

SÜDLICHE PLATTENTURM (2,860 m.=8,980 ft.), NÖRDLICHE PLATTENTURM (2,865 m.=8,996 ft.).—September 17. After making the direct ascent of the Plattenspitze, 2,880 m., the same party attempted to complete the traverse of the arête leading from the Plattenjoch to the Gross Maderer. They climbed two crags, c. 2,860 and c. 2,865, which they propose to call Südliche and Nördliche Plattenturm, and were again turned back by the iced slabs of the twin peak. Both the above arêtes afford first-rate rock sport and interesting views of the Silvretta group, &c. The Tübinger hut is *bewirtschaftet* and comfortable, 4 hrs. from Gaschurn with its admirably kept 'Post' or 'Rössle.'

E. T. COMPTON.

[There is a paper on this district in 'Jahrbuch der S.A.-C.,' vol. xxviii., and 'Mittheilungen D. u. Oe. A.-V.,' Nos. 3 and 4, 1910, also contain information as to other ascents from the Tübinger hut which was only opened in 1908.]

VARIOUS EXPEDITIONS.

Apennines.

1. MONTE CAIRO (1,669 m.=5,575 ft.).—During a long visit to Rome early this year the sight of the lovely and subtle outlines of the snowy Apennines and lower ranges often gladdened my eyes, and the mountains seemed to beckon to me, as mountains almost invariably do, to pay them a visit. Mr. Freshfield had given me some valuable information about the Gran Sasso d' Italia (not itself visible from Rome) and other high mountain ranges, but as they were almost smothered in snow, I turned my attention to lower ranges.

At an earlier visit I remembered noticing the grand situation of the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino and the fine mountains behind. Baedeker shows that Monte Cairo is ascended from the monastery and that a guide can be found there. The sheet of the Governmental map which I got in Rome showed that the summit of Monte Cairo is equidistant from both Monte Cassino and Rocca Secca, and that a long flattish ridge leads from the top towards the latter town. I spent a night at the monastery, where a monk procured me a guide. I pointed out the ridge to the latter, and soon a bargain was struck, that he was to lead me to the top of Monte Cairo and to carry my rucksack, and that I should guide him along the ridge and down to Rocca Secca. This worked very well. I had about an hour's tramp on excellent snow on the ridge, whilst my companion, who wore sandals, skipped along merrily over the screes below, and parallel to, me. It was a most enjoyable expedition, the details of which I am describing elsewhere, and the night spent at Rocca Secca gave me an opportunity of seeing well the picturesque old town, the birthplace of St. Thomas Aquinas, and the ruined old castles which belonged to his family.

We were about 11 hrs. on the way, but it could easily have been

done in 9 hours. The views were superb, and the descent to Rocca Secca through a well-wooded glen was really lovely.

2. TRAVERSE OF MONTE SORACTE.—We have all known the name of Monte Soracte since our school-days, and many A.C.s have not only admired it from Rome, but have also ascended it. Apparently, however, few have traversed the whole five, or seven, peaks of which the mountain consists. This traverse was recommended to me both by Mr. Tuckett and Mr. G. M. Trevelyan.

Electric tramcars now run between Rome and Civita Castellana. About halfway is the station of Oreste. A walk from here of about an hour through pastures and olive groves brings one to the hill town of Sant' Oreste, and after $\frac{3}{4}$ hr. more the summit of Monte Soracte is reached. So far I had the advantage of the companionship of a retired Yale professor, who read Virgil to me. After parting from him I followed the northern ridge. This may be made as sporting a route as can be desired, by climbing over the numerous limestone pinnacles. I shirked many, but finally descended the steep and bare N.W. face, which afforded me an excellent climb. Thence a walk of several miles brought me to the most interesting city of Civita Castellana, where I spent most of the following day in exploring one of the five neighbouring ravines and photographing Etruscan tombs and other interesting objects.

There are many other mountain expeditions which can be easily made from Rome which are equally as interesting as the two which I so briefly describe, but which I so strongly recommend to mountaineers staying in Rome who, possibly, would relish a change to the hills from the usual sightseeing. Wm. CECIL SLINGSBY.

Mont Blanc Group.

COL DES NANTILLONS (3,289 m.=10,327 ft.) FROM THE MER DE GLACE: AN ATTEMPT.—In an interesting paper in the 'Alpine Journal,' vol. xxii. p. 353, Mr. Broome discusses the history of this pass and of its two crossings from W. to E. One passage was by Mr. Seymour Hoare's party * in 1875, one by Mr. Broome himself in 1904. As will be seen from the illustration, reproduced from his paper, p. 352, two big couloirs descend on either side of the point which marks the summit of the pass and the head of the Glacier des Nantillons. By the southern of these Mr. Hoare descended. Mr. Broome's descent started from high up on the ridge of the Aig. de Blaitière and descended the face of that peak exclusively.

In the course of some exploration of these faces in 1909, from a camp beside the Mer de Glace, Donald Robertson, Mallory, Knubel, a porter and myself found ourselves on the morning of August 18 at the foot of the northern of these two great couloirs. The first few hundred feet were none too easy; then the couloir looked impracticable and Knubel attacked a desperate-looking cleft, which appeared to lead up to the foot of a subordinate gully that ended

* *Pioneers of Alps*, p. 70; *Alpine Journal*, vol. viii. p. 56.



COL DES NANTILLONS

(from the Mer de Glace)

The routes marked are :

Left hand . . . Mr. Broome's.

Centre . . . Mr. Seymour Hoare's.

Right hand . . Mr. Winthrop Young's (attempt).

100 ft. above us on the S. wall. Two of us managed to shove him into the sloping bottom of the cleft. For some 40 ft. he then appeared to rely principally upon jamming his axe into a narrow crack, and holding himself, with shoulder and foot braced across between the outward sloping walls of the cleft, until the axe could be reinserted. 50 ft. up he managed to break out to the left, and about 90 ft. above us found a good platform and belay. The others ascended on the rope up the slabs; but in order to fetch his abandoned axe, as well as to gauge the climb, I followed up the crack, using the rope. I should say that for over 30 ft. it is 25 per cent. harder than the worst portion of the Grépon crack. Above this we followed up difficult but attractive slabs on the edge of the ridge between the subordinate gully and the couloir. Early in the afternoon, however, the weather broke, a hopeless hailstorm set in, and in 20 min. the slabs were racing with icy water. Direct ascent became impracticable. We descended some distance and traversed back into the couloir; that too was a rushing waterfall. We marked a likely way up the slabs on our left, but the clouds and rain prevented us from seeing whether worse followed above. Very reluctantly we were forced to face the formidable descent. Chamonix slabs, with their dry pleasant 'wrinkle' holds, make dangerous work when slimy and chill with hail and streaming water. For practically all the descent we depended upon 'doubled' ropes round every contrivable excrescence. At one point we had to jam for 10 ft. down the centre of a narrow pipe of waterfall. Robertson and Mallory led the descent, climbing with excellent surety. The example steadied the nerves of the somewhat overwrought professionals. The 100 ft. of 'Knubel crack' looked very formidable. Fortunately we had plenty of rope, and with the help of some 300 ft. of it we lowered ourselves severally, like nest-cragmen, to the foot. The remaining difficulties seemed light in comparison, and we raced drenched but cheerful down through the storm to Chamonix. A week later, after a fine traverse of the Grépon, we looked down from the Col des Nantillons and identified our turning-point. It was tragic to note that we had been turned back only some 500 ft. below the col, with the difficulties apparently over.

This failure is recorded primarily to make mention of Knubel's extraordinary climb, the most technically remarkable feat upon dry rocks that I have ever seen; and, secondly, because I have some doubts whether a successful ascent by this line will soon be recounted.

G. W. Y.

Bernese Oberland.

DAMMASTOCK (3,633 m.=11,920 ft.).—On July 24, 1909, Messrs. J. P. Farrar, H. V. Reade and I left the Göschener Alp to traverse the Dammastock to Handegg; but it was not until the third attempt on July 28, and after sleeping out for two nights, that the unfavourable conditions of last summer allowed us to start the climb. We made a good bivouac on the grass slopes of the S. spur of the

Moostock and close to the Damma glacier, thereby saving nearly 2 hrs. in time and an uncomfortable stumble in the dark up an ill-defined track.

From our bivouac we descended in 5 min. to the stream and bore almost due W. direct for the peak, up easy rocks and over gentle slopes of dry glacier, having on our right hand or N. side the ridge which joins the Schneestock to the Moostock. In 3 hrs. 35 min. we reached the ridge of snow which, higher up, forms the S. bank of the great couloir which seams the E. face between the southern summit of the Dammastock (3,633 m.) and the point immediately to the N. (3,624 m.). Twenty minutes up this ridge brought us to the edge of the couloir, which we expected might give us some trouble. It was roughly 50 yards wide, full of snow, and with a deeply cut V-shaped channel in the middle, whilst a cornice could be seen crowning the arête at its head a great distance above. The snow in the couloir was good—about the only place on the whole expedition where it was good—and we were all across in 30 min., seeing no sign of anything falling. This couloir must, however, be dangerous at times, and later in the season it may be ice and need a lot of work. Once across it, we climbed in 50 min. up rocks difficult in one place, to the crest of the great E. buttress leading to the northern summit. This gave us 2 hrs. of good climbing, mostly big slabs of sound rock, with here and there a difficult corner and pitch. The time taken from the bivouac to the N. summit, from which we reached in a few minutes the southern or highest point, was 7 hrs. 55 min., inclusive of halts.

The weather, which had looked threatening for some time, now became distinctly bad, a strong W. wind blowing, snow beginning to fall, and nothing to be seen. We accordingly laid our course by compass for the Triftlimmi. The weather grew worse and worse, until after 2 hours' careful steering by compass in thick mist and snow a welcome rift in the clouds showed us the Triftlimmi, which was reached in 2 hrs. 40 min. from the summit. A tremendous gale was now blowing, and we were glad to shelter a little under the rocks that guard the pass. It had been the intention of the party to follow the ridge to the Thieralplistock, descend the Alpi glacier to the Gelmersee, and so to Handegg. Under the bad conditions then prevailing we doubted the practicability of this route, and the idea of passing a night out on the slopes of the Thieralplistock being distasteful, discretion gained the day. Turning our backs on the gale, we went straight down the Rhone glacier, crossed the Nägeligräthli to the Grimsel, and, pursued to the last by a persistent downpour, reached the Handegg at 10 P.M.

Even as carried out the expedition is a fine one, and if combined with the traverse of the Thieralplistock must be reckoned as first-rate. The route gives good climbing up the E. ridge of the Dammastock, it shows much country, including the head of the Rhone glacier and part of the great watershed between the Mediterranean and North Sea waters.

The whole expedition with halts took us 18 hrs. 20 min.,

actual going 16½ hrs. In good conditions and by crossing the Thieralplistock instead of descending to the Grimsel, the time required should be much less.

The Gelmersee, which we visited another day, is most exquisitely situated in a romantic hollow in the hills immediately opposite Handegg, and is well worth a visit. A steep and almost dry water-course, the so-called 'Katzenweg,' leads down from the lake towards Handegg; but though this proved a delightful afternoon's scramble from the hotel, it would prove awkward to descend in the dark at the end of a long day. A good path descends from the S. end of the lake and reaches the Grimsel road above the Hellamad bridge.

GEO. E. GASK.

THE GROSS SCHRECKHORN (4,080 m. = 13,386 ft.) BY THE S.W. ARÊTE.—August 20, 1909. Dr. Th. Thomas (of Paris), with Auguste Blanc and Jacomin (both of Bonneval-sur-Arc).

From the Schwarzegg Club hut the party mounted by the usual Schreckhorn route to the S. foot of the S.W. arête of the peak. They then bore l., and, instead of climbing the rocky spur to the crest of the S.W. arête of the peak, preferred to mount the rocks of the S. slope of the S.W. arête till on a level with the great snowy gully that descends to the r. of the aforesaid rocky spur and from the small platform on the S.W. arête. In order to gain this snow gully the party had to traverse some steep rocks, which were rather hard. Then the gully was mounted to the shoulder on the S.W. arête, and that arête followed to the top—there were some bad bits, but the rocks were dry and very firm. The time taken from the Club hut to the top of the peak was 6½ hours, halts included.

The descent was made by the N.W. arête (then covered with much powdery and unstable snow), and Grindelwald gained by the Lauteraarsattel.

[This would seem to be the third party which has taken this route, the first having been that of Messrs. Wicks, Bradby, and Claude Wilson, on the ascent, in 1902 ('A. J.' vol. xxi. pp. 269, 501-2), and the second, Messrs. Greenwood, Ling, and Raeburn, on the descent, in 1906 (*ibid.* vol. xxiii, pp. 342 and 437-8).]

ALPINE NOTES.

'THE ALPINE GUIDE.'—Copies of Vol. I. of the new edition of this work, price 12s. net, and of 'Hints and Notes, Practical and Scientific, for Travellers in the Alps' (being a new edition of the General Introduction), price 3s., can be obtained from all booksellers, or from Messrs. Stanford, 12 Long Acre, W.C.

'THE ALPINE GUIDE,' THE CENTRAL ALPS. PART I.—A new edition of this portion of the 'Alpine Guide,' by the late John Ball, F.R.S., President of the Alpine Club, reconstructed and revised on behalf of the Alpine Club under the general editorship of A. V.