

THE DAMMASTOCK FROM THE GÖSCHENER ALP.

BY H. J. HEARD.

ACCORDING to a well-known writer all that remains for the present-day climber is to go up mountains the wrong way. A melancholy prospect, if it is the case, but happily only true if we take the right route to be the easy and obvious, and all the others the wrong. I mention this not because our route up the Dammastock was new, difficult, or dangerous, but because it was certainly not the easy side, yet interesting, and without any real risk, and therefore if wrong it has much to commend it. As most of my readers are aware, the whole of this range on the Rhône Glacier side are simply snow walks up more or less gentle slopes, but if you come round to the Göschener Alp and look at the wall of rock running without a break from the Winter Lücke to the Kehle Glacier, you will see that there is something worth climbing even in these decadent and degenerate days.

Mr. Burchell Rodway and I, accompanied by Peter Brawand of Grindelwald and a local guide, set out at 9 A.M. from the comfortable little hotel on the morning of August 9, 1901. The hotel stands at the foot of the Moostock, a kind of promontory which runs out from the main ridge, and divides the valley which leads to the Kehle Glacier from that of the Winter Glacier. As we were bound for the latter, we were spared the half hour of swamp which forms the first stage of the Kehle route. To commence a snow climb with your boots full of mud and water is not productive of that serenity and peace of mind which befits the very small hours of the morning.

Our track led along the S. side of the Moostock. Before daylight we reached the end of this grass slope at the point where it overlooks the Winter Glacier. Here the local guide carefully concealed the lanterns in the ruins of a hut. This proved to be one of those pennywise or rather pennyweight precautions which generally result in tons of extra trouble later on. It was nearly a week before we saw those lanterns again!

We then descended into the hollow between the Moostock and the Winter Glacier ice-fall. Our course was now parallel with the long ridge of splintered rock which joins the main chain to the Moostock. An hour of steep slopes covered with well-rounded stones, all loose, made us glad at last to get to the ice. After breakfast on the last oasis of rock we crossed the bergschrund, that Rubicon of mountaineering beyond

which there is nothing but victory or rout, and struck the sharp snow ridge which can be seen from the hotel and descends from below the rock rib or buttress on the flank of the Dammastock.

This brought us up so quickly and easily to the rocks that it seemed as if half the face were accomplished. It was now barely 8 A.M., and we began to calculate as to our time on the summit; but even chickens in the shell and railway time-tables are seldom more disappointing. On examining the rib we found that on the right and N. it ran into a gully,



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and on the other and left and S., into the broken face of the mountain. We chose the former, partly because the rocks seemed easier, and partly because a big stonefall on our left removed any desire to work in that direction. For the next few hundred feet our progress justified our choice, but beyond this the pitch became considerably steeper, and the rocks began to be somewhat undercut, or rather resembled petrified spices, pines, or almonds in a tipsy cake. Whether on that day, like 'the fretful porpentine,' the mountain had his back up, or whether we persisted too long on the wrong side of the rib, is a balance of probabilities of which, I am afraid, the

weight is against us. We looked, indeed, at the other side, but that appeared to have the opposite defect of being too smooth, and so we stuck to 'the steep and thorny'—I mean spiny—way to the 'topside.' Our progress became slow and ever slower. The rope was neither tractive nor attractive, but simply distractive. Nothing but the sternest sense of the obligation of the first commandment of mountaineering kept us corded together. We always came to the end of our tether just where there was no particular hand or foothold, and as



COMING THROUGH THE CORNICE.

we all said the same thing, we can only deduce the simple rule that on such rock a 100 ft. of hemp is not enough between four men.

However, we crawled along until we were forced into the gully, which here gradually flattens out into the face. From this the well-corniced crest of the ridge was now not much more than 150 ft., but I am sure we took fully an hour to conquer it. The exact time I leave to those who have more than two hands. It was also very steep, but, for the same reason (though I had a clinometer with me), I cannot reveal the

awful angle. The rocks were here plastered over with about 6 in. of wet and rotten snow, and the only way was to get your hands and toes through this freezing mixture into any crannies we could find. While Brawand prodded and poked about above to get a hold, we had to hang on as best we could, each in turn take our place under various cascades of water from the cornice above us—a refreshing process on a hot alp, but altogether out of place in a gully with fingers and toes in wet snow. But it was almost over. A short traverse across the head of the gully brought us on to the top of the rib, from which a ridge of good snow about 50 ft. led right up to the cornice. As by this time we had seen quite enough of the E. face of the Dammastock we were not sorry to find the cornice was snow instead of ice. In a few minutes more we were all crawling through a narrow gap. The last man, however, had to keep in the breach until we had taken a snapshot of his head and shoulders, and (in a lantern-slide) he is still coming through that cornice. It was now 12.15 and a glorious day, so we all agreed on two things—first, that we would take a good look round; and second, that the *facilis descensus* of the poet did not apply to the Göschener Alp, though it might to Avernus. We spent one of those never to be forgotten but all too fleeting hours on the summit, and three hours later at 4.30 P.M. we found ourselves, after an easy walk, in the Furka Hotel. Some suggestions were made about getting back over the Winter Lücke the same night, but the thought of six hours extra, half of which would have been in darkness without lanterns, reconciled us to the Spanish version of the well-known proverb, viz. Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow.

THE COLLE FIORITO.

BY THE EDITOR.

ON August 10, 1902, I left Aosta with a local guide to cross the Col du Drinc. Owing to misfortunes with my luggage, due mainly to the unveracity of an English railway company (the name whereof I suppress, lest my readers should one and all be seized with violent exasperation), I did not start till close upon midday. My companion was for taking the route by Vièyes, but I insisted upon the Col du Drinc, partly because I knew the valley track so well and partly because I wished to get the benefit of a training walk. A short conversation converted my companion to his traveller's