of huts at high altitudes.

Personally, I should not advise anyone to take much 'gear' from England—tents, blankets, utensils, and necessary supplies can be obtained locally, which are more suitable for the work and less expensive, because more practical, than if bought in London. But boots, ropes, ice-axes, &c., should be taken, also foods in condensed forms and self-cooking tins, as these cannot be obtained in the colony. London 'outfits' are very beautiful to look at, and cost a great deal of money, but they are too elaborate. Camping in a light form has been reduced to a science in the colonies, and it stands to reason that a colonial outfitter has more practical experience of what is required than any other. We have suffered from being unable to obtain concentrated foods, and hence our loads have often been too heavy, but the camp outfit has never erred on the heavy side. Photographic materials should be taken from London. They can be bought locally, but are more expensive and less to be relied upon.

To conclude, there is in these Alps a very large field for seekers after virgin peaks and passes, also for geologists, and



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those interested in glacier movement and the action of snow and ice. The activity is so marked that the results thereof are more apparent than in many other Alpine regions, and these, so far, have been very little observed and recorded. Finally, I should like to say that in the event of any member contemplating a visit to the colony, I shall be glad to give all the assistance in my power to further the success of his venture. This offer is made in the earnest hope that some member of the Alpine Club will find himself able to accept it.

AN ATTEMPT ON KOLAHOI.

By ERNEST F. NEVE.

THE clouds which drift over the plains of India towards Kashmir are first arrested by the Pir Panjal range. After a greater or smaller fall of snow or rain, according to the time of year, they cross the Valley of Kashmir, and are again arrested by the northern chain of mountains which forms the second line of defence against snow or rain to the dry upland deserts of Little Tibet. The result is a line of snowfields and glaciers, from which a series of summits arise, partly mantled by snow and partly consisting of steep faces of rock, the cracks and fissures of which are streaked with white. The ranges to the north of Kashmir can be conveniently grouped for descriptive purposes according to the rivers by which they are drained. The slopes of one group ultimately contribute all their surplus water to the river Jhelum, in the Valley of Kashmir. This group may therefore be considered as most intimately connected with the valley. And of its higher peaks Kolahoi is one of the best known. Viewed from the S.W. its northern peak appears almost the shape of a sugar-loaf; and sometimes, when its snow is brown and dirty, it looks like a goat's horn. Seen from the E. or W., the shape is that of a pyramid, two of the three sides of which are well seen from the N. From some points of view its resemblance to the Matterhorn is very marked.

The natural approach to Kolahoi is up the Liddar valley, a favourite resort of Kashmir tourists. Leaving the river Jhelum at Islamabad, the path skirts the north-west side of a great plateau, with raised beaches and glacier-ground sands, and following up the left bank of the Liddar passes within two miles of the famous temple of Martand, dating probably from the fifth century A.D., built of large stone blocks beautifully fitted together and on one of the most commanding