

camp after 6 o'clock, having had 12 hours of continuous mental and physical tension. We did not sit down to rest once during the day, and there was no place after the ice slope was reached where we could have rested had we been so disposed.

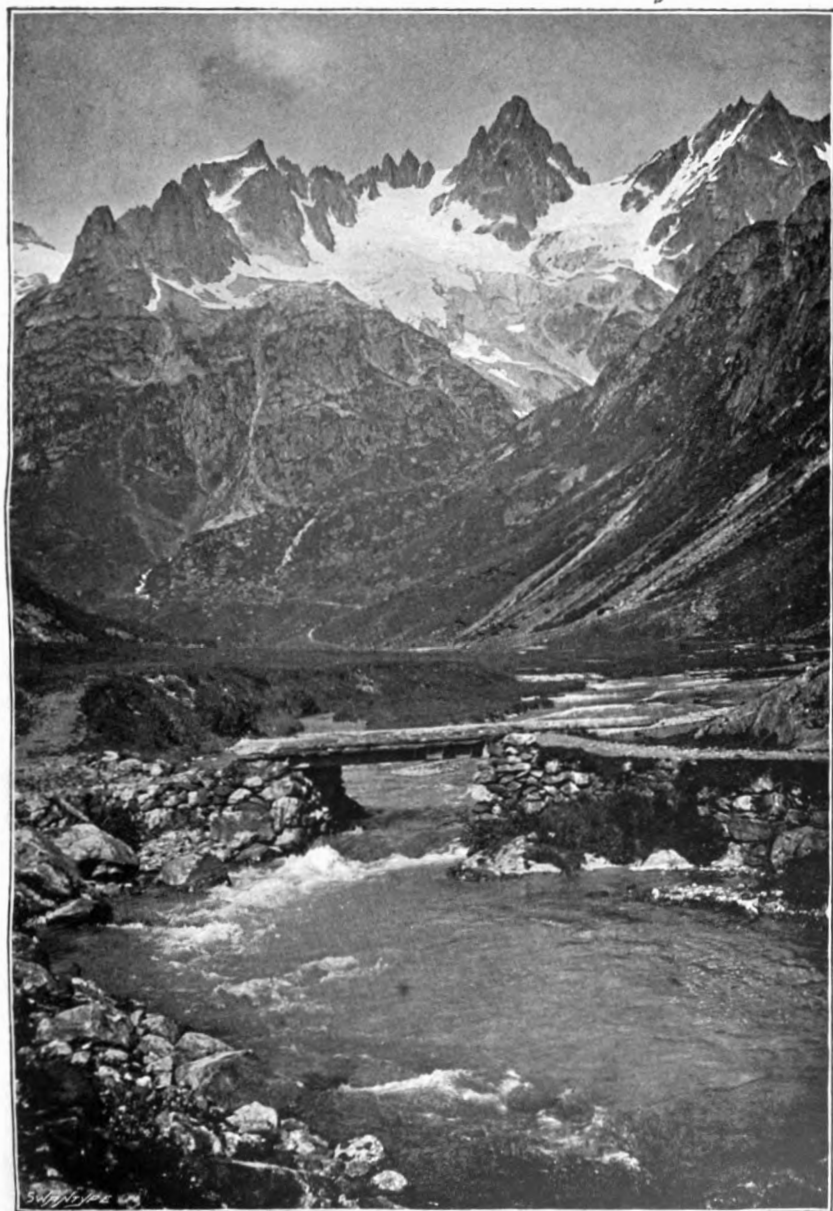
Zurbriggen called this the most difficult col he had ever made. The effect of altitude was added to the difficulties of a purely alpinistic character. Above 17,000 ft. the resistance of most persons to fatigue is distinctly lessened, and a march or climb of 6 hrs. is felt as much as one of the same character of double that length at lower altitudes.

We named the col the Bhayakara La from the Sanskrit word for 'perilous.'

### THE MEIENTHAL.

By LEGH S. POWELL.

IN the following narrative the reader will find no account of thrilling mountain exploits. He will merely have his attention drawn to an easily accessible, but comparatively neglected valley, of considerable beauty, which, though it boasts no great mountains, is notwithstanding full of interest to the lover of unfrequented districts. The probability that a carriage road will be constructed over the Susten Pass in the near future means, of course, that the innkeeper will be attracted, and will be followed by the general public in greater numbers than hitherto. Then will the present order of pristine simplicity and charm pass away. As things are now, a very small proportion of the pedestrians who cross the Susten Pass ever turn aside to ascend a peak, or cross the mountains to an adjoining valley. Until last summer there was but one place in the Meienthal where an intending visitor could stay with any degree of comfort—the inn at the village of Meien, and even here fresh meat is a luxury, only to be obtained occasionally by ordering beforehand. The postman, moreover, is seen but three times a week. But rumours of a road, and something more than rumours (for, although not yet actually sanctioned, it has been marked out with red paint, figures, and posts) have already commenced to disturb a somnolence that has evidently continued for many years. A new, clean, and passably good inn at Färnigen has this year supplemented the dirty hovel which has hitherto supplied the traveller with milk and other drinks; whilst



*Photo by A. V. V. Richards.*

*[Swan Electric Engraving Co.]*

**VIEW LOOKING UP THE MEIENTHAL.**

over the Susten, the little Stein inn has passed into different hands, and the new proprietors have already made changes in the prices, and are about to make alterations in the accommodation for visitors.

As the mountains which bound the valley are of no great altitude, the highest being the Fleckistock (3,418 m. = 11,215 ft.), and the Hinter Sustenhorn (3,320 m. = 10,893 ft.), and consequently the expeditions neither long nor fatiguing, the village of Meien, which is 1,320 m. = 4,332 ft. above the sea, forms a very fair centre. Its proximity to the woods and pastures of the picturesque lateral Kartigelthal, and its generally pleasing situation, render it, particularly on off days, a more agreeable halting-place than the dirty and odoriferous hamlet of Färnigen, three quarters of an hour higher up the valley. The latter, however, is manifestly the better situation for reaching all the mountains, except the Kuhplankstock and a few other points to the S.E. of the Fleckistock. In point of fact, the spot known as the Gorezmettlen Alp (1,565 m. = 5,137 ft.), at the mouth of the Kleinalpthal, and twenty minutes beyond Färnigen, is the place of all others in the valley for an hotel. Around this spot snowy slopes and rocky summits crown the heights which rise on every side, but eastwards, down the valley, thus making it a 'centre' of no mean interest. To the north the summits of Zwächten, the Spannörter, and the Wichelplankstock, to mention those most prominent, are easily approached; to the west, sundry excursions may be made among the Fünffingerstöcke, of which perhaps the most interesting would be a new route up the highest point of the group—the Wendenhorn, which is well shown in the annexed photograph; \* whilst, to the south, ascents may be made of the higher and more imposing summits of the Sustenhörner and the Fleckistock. Moreover, passes may be made to no less than five distinct and adjoining valleys, if we count the Wendenthal, exclusive of the main pass of the region—the Susten, leading to the Gadmenthal.

It is not my intention to describe in detail either the principal excursions that may be made from this valley, nor yet all those I have accomplished during the last two summers with Mr. Walter Larden and others. I propose, however, to make a few remarks about one or two that I have made, which seem to me to possess some degree of interest, and

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\* I am indebted to Mr. Valentine Richards for this and the other photographs which accompany this article.

which have not, it is believed, with one exception, been noticed in this Journal.

The one prominent and well-known pass for reaching the Voralpthal from the Meienthal is the Sustenloch, lying between the Hinter Sustenhorn, to the W., and the Stucklistock, to the E. Guide books are, however, silent as to the existence of any alternative way of communication between the two valleys; and, as there may not impossibly be one or more hotels at Meien in due course, it seemed of interest to visit the range to the E. of the Fleckistock, to ascertain what sort of passage might be effected at that part. The map shows a marked depression between the Fleckistock and the Winterberg, with a height of only about 2,900 m., but below it on the Voralpthal side a continuous wall of rock is indicated. A visit of inspection made the summer before last disclosed a distinctly formidable cliff which comes into view from the expansive terrace, called Aufden Flügen, at its foot, a spot reached from the hut by a well-marked track. Two assailable points are, however, noticeable—one a steep snow couloir reaching from top to bottom, the other a rock couloir at no great distance to the E. of the first named. The latter appeared the more promising, and Larden in fact ascended it without difficulty, alone, one unsettled day when I was fetching provisions from Goschenen; a change in the weather having upset our calculations as to food requirements. Owing, however, to the unsafe character of the ascent, as he found it, from falling stones, it was considered more prudent the following day to try the snow couloir, although we surmised that a good deal of step-cutting might be required. This surmise turned out only too true, the snow proving very hard. When about half way up the couloir we tried the rocks to our right, but as these gradually became more difficult, and as there was no obvious way by which we could regain the snow, we certainly did not improve matters. In addition to the natural difficulties we were greatly encumbered by unusually heavy sacks, and as a result I do not record the time it took us to reach the ridge. Unless the snow should be soft enough to permit of kicking steps, there is no question but that the rock couloir would be the easier and quicker of the two ways; but anyone following our route will do well to keep to the snow the whole way. In crossing from Meien the snow couloir is first reached, and may be easily inspected, as it is flush with the Kartigel névé; but it should be mentioned that, even at its best, this couloir is not free from the danger of falling stones.

The descent to Meien offers no difficulty; but to prevent delay from troublesome moraine at the lower end of the glacier the traveller should bear well to the left. Lower down, where there is a cirque of cliffs, we experienced considerable difficulty and delay in hitting off the right sheep track. We at first managed to get too much to the left, found ourselves stopped, and had to retrace some of our steps. The proper way starts a little to the W. of the most westerly stream, close to where the latter falls over the cliff. Assuming that no mistakes are made, the passage ought not to take more than 6 hrs. or 7 hrs. The pass was crossed on February 18, 1890, by Herren Labhardt and Helbling, who named it the Fluhlücke.\*

Guide-books are silent as to a mountain route from the Erstfelderthal to the Meienthal. Now that there is an inn at Färnigen, a traveller arriving at Altdorf, and bound, say, for Stein or the Haslithal, will find it an interesting alternative to the railway to Wassen and the road up the Meienthal to cross one of the two neighbouring and perfectly practicable passes which lie at the head of the Erstfelderthal, to the E. of the Klein Spannort. It is only in the limited portion of the range between the Klein Spannort and Zwächten, a distance of about two kilomètres, that the Erstfelderthal abuts against the Meienthal. To the E. of Zwächten the watershed range divides the Erstfelderthal from the Gornerenthal, whilst to the N. of the Klein Spannort lies the Engelbergerthal. The expedition may be made equally well in the opposite direction, and it was in this way that Larden and I took it in the summer of 1902. Starting from Meien, we made our way up the N.E. branch of the Rossfirn, by an obvious route, crossed a conspicuous rib of rock to gain a higher level of this glacier, and somewhat further on left the glacier to ascend an easy arête, ending in a shaly slope (to the S. of Zwächten) and leading to the ridge overlooking the Gornerenthal. From this point we found we could without difficulty traverse the E. face of Zwächten nearly on a level, over snow and ice, to a second ridge or shoulder, the true watershed (not clearly indicated on the Federal map), and descend to the Glattenfirn, our maximum height being somewhat over 3,000 m.=9,844 ft. Here the regular route from the Krönte Hut to the Spannörterjoch is joined. We spent the night at the Krönte Hut, and next morning made our way down the lonely but very striking valley to Erstfeld.

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\* *Alpine Journal*, vol. viii. p. 67.

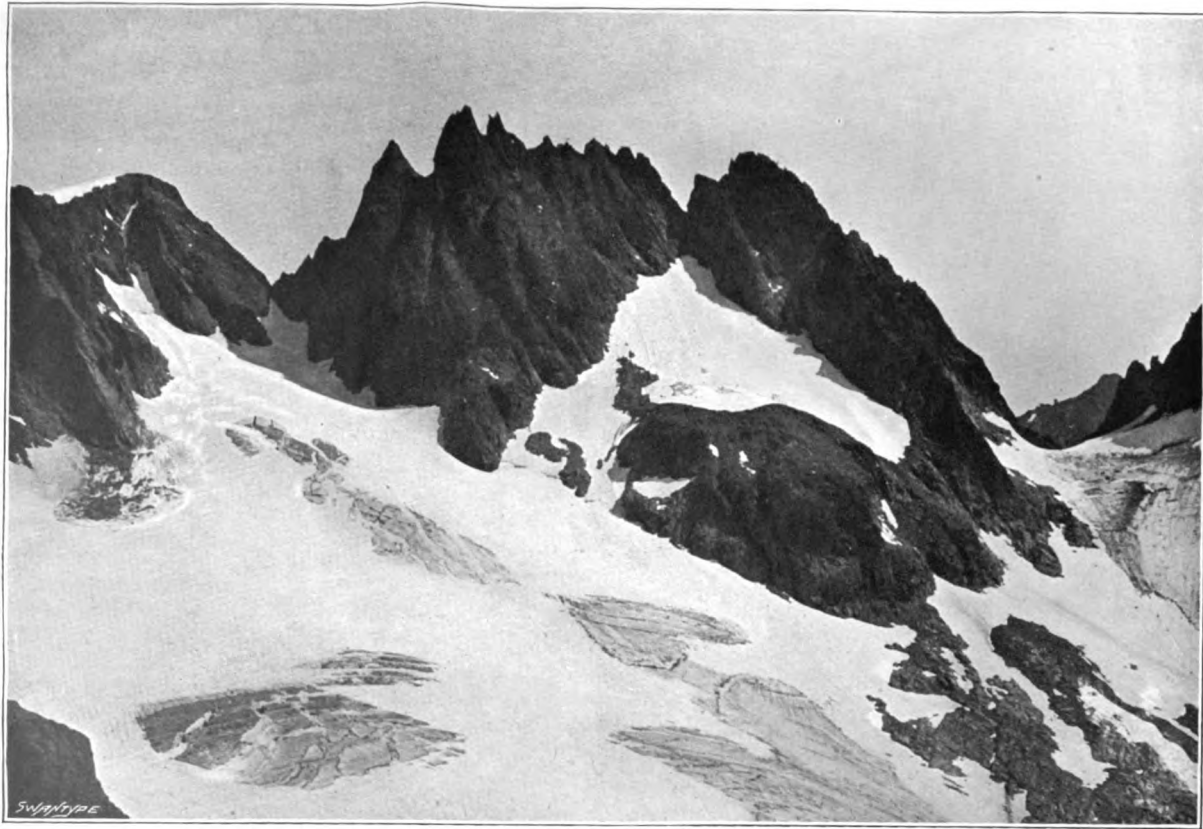
What appears to be an equally simple pass, and easier to find in cloudy weather, lies near to, and E. of, the point on the buttress of the Klein Spannort, marked 3,030 m. on the Federal map. This passage is described in the local guide-book 'Uri. Land und Leute,' page 87.

The ridge was also crossed in 1895 by Herren Brun and Schultz, who ascended the deepest couloir immediately below the summit of Zwächten, and when about 20 m. below the summit turned to the left and descended to the Glattenfirn. This way is probably less easy than either of the preceding.

A suitable name for the passage would be the Zwächten Pass, the true pass being that described in 'Uri: Land und Leute,' the others being variations.

A distinctly interesting ladies' expedition, which is equally conveniently made from either Meien or Färnigen, is a visit to the Seewenfirn and the ascent of the Bächlistock. This latter (3,012 m. = 9,883 ft.) is the highest summit of the range which separates the Meienthal from the Gornerenthal. Last summer I made its ascent with a young cousin, and we were repaid by a particularly fine and extensive view, in which the Fleckistock formed the principal feature. On the summit, which was reached from the upper end of the Seewenfirn by a short climb up the easy granite rocks which face N.W., we found a cairn, with a bottle containing a single card—that of Herr Karl Seelig—bearing the date 1895. I have since heard that a subsequent ascent of the point has been made. Lovers of Alpine flowers will find the Märzenstafel Alp, which is passed on the way from Meien to the Seewenfirn, a very attractive place. *Paradisia Liliastrum* grows in abundance, and there is a singular profusion of other flowers.

A climb of a very much more exciting character than that of the Bächlistock is that up the highest point of the Wichelplankstock (2,975 m. = 9,762 ft.). In the ascent of this peak, an offshoot from the main chain dividing the Meienthal from the Engelberg valley, Larden and I were accompanied by Valentine Richards. We started on August 31 last from the new inn at Färnigen, and followed the Susten path for half an hour as far as the bridge which crosses the Meien Reuss to the right bank. At this spot a well-defined track starts up the slope to the right (N. slope of the Meienthal), and a steady ascending traverse leads past the Oberplatti Alp, up grass, stones, and snow patches, with scarcely a single zigzag, to a fairly steep snowfield, above which rose the



*Photo by A. V. V. Richards.*

**THE WICHELPLANKSTOCK FROM THE WASENJOCH.**

*[Swan Electric Engraving Co.]*

peak. This consists of a short chain of formidable-looking pinnacles running practically from N. to S., and separated from the main watershed range by an appreciable dip. The highest point lies to the N.W., and the obvious line of ascent is up a steep narrow chimney which leads from the face common to all the pinnacles, to a gap between the highest point in question and the next to the S.W., seen in the photograph to the right, of the highest point. To reach the face from where we stood the rather steep patch of hard snow was ascended diagonally to a little break in the rocks. No difficulty was experienced in traversing the face, but the narrow and very steep, though safe, chimney gave us plenty of exercise for our arms, legs, knees, and backs. The final short climb, however, from the gap between the two pinnacles proved to be the most sensational part of the ascent. The face overlooking the Wichelplankfirn is an awe-inspiring, vertical precipice of smooth, unbroken rock, whilst the side facing W. is nearly as steep and impracticable as far as climbing is concerned. The only means of reaching the summit was to climb the very steep, well-nigh knife-edged arête formed by the meeting of the two faces. By dint of careful hoisting and clinging to the sundry succeeding cracks and knobs of rock, we managed at length to get to the top, where we were just able to sit closely huddled together, the ascent from Färnigen having taken us rather less than 5 hrs., of which one was spent in climbing the rocks. We found no cairn on the summit, and were naturally inclined to conclude that we were the first to make the ascent, and we accordingly made a small pile of stones and left a bottle, with a card recording our names and the date. I have, however, since ascertained that Joseph Kuster, the well-known Engelberg guide, made the first ascent on July 9, 1895, with a Dutch gentleman, and they 'left a little flask about 2 in. in length in a chink'—a record we failed to see. Two subsequent ascents are also known to have been made. The Wichelplankstock may be thoroughly recommended to those who enjoy an exciting scramble, and it vies in interest with anything to be obtained in the neighbouring Fünffingerstöcke group.

I have reserved to the last an expedition which seems to me the most interesting, and from a utilitarian point of view the most important, of all those I have to refer to. It is one that affords a means of reaching the Engstlen Alp from the valley of the Reuss in a single day's journey, *via* the Meienthal, the Sustli Alp, the Wasenjoch, and the Titlisjoch; and it is a route that I think should be mentioned

in guide-books.\* The Engstlen Alp can, of course, be reached from this frequented quarter by two other, and it must be admitted, easier, routes for the ordinary tourist—that by the Surenen and Joch passes, and that by the Susten and Sätteli passes. Both these ways, however, are more circuitous; they do not compare in point of time, when the mountains are in good condition, with the one about to be described, and in the case of the route by Engelberg the ascents and descents involved are greater. With regard to the time required for the passage, I may mention that Larden and I have twice made the expedition, and on each occasion we carried pretty well filled rucksacks. On the first occasion the condition of the mountains was normal, and, deducting time lost in finding a way up the first rock-wall of the Titlisjoch, we took almost exactly 9 hrs. actual going, starting from Meien. Our second passage was made from Wassen, after a heavy fall of snow in the mountains, where we sank deeply at each step, and this time we were 11 hrs. 20 min., exclusive of halts. Stated generally, the expedition may be said to take 10 hrs. to 11 hrs. from Wassen, easy going, without halts; but there is no doubt that an active walker, especially without a weight on his back, could make the transit in less time. In the reverse direction the time occupied should be appreciably less, since, in the first place, there is a difference in level of almost 3,000 ft. between Engstlen and Wassen; in the second, good glissades can be obtained in the descent of the Wasenjoch to the Sustli Alp; and, in the third, because one can get up a good swinging pace down the road of the gently inclined Meienthal.

The route as far as the Gufierplatten Alp (at no great distance from the zig-zags up the Susten Pass) need not be remarked upon. From this spot the shortest way in the end to the Sustli Alp is to cross the two streams which flow down the lateral glen to the N., and to follow the rough track to the Alp, rather than to leave the Susten path earlier and take a tempting-looking short cut up slopes covered with grass and rhododendron bushes. From the Sustli Alp grass slopes are mounted in a north-westerly direction, and then turning

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\* A notice of this expedition is recorded in the *Alpine Journal* of November, 1902. In this record the first of the two passes is named the Wassenhornjoch. Since, however, it is customary in naming passes to drop the 'horn,' it is now proposed to call it the Wasenjoch. The Wasenhorn is spelt with only one 's' in the Federal map—not two, as in the village of Wassen.



*Photo by A. V. V. Richards.]*

*[Swan Electric Engraving Co.*

**VIEW SHOWING THE WASENJOCH FROM THE WICHELPLANKSTOCK.**

northwards at an obvious spot a rock terrace is reached and traversed. The way continues up grass and stones to the foot of the E. arête of the Wasenhorn, where the Stossenfirn is struck, high up, and above a number of awkward-looking crevasses. Hence to the col (2,744 m. = 9,004 ft.) is an easy mount up snow, as may be seen from the accompanying photograph. In the descent to the Wenden Glacier it is well to bear appreciably to the left. The glacier is crossed to some limestone screes, at the foot of the point 3,032 m. on the Titlis cliff. Here an attempt was made to scale the rock, in order to gain access to the Klein Glacier, and thus avoid a descent to the foot of the rock wall below that glacier, but a practicable way did not appear. Future travellers are recommended to follow our course on the occasion of our second visit, and at once continue along the rock terraces leading down to the foot of the imposing rock barrier, which looks as if it would effectually stop all further progress. Here will soon be found a watercourse (the most easterly of those which descend from the Klein Glacier), which has carved a way by which access to the glacier is perfectly practicable. The first few steps up some sloping rocks, affording very poor foothold, and scarcely any handhold, require care, but the way soon becomes easier and safer. Arrived at the top of the cliff, there follows a gentle ascent up the snow-covered Klein Glacier, to the foot of a second rock wall, little less formidable in appearance than the first, leading to the Titlisjoch. This we attacked a little to the left of the lowest part of the ridge. The climb up these weather-worn limestone rocks, which are safe and offer good hold, is an agreeable scramble, free from any kind of real difficulty.

The descent to the Engstlen Alp need not be described, since almost immediately below the pass the track up the Titlis from the Engstlen Alp is struck. In bad weather, however, even this well-marked way may be difficult to follow, as we found when we first made the passage. A thunderstorm, accompanied by rain and fog, overtook us soon after leaving the pass, and although we knew the way, through having been up the Titlis a week or two earlier, we managed to get too high in traversing one of the snow-slopes and landed on steep black ice, near some rocks. Down the former we had to cut our way, in dense mist and pelting rain. A little later, after regaining the track, we had some excitement in dodging a number of stones that the rain had loosened, and that came bounding down the snow-slope we were on. After an experience of this sort a hearty welcome

at the Engstlen Hotel from Herr Immer, a warm bath and the loan of dry clothes, are comforts not easily forgotten.

It may be remarked that the Wasenjoch, in addition to affording means of access from the Meienthal to the Engstlen Alp, may be used as an interesting alternative route to the Susten Pass in order to reach Gadmen ; or, by combining it with the Wendenjoch, Engelberg may be easily reached.

## THE NEW ZEALAND ALPS.

BY O. J. BAINBRIDGE.

### PART I.

#### *The Hermitage.—Mt. Cook.*

**I**N spite of the work of the New Zealand mountaineers, Messrs. Harper, Mannering, and Fyfe, and the expeditions of the Rev. W. S. Green and Mr. FitzGerald ; in spite of the foundation of a New Zealand Alpine Club, and the facilities for mountaineering supplied by the Government, the popularisation of the New Zealand Alps has so far proceeded comparatively slowly.

Tourists there are in plenty : some come by one coach and go by the next, content with a view of Mt. Sefton and Mt. Cook ; others allow themselves a week to see the ice of the Tasman Glacier or to explore the moraine of the Mueller ; but those who would benefit from a close inspection of the mountains, an inspection which necessitates all the impedimenta of mountain expeditions, must be content to wait patiently and watch. A week or ten days at the Hermitage is useless for the mountaineer. But before discussing the difficulties he must face it would be well to enumerate the excursions from the Hermitage that are open to those who are not at home with the ice-axe and the rope.

An hour's walk to Kea Point will disclose the moraines of the Mueller and Hooker Glaciers. Mt. Sefton is too near to allow a proper appreciation of the steepness and extent of its glaciers, but Mt. Cook shows well from here. Neither the clear ice of the Hooker nor the Mueller Glacier can be seen, the outlook being one of extreme desolation. Any grandeur it has is derived from this characteristic ; probably nowhere in the world can such a quantity of moraine and debris be seen in a similarly enclosed area.

Those who are energetic can sample the moraine of the Mueller Glacier by a short though steep descent from Kea