

THREE WEEKS IN THE ADULA DISTRICT.

BY J. H. DONCASTER.

IT is not difficult to find a reason for the great neglect of the Adula district by English climbers. After all, it is natural for a climber to wish to climb; but he can hardly do that, properly speaking, in these mountains. Nearly everything is easy; nothing is really difficult. In the eleven peaks which I ascended last year there were no passages which the merest novice would shrink from, nothing which the most timid could call dangerous.

But this by no means implies that the district is dull. Lack of difficulty is amply compensated for by a profusion of beauty, quite different in kind from the beauty of the better-known mountain districts of the Alps.

Roughly speaking, the boundaries of the Adula group are the valley of the Vorder Rhein on the north, the Luckmanier road on the west, the valley of the Ticino on the south, and the Splügen road on the east.

On July 14, 1901, I reached Olivone in the Val Blenio. It is a beautiful little village, sheltered by soft green hills on all sides. There are no snow mountains visible, but the Sosto is a peak of singular beauty in spite of its insignificant height. Everything is Italian in character, from the language of the people down to the frescoes on the walls of the hotel garden.

When, on the following evening, the guides, Maurice and Joseph Gaspoz, of Evolena, emerged from the stuffy diligence, their first remark, after the usual warm greetings of old friends had been exchanged, was the rather wistful question, 'Mais, monsieur, où sont les montagnes?' I felt that this boded ill for our tour, and it must be confessed that the guides could never be brought to treat the Adulas with respect. I promised that we would go in search of mountains on the morrow. We left Olivone accordingly at 3.35 A.M., and mounted the steep path that leads in zigzags up the side of the Carasina torrent to the Bolla Alp. Here the valley turns abruptly to the S. at right angles to its previous course, and becomes almost level. As we rose we could see glimpses of the wild, rocky chain of peaks which runs from the Piz Casinell to the Rheinwaldhorn. We reached the Cassimoi Alp at 6.30, and turning up an ancient, grass-covered moraine on the left of the torrent descending from the Fornei Glacier, we walked up to the Bocca di Fornei. On the way a large

herd of chamois appeared. The guides' excitement knew no bounds. 'Observe! they mount!' 'They traverse the moraine!' 'Ah! they disappear!' No other subject of conversation was possible for some time. Indeed, the fact that the district swarms with chamois was, I believe, a great help in reconciling the guides to its obvious defects.

From the Bocca di Fornei we had a distant view of the Valaisian Alps and the Mont Blanc group. The Güferhorn and its neighbours were capped with cloud. The deep depression of the Lentathal and the curious Zervreilahorn lay immediately at our feet.

Our object was to traverse the Cima Fornei and Piz Jut. The first party, according to the 'Climbers' Guide,' mounted the glacier on the east, and then climbed to the summit of the Cima Fornei by steep rocks. This description I do not understand. It is obviously perfectly easy to follow that route, but the rocks on the E. are nowhere steeper than a Cumberland scree, and are of much the same character. We followed the arête between the Bocca di Fornei and the summit. There was some pleasant rock climbing. In one place we gained a curious, cleanly cut tunnel by aid of a shoulder, and emerged from the other end upon the final ridge. The arête from the Cima Fornei to the Piz Jut is at first very narrow and in places difficult. We left one *gendarme* unclimbed. Presently the ridge merges in the snowy north face of the Piz Jut, whose summit we reached at 1.30. We descended to the col between the summit of the Piz Jut and the peak marked 3,108 m. on the Siegfried map by particularly nasty mud terraces and rotten rocks. From the col a fine glissade down a snow couloir brought us to the Fornei glacier, whence we followed our morning's route back to Olivone (7 P.M.).

On July 18 we left Olivone (at 2.10 A.M.) for Vrin by the Gûda Pass. At first our course lay up the wonderful new char road through the Sosto Gorge. The road has been hewn out of the precipitous cliffs of the Toira in a sort of gallery for more than a mile, and has quite superseded the old path on the opposite side of the torrent. At Ghirone we turned up the Val Luzzzone. The path, after rising for some hundreds of feet, descends among the pines to the broad, park-like valley in which Alp Sasso lies. This is a most lovely place. The rich green meadow is studded with splendid pines, grouped together with a picturesqueness which rivals that of the Yosemite Valley in California. Above the pines rises the long, dark, jagged ridge of the Vernok Hörner and

Piz Alpettas, which merges in the Piz Terri—the darkest and most jagged of all. In the pale early-morning light the whole scene was indescribably beautiful.

Information which we had received at Olivone led us to neglect the instructions given in the 'Climbers' Guide,' which directs the traveller to ascend to the Garzura Alp. We followed the torrent instead by a path on its left bank much lower down. This path is clearly shown on the Siegfried map. It saves fully an hour, as the ascent to the Garzura Alp would involve a long descent afterwards. Our path led through a splendid gorge, with tremendous precipices on either side, worn smooth by falling *débris*. Beyond this gorge the valley opens out, and the path crosses to the right bank of the stream, where the Rifugio lies in a meadow full of flowers. Thence we mounted tedious cattle pastures to the Monterascio Alp (7.35). Here the route to the Greina over the Monterascio Pass leads to the N. We walked straight up to the Gūda Pass by scree and snow slopes without finding any kind of difficulty (9.55). The pass lies between the Piz Terri and the Piz Gūda. The Piz Terri is obviously easy from this point, but it looks most uninviting. The whole mountain consists of loose slate screes set at a disagreeable angle. We decided to try the Piz Gūda by the S.E. arête. At first all was perfectly easy, and we wondered how Herr Helverson and party had found it difficult.* Presently, however, we saw the reason. The ridge is made of a curious sort of flaky rock set at a steep angle, and absolutely rotten. It grows steeper and steeper as you ascend. It is necessary to throw the body out on to the S. side, and, grasping the ridge with the hands, haul yourself up in a sitting position. This method of progression is, of course, perfectly familiar to every climber of rock ridges, and usually affords pleasant scrambling. But on this mountain it is complicated by the fact that the whole ridge is quite rotten. Great flakes of rock two or three feet square, and not more than an inch thick, come off in the hands without warning. At one place this peculiarity of the rock stopped us for some time, and when Joseph did at last succeed in getting up, it was at some little risk to himself. The rest of the ridge was easy, and we reached the summit at 11.40. We stopped for a few minutes to admire the splendid view of the Tödi group across the Vorder Rhein, and then descended to the Gūda Pass by the same route (12.20).

From the Gūda Pass the way to Vrin lies across the level

* *Climbers' Guide*, p. 72.



Photo by J. H. Doncaster.]

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PIZ GÜDA, FROM GÜDA PASS.

Güda Glacier, and down its northern tongue to the head of the Blengias Valley. Here a grand view of the Piz Aul opens out. Apparently this fine peak has never been climbed from the W., but there seems little doubt that it could be done from the point called Pleun de la Galera, on the Siegfried map, by a long ridge of probably rotten rock. The ascent by this route would involve a great deal of labour, with possibly little to repay it, but it is certainly worth trying.

We lost some time and temper in the Blengias Valley by ignoring the instructions of the 'Climbers' Guide' to keep to the left bank of the stream. A very inviting-looking bridge led to a good track on the right, but this soon vanished, and we had to wade the torrent to reach the Vanescha Alp. From here to Vrin the path descends the beautiful Lugnetzthal through splendid pine forests.

At Vrin we were the guests of Major Soler, of the Federal Army, who combines with the office of postmaster those of landlord, waiter, and president of the commune. He is the very soul of hospitality, and a mine of information about the neighbourhood. His inn is the cheapest in the district. Vrin is a very out-of-the-way place. The advent of strangers made quite a stir among the quiet population, and crowds gathered next morning to look on as we sat outside the inn and listened to Soler's discourses on the district. The guides were full of simple wonder at the strange appearance of the church door, which is crowned with human skulls in large numbers.

On July 20 we left Vrin at 3 A.M. for the Piz Aul and Vals-Platz. Descending the valley to the bridge just below Surrhin, we stumbled in the dark across the *débris* of a landslide and mounted the Val Seranastga. The path is very bad and very steep. We saw numbers of hideous, black, newt-like creatures with big flat heads, which crawled across our path. We learned afterwards that these are a warning of bad weather. Above Alp Seranastga the Piz Aul Glacier descends to a small lake, where we left the sacks. Turning off to the S.W. under the curious peaks of the Breitengrat, we mounted the glacier without difficulty direct to the summit of the Piz Aul (9.20). Unluckily there was no view; but we were able to see how hopeless are the vast precipices which fall towards Vals-Platz on the S.E. There is not a solid rock on the Piz Aul. Descending by the same route to the sacks (11.5), we crossed the Satteltö Lücke (11.55), and ran down to Vals-Platz (1.30).

There are several large hotels at Vals-Platz and a great bathing establishment. The visitors are chiefly Swiss from Zürich and St. Gall. The advent of strange guides caused

quite a commotion. The hotel people did not understand the simple requirements of guides, and both here and henceforward they had to pay very high prices for lodging.

We had hoped to go up to Zervreila, at the head of the Valsertal, next day, and to stop there for some time, but we found that the little inn is never opened until the last week in July, when the landlord has finished haymaking. This was rather a blow to our plans. We found, however, very comfortable quarters at the Kanal Alp, which is 1 hr. above Zervreila and 4 hrs. above Vals-Platz. The hay bed is clean and dry, the milk is excellent, and the people are most hospitable. We were told by our porter from Vals Platz that the quarters at the Lampertsch Alp in the Lentathal are equally good, so that travellers who find the Zervreila inn closed need not be deterred from making expeditions at the head of the Valsertal.

On July 22 we left the Kanal Alp at 4.50 A.M., and mounted grass and snow slopes to the E. Taking to the glacier lying to the E. of the Rothhorn, we walked up to the nameless pass which lies between the Rothhorn and the St. Lorenzhorn (7.30). This is a much more convenient route than the Fanella Pass for those who start for the Fanella Glacier from Kanal Alp instead of Zervreila. We crossed the broad snow basin of the Fanella Glacier to the foot of the S.W. ridge of the Kirchalhorn, which we mounted to the top (9.15). This route appears to be new. There is some pleasant scrambling on the ridge, and the guides' spirits rose perceptibly at the prospect of real climbing. We found no difficulty, but there were some interesting little traverses, and the rock was firm—an unusual feature in this district.

From the summit of the Kirchalhorn we raced down to Hinterrhein by way of the Kirchalp without incident (12 noon).

On July 23 we left the miserable inn at Hinterrhein and walked up to the Zapport Club hut at the source of the Rhine. A violent thunderstorm with torrents of rain blotted out most of the grand scenery. For more than a mile the floor of the valley is filled with vast masses of winter avalanche snow, which is broken up by large schrunds 20 ft. to 30 ft. deep. We were informed that there is always snow there in large quantities. The precipitous slopes on either hand send down innumerable streams from the glaciers above, and many fine waterfalls are to be seen. Plenty of wood can always be found at the shepherds' hut, $\frac{3}{4}$ hr. below the Club hut and 2 hrs. above Hinterrhein.

We spent four nights at the Zapport Club hut, but unfortunately we had to snatch the few summits which we succeeded in reaching during the intervals of shocking weather. On July 24 we left the hut at 9.15, and, crossing the dry Paradies Glacier, mounted over crevassed *nevé* to the Cramorino Pass (11.30), and thence to the top of the Vogelberg in half an hour. The view from this point is very fine. The Rheinwald basin is by far the grandest bit of the Adula district. It is enclosed by the Rheinwaldhorn, Güferhorn, and Rheinquellhorn masses on three sides, while the long, serrated Zapportgrat stretching away to the W. is very beautiful. Beyond this is the Pizzo Tambo group, while still further can be seen the mass of the Bernina. To the S. we had a peep under the clouds into the picturesque valley in which the Alpe di Giumello lies. Leaving the Vogelberg at 12.40, we traversed the *arête* from it to the Rheinquellhorn (1.5). The 'Climbers' Guide' describes this ridge in the opposite direction, and says that the Vogelberg is reached by a 'short, stiff climb up rocks.' We found no climb at all, but merely a gentle walk over loose stones till the easy snow ridge is reached, which joins the two summits. Leaving the Rheinquellhorn (at 2 p.m.), we descended the north ridge and returned to the hut by the Paradies. It may be remarked that the 'Climbers' Guide' states that the Paradieshörnli may be reached 'by the long snow ridge which joins it to the Rheinquellhorn.' This may be possible, but it would certainly involve some climbing of a very high order. We examined it, and decided that it was probably beyond our powers. From the N. the Paradieshörnli is obviously easy.

The night was rendered horrible by the invasion of the hut by a party of eight non-climbing human beings and one dog, who had come up to sleep at the hut. We learned that this kind of trouble is common here. Parties of people who do not climb visit the hut for the sake of the experience. As the accommodation is very limited and the number of blankets still more so, the plight of the luckless climber who has made the hut his abode for some days may be imagined.

We were kept in the hut for the whole of the following day by incessant rain. On July 26 we left at 4.30, in very doubtful weather, and walked up to the Lentalücke (6.30). Thence we ascended the Rheinwaldhorn in thick mist (8.20). It is worth noting that it is best to keep well to the right (west) on the final slope, instead of the left, where we found the gradient very steep and the snow in bad order. Returning to the Lentalücke (10.40), we ascended the perfectly easy

western ridge of the Güferhorn to the summit (12). The weather had cleared somewhat, and we decided to descend by the eastern ridge. This, too, is quite easy, though steep in places. From the pass between the Güferhorn and the Salahorn (1.25) a little glacier leads to steep grass slopes; and it is worth noting that one cannot keep too high up in traversing E. to the route from the Platten Schlucht. We got back to the Zapport hut (2.40) just in time to escape a violent thunderstorm.

There is little to relate about the next few days. An attempt to cross the east Zapport Pass to the Val Calanca, frustrated by thick fog; the sorrowful descent to Hinterrhein instead; a drive over the San Bernardino Pass to San Bernardino; two days of rain and idleness there, and one spent in scrambling on the Pizzo di Muccia and the Pizzo di Vigone in the wet; and, finally, the passage of the Bocca di Curciosa to Splügen in incessant downpour, such was the melancholy programme. As we never saw a mountain top at San Bernardino, we could hardly offer an opinion about its climbing attractions, but it is certain that the climber is not wanted there. At the magnificent Hôtel Victoria we were flatly refused coffee at 3 A.M., and had to be satisfied with milk instead. The guides were charged ordinary travellers' rates. Possibly at some of the smaller hotels the climber would be better off. The Val Curciosa, whether reached by the Bocca di Curciosa or the Passo Vignone, is certainly well worth a visit.

At Splügen we received a very different welcome both from the landlord and from the weather. On August 2 we left the Hôtel Bodenhau at 4.10, and went up to the Splügen Pass (5.55). Thence an easy walk led to the top of the Lattenhorn (8.30). From the Lattenhorn a short descent leads to the foot of the E. arête of the Pizzo Tambo, which we followed to the summit (10.20). The walk is a magnificent one, along a beautiful corniced ridge and up steep but easy rocks to the summit. Unfortunately mists again deprived us of a view, and we had to be content with the imaginative pictures conjured up by the words, 'Aussicht unbegrenzbar,' which we found on a bottled visiting card. We left the summit at 11.12 and descended by the N. arête, which is quite easy at first, but affords some pleasant scrambling below. From the Areue Pass (2.22) we followed a fine new path which leads across the Tambo Alp to Splügen (3.50).

Here our tour ended. In conclusion, I would say that the Adula district well repays a visit. There is a vast amount of

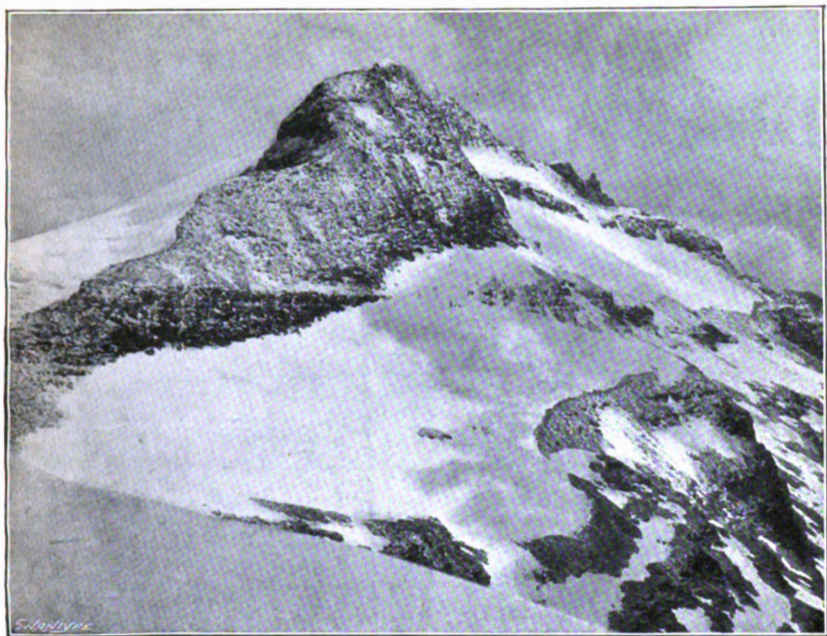


Photo by J. H. Doncaster.]

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GÜFERHORN, FROM N. ARÊTE OF THE RHEINWALDHORN.



Photo by J. H. Doncaster.]

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PIZZO TAMBO, FROM NEAR SPLÜGEN.

new work to be done. The Splügen dolomite peaks especially look most inviting. In the northern parts there is plenty of ground left for the explorer. Throughout the district the forest scenery of the valleys has an indescribable charm. But there is also a wild beauty in the lonely summits, which are seldom visited, but never visited in vain.

[NOTE.—I have occasionally called attention in the foregoing paper to slight errors in the 'Climbers' Guide,' but I should like to add that the errors are extraordinarily few. The book is really excellent, and indispensable for the climber.]

THE PIR PUNJAL RANGE AND TATTICOOTI, KASHMIR.

BY DR. ERNEST F. NEVE.

THE Pir Punjal range is the serrated edge of rocky arête-joined peaks and snow-clad slopes which form the highest line of the great mountain barrier dividing Kashmir from the plains of Northern India. Approaching it from the Valley of Kashmir, which lies to the E., we gradually rise, passing first through broken plateaux fissured and eroded by water. Up these intersecting valleys the path passes until at a height of about 6,000 ft. we begin to see occasional pines. A gradual ascent for a few more hundred feet brings us to the lower margin of the great fir-tree forest which clothes the foot of the Pir Punjal slopes with a band about sixty miles long and with an average breadth of perhaps six miles. In spite of the extent to which this forest is overrun by herdsmen, it still remains the haunt of black bear. Large streams flowing down from the snows pierce it in many places, and the easiest route to those snows usually lies along the side of one of these torrent valleys.

Some of the summits are of great beauty, such as the three Brahma peaks at the E. end of the range, whose graceful conical forms, the lower shoulders of which are mantled with perpetual snow, tower up to a height of 15,500 ft. Four thousand feet lower down, nestling at their base, lies the turquoise blue Konsa Nag, a glacier-fed lake three miles in length.

To the W. of the Brahma peaks the Sedau and Pir Punjal passes cross the range in two well-marked gaps, separated by a group of five grey rocky summits, which enclose snowfields of considerable extent. Looking along the sky line, again six miles to the W. is the highest point of the whole range—Sunset Peak, so named on account of the manner in which it is