

when the weather makes success with the greater peaks on the opposite side of the valley doubtful. But I think that the climber who has made his first acquaintance with the Aiguilles Rouges as a second-best on a doubtful day will return to them on fine days and will find his time well employed.

THE TRANSYLVANIAN ALPS AND THE HIGH TATRA.¹

By L. A. ELLWOOD.

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 31, 1925.)

‘**S**ET peaks from Skye in the valley of Ceresole, and you have the Tatra.’ Such was the fascinating description of those mountains a friend visiting them in 1923 sent me on a postcard bearing the postmark ‘Strbske Pleso.’ I could not find this unpronounceable name mentioned in any available guide-book or atlas, and I soon found that though of the physical geography of the district my knowledge was slight, of the present political geography it was less. Such ignorance was doubtless unusual, and I need only refer here in outline to the present geography of the Carpathians.

The Carpathians are a chain, separated from the Alps by the Danube, of some 800 miles in length in the form of a semi-circle running E. to W. and having its eastern extremity turned inwards. If we count its foothills it could thus be said to extend from the Danube, near Bratislava (Pressburg), to the Danube at Orsova, near the Iron Gates. Formerly the whole of the range was within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with the exception of the S. side of the southern flank, which was in Roumania. Now the northern division of the range forms the frontier between Poland on the N. and Czecho-Slovakia on the S., while the eastern and southern portions are entirely in Roumania. Much of the range is made up of thickly wooded eminences which hardly merit a more flattering name than hills. But there are three groups which rise to the dignity of mountains: the Tatra, in the N., whose highest peak is a little under 9000 ft. in height; the Pietrosu or Rodnaer group in the E., and the Negoi or Fogaras group in the S.

My brother and I decided to visit these three groups and

¹ See map at end of this number.

to begin in the S. We accordingly made our way to Buda-Pesth and thence across the Hungarian frontier at Lököshaza, to a junction station on the main line to Bucharest called Vintul de Jos (Alvincz), whence a four hours' journey in an unlighted local train brought us to Sibiu.

Sibiu is the Roumanian name for a town in Transylvania which is better known to Englishmen as Hermannstadt. The Hungarian name is Nagyszeben. These three names well illustrate a difficulty which confronts the traveller or mountaineer in Transylvania or, indeed, in the Carpathians generally. Every place of importance has at least three names, often bearing little or no visible resemblance to one another. A Hungarian map will generally give only Hungarian names and, similarly, German and Roumanian maps keep to their respective nomenclatures. In addition to this, the cartographer is apt to assign to places names unknown to the natives. In these circumstances an English traveller, who finds most of the names unpronounceable, will very likely add one other to the list—a nickname of his own.

Sibiu (Hermannstadt) is one of the seven fortified towns of Transylvania (Siebenbürgen) which was founded by Saxon colonists in the twelfth century. It is the headquarters of the active Siebenbürgische Karpathen-Verein. We sought out the secretary of this club, and obtained from him much useful information as to the present condition of the huts and of the best excursions in the Fogaras range. He was a Saxon and was deeply grieved that, though many of the club huts had been burnt down in the war, he could get no help whatever towards reconstruction from the Roumanian authorities—'not even a tree.'

Armed with the information with which he had supplied us and with the best maps obtainable we set out for Porumbacul de Jos (Unter-Porumbach) *en route* for the highest peaks in Transylvania. Between Porumbacul de Jos and the mountain path at the head of the valley are nine miles of dusty road. Enthusiasts have been known to walk this, but then enthusiasts have been known to walk from Aosta to Courmayeur to get in training for the Grandes Jorasses. We resolved to ride. Arrived at the station we found a group of idle villagers, clad in the normal costume of these districts, a long shirt or tunic of white canvas-like cloth, trousers of the same material, and a wide cloth belt. They wore queer stiff felt hats somewhat resembling much disfigured bowlers. Roumanian was the only language they knew. We could not find in our polyglot

phrase book the equivalent for a vehicle, but by a series of gesticulations, brandishing our maps, we made ourselves intelligible to one of the villagers who led us through the village to his home. Whether his neighbours were fond of borrowing or whether they have all things in common in these parts, we did not discover, but our guide called at one house to pick up a bridle and at another a harness, and finally led us through a small gateway into his yard where he showed us the vehicle. His house, like most others in the district, was low-built and had a large sloping roof so constructed to cope with the heavy rains.

Whilst he was busy putting the horses in harness, his wife was very diligent in showing us hospitality; she stuffed our pockets full of plums, and would have supplied us with bacon, eggs, cheese, and chickens and many other things besides, had we desired it. The vehicle being ready, we installed ourselves on the narrow plank which served as a seat and rode away through the village where scores of ducks and geese came out to greet us and quack *bon voyage* or hiss good riddance. Our little, lightly built fourwheeler had seemed to us a sorry object when we compared it with the sturdy agricultural waggon with which we were more familiar, but after half an hour of jolting over a long trail of *débris* which in Transylvania is called a road, we were full of admiration for its strength and resistance, but not for its resilience. When our vehicle was driven axle-deep in water across a series of torrents we had to share our excitement with our driver. Though we knew no Roumanian our conversation was successful, if a trifle one-sided. Take a pinch of Roumanian from a phrase book, mix with sufficient bad Italian and dog-Latin, add Imagination, Confidence and Gesticulation *ad libitum*, and you have a fair recipe for making yourself intelligible to the peasants of Roumania.

We passed through Porumbacul de Sos (Ober-Porumbach) and continued some distance further to a place called the 'Glassworks,' where the road ended. We then set out on the well-made path, eight miles long, which leads to the Robert Gutt Hut.

After half a mile in the valley the path forked and the true way led unexpectedly up a steep zigzag to the left. We had been warned of this and so lost no time in mistakes. Throughout the whole eight miles we were passing through thickly wooded forest, and every glimpse we had of the hills around showed still more forests. We passed several water-

falls, the crystal clearness of whose streams reminded us of the Cottian or Maritime Alps.

As we stepped into the courtyard of the Robert Gutt Hut we were delighted at the word of welcome emblazoned in golden letters above the doorway: HEIL. This we found was the favourite word of salutation amongst the German-speaking natives and visitors in this district. The hut was large and there was room enough for the two classes of mountain tourists, those who intended merely to admire the view from the hut, which indeed was very fine, and those who wished to climb. There was a strange mixture of nationalities at supper that night, and six languages could be heard: Roumanian, Magyar, German, Czech, French, and English; but everyone was friendly and all were united in the common love of the hills.

Out of respect for local feeling we could hardly have chosen for next day any other excursion than the Negoi, the highest mountain in Transylvania. There was a good path most of the way and the various landmarks were known by picturesque names, Chamois Rock, Dragon Slope, and Michel's Rest. After an hour and a half we came to a large flat rock labelled in red letters, after a fashion dear to German mountaineers: Frühstückplatz. In a little while we overtook a Roumanian family party who were climbing, according to their cherished custom, in bare feet. We thought it courteous to accompany them, but as they moved slowly and circumspectly, we amused ourselves by scaling by its various routes a fine rock pinnacle (rather smaller than the Napes Needle) known as Cleopatra. The Roumanian paterfamilias was most shocked that we should descend to rockclimbing, and shouted to us cynically 'Well! Is the view any better up there?' We assured him it was, but he refused to come and see.

On the summit of the Negoi, 8345 ft., we could look for miles across the countless winding valleys of Old Roumania towards the plains where flowed the Danube. The morning mists had already begun to gather about the highest ridges and as the various summits loomed out, now and then, these little mountains, but 8000 ft. high, seemed as great as the giants of the Alps; but the snow fields and the glaciers were lacking. The Roumanians discoursed with us for an hour or so on the state of their country and of Europe generally. The conversation was mostly in German, but occasionally some of them tried their skill in French and Italian. This showed that they had a working acquaintance with five languages, which was not

uncommon amongst the educated classes in these countries. The political problem which seemed to interest them most was that which confronted their anti-Semitic league.

We were rather amused at the description of the view from the Negoii in a German guide book—published at Hermannstadt in 1881 and written by a German, a Transylvanian patriot, who loved his native hills. ‘Here we may recline on the narrow ridge scarce three yards wide, overgrown with moss and lichen, and enjoy the distant view across the mountains and valleys of Transylvania which fade away in the distance into the clouds, or look towards the S. far into Roumania where the countless ridges and valleys of our high mountain chain lead down to the plain in gentle slopes and broadening dales. But the finest picture of all is spread at our feet, the deep rocky basin bearing the awe-inspiring name of Sztrunga Drakului (Devil’s Fold), where even the hot August sun is not strong enough to melt the winter snows on these northern precipices, and where full many a chamois may be seen sporting on a snowfield or browsing on the steep crags nearby. Further on one may discern two tarns, parted from each other by a mountain ridge, which in their rocky hollow look like two blue eyes peering into the clear heavens.’

We set out at once for this Devil’s Fold, but I am sorry to say that we met neither the chamois nor the devil. Had we been able to reach the mountains further E. we might well have met both, for good chamois-hunting can still be had in these parts, so we were told, but there are no huts and food is scarce in the valleys. As has been said, ‘No food in the rucksack and none in the inn, that is the devil!’

We did meet with good rock-climbing, however, on the S.E. face of the Negoii, where we enjoyed an hour or so of delightful scrambling. There one could find countless routes uncatalogued. Between the Caltunul and the Laitunul is a little pinnacle, apparently nameless, which attracted our attention. It was small but it satisfied us that there are some peaks in the range which a cow could not climb!

A sudden snowstorm curtailed our activities, and we made our way in the fog across the rocky basin at the E. of the Negoii to the Bergescharte pass, a narrow rift in the ridge descending from the Negoii, approached on either side by steep gullies. We had thus ‘done’ the show peak by the favourite circular route and were free to follow our own inclinations.

The next day we devoted to an exploration of the peaks W. of the Negoii. We found a tempting buttress between the

Moscavul and the Scara, and worked our way up it. Before we had finished our climb we were enveloped in the mist. It was our experience, which other climbers confirmed, that the morning mist arrives much earlier in the day in the Transylvanian Highlands than in the Alps, sometimes as early as 8 or 9 A.M. But slight breaks occurred fairly frequently and the mist generally dispersed in the late afternoon. During one of these intervals we caught a good glimpse of the mountains between us and the Roten-Turm Pass. This pass was formerly of great commercial importance as the trade road to the E., which avoided Serbia, passed over it, and at the end of the eighteenth century the despatches of the East India Company were brought by this route.

We ceased looking for climbs and wandered over the ridge westward. In many places we noticed traces of glacier action or *roches moutonnées*. After paying a visit to the Lacul Aurigului (Freckler See), a small tarn beneath the Ciortea (Hohe Scharte) on the Transylvanian side, we descended the military path from the Col. This Col had been passed by the Roumanians in their offensive in 1918, and we noticed many old trenches and other signs of the battle. After much argument we fancied we had reconstructed the strategic positions and understood the military tactics employed. Later in the afternoon, when the mist had quite cleared, we sat on a ridge above the Barcasiu Hut, the only other provisioned hut left in the district, and looked for miles across the Transylvanian plateau. We were again struck by the suddenness with which the mountains rise from the plains. In some parts the spurs on the northern side of the main range attain a height of 7000 ft. above the Transylvanian plain in a horizontal distance of only 7 miles.

We returned to the hut and discussed our plans. We should have liked to explore the whole range further eastward towards Brasov (Kronstadt); but the secretary of the Siebenbürgische Karpathen-Verein had told us that such an expedition would be a very lengthy one, as all the huts, except the Upper Stein Hut on the Bulea See, had been burnt down, that we should need two porters, and it would be advisable to take provisions for the whole time, as food was apt to be scarce at the stâne or shepherds' huts at the head of the valleys. We much regretted this as we had seen from pictures in the Year-Books of the S.K.V. that there were some fine rock peaks further E., particularly above the Podragu and Bulea Lakes. So we decided to cross the range into Old Roumania. No one could give us

any information. We were told that few people had ever made the passage, as before the war the Roumanian passports and customs regulations had rendered short visits by such routes extremely irksome. From a map in Baedeker (scale about 40 miles to the inch) we learnt that there was a railway station in one of the southern valleys. We made this our objective.

We followed the now familiar route of the Bergescharte and Portita, descended to the Caltun lake and chose our valley. After descending to the upper pastures we met with a little difficulty which I believe is common in the Pyrenees, that of gaining the bed of the valley. A Roumanian peasant boy whom we chanced to meet pointed out to us a track which led to a gap in the forest caused by a recent avalanche, and thus we attained to the level of the valley. But what valley? Our Austrian map which stopped a little beyond the old frontier suggested that it was the Valea Caprareata. 'Perhaps we are guilty goats to be in it,' my brother irreverently remarked!

In an account of the Eastern Carpathians, by Sir Leslie Stephen, published in the third volume of the *ALPINE JOURNAL*, the following passage appears. (An energetic bookseller named Krabs told us that) "The principal danger to be anticipated was from the attacks of sheep-dogs. These animals scent the traveller from an incredible distance, and rushing upon him with appalling cries, tear him, or at least his clothes, in pieces. My own experience went to show that Transylvanian sheep-dogs are the veriest curs that ever ran away from a fictitious stone, but as such ferocious beings may possibly exist somewhere, I will communicate to the Club the remedy he described as infallible. 'No one should venture,' he said, 'upon these mountains without a good supply of fireworks.'" We were familiar with the type of cur that runs away from a fictitious stone, and so at first we were indifferent when on our emerging from the wood, three wolf-like creatures rushed at us, barking furiously. But stones only made them more ferocious than ever, and we were some minutes fighting them, before they were beaten off by a peasant who could throw larger boulders with greater accuracy than we had done. My brother and I agreed that we would not visit these parts again without taking some fireworks or other more efficacious deterrent against the wolfish creatures which, in Munthenia, serve as sheep-dogs.

The wealth of foliage, the luxuriance of vegetation, and the brilliance of the sunlight in this valley were more than Italian,

they were almost tropical. At first the only trees were pines, and then there seemed to be a sharp line beyond which only beech trees were growing. This transition occurred very suddenly and we noticed it several times. Lower down the valley, pines and beech grew side by side. We soon came to a little stâna where we called to discover, if possible, the name of our valley, and what was the direction of Arges. The peasant at first insisted that we must go back to the Negoii, which as good Austrians we must surely wish to climb, but when we asked for Bucharest he pointed to a path leading down the valley, and congratulated us on our discernment in coming to visit his lovely Capital. Speaking our pseudo-Italo-Roumanian we got on quite well with the conversation. When we announced that we were not Austrians but English, a small crowd appeared from nowhere in particular, and examined us closely as though we had been members of a strange tribe from some South Sea island. They then showed us the customary hospitality and gave us the best drink they had—sour milk in which lumps of cheese were floating. We drank it manfully, though slowly, thinking that no doubt it was much better than Tibetan tea.

The path on which we then set out appeared to have been a military route constructed during the war, for it had been carefully built up, so that artillery could be drawn over it. A mark on a tree showed us that it was 27 kilometres to the first large village, which turned out to be our desired goal, Cumpana d'Arges. The valley is the centre of a large timber industry, and we found the methods by which the timber is taken down towards the plain very interesting. The tree trunks are first sent down steep gullies, and then put into wooden troughs, down which they slide to the river. As the river is not swift or deep enough to carry the timber of its own accord, dams are constructed at intervals along its course. These are opened and closed alternately, so that the timber is carried down stream by the artificial flooding which results.

Though the path was generally very good, there were places in which it had been completely covered by landslides, and many of the bridges had been washed away. One of the bridges consisted of three unsteady tree trunks (some 60 ft. above the rushing water). We passed several hamlets where the dogs were of the currish and not wolfish variety, and at length reached Cumpana d'Arges, the terminus of a little railway built for the development of the timber industry. The 7 o'clock train, *i.e.* one truck without an engine, was full

of people and left without us. After an eventful evening during which we were arrested by the village policeman as German or Russian spies, and released again, and then put under the charge of a workman who spoke Italian, we took the 1 A.M. train to Arges, and proceeded thence to Bucharest.

Our next objective, the Pietrosu, the highest point of the Eastern Carpathians, could be approached by two routes, but as one of them, that through Transylvania, would have necessitated three days' travelling, owing to the slowness of the trains, we chose the alternative, and travelled N. through the plains of Moldavia, going by the Warsaw express as far as Dermanesti, and then by a local line to Jacobeni. Jacobeni, like most of the other villages we saw in Bukovina, seemed poorer and filthier than the villages of Southern Transylvania. This corner of Bukovina had suffered a great deal during the war. First the Russians had entered, then the Austrians drove out the Russians, and finally the Roumanians captured the district from the Austrians. We learnt much of the recent history of the valley from a villager who began his narrative thus: 'Gentlemen, I am Friedrich Suchard von Jacobeni, I have six sons and six daughters.' We bargained with a Jewish driver to take us to Cârlibaba, a large village on the south-eastern side of the Stiol Pass. After taking us a couple of miles his only thought was that he might induce us to hire his vehicle to cross the pass next day to Borsa. When we refused to consider the proposal, he leapt out of the cart and went to join the driver of the vehicle in front, possibly to warn him not to cut prices. The horses, left to themselves, seemed to know how to avoid accidents by about half an inch. The inn at Cârlibaba was fairly comfortable, being kept by one Ann Müller, of German origin. She could give us no food; to-morrow's bread was being baked, but there was none for to-day. We went out shopping for our usual fare—bread, cheese, and pickled gurkin. The inhabitants of these parts make their chief meal in the middle of the day, and the traveller arriving very hungry at a village in the evening may find that there is no food to be had.

Of our ascent of the Pietrosu, I have little to say, for we failed. After pushing rapidly along the ridge from the Stiol Pass we at length reached a peak adjacent to the Pietrosu. It would have required another hour or more to gain its summit, which was surrounded by thick forests. We could not discern with our glasses the least semblance of a path leading into the forest, and as we knew that the descent without

one might take hours, if not days, we thought it prudent to retire. During the descent from the Stiol Pass we were joined by two German-speaking peasant girls, who showed us the best short cuts through the forests, and accompanied us some miles towards Prislop and Borsa. These two villages of Máramaros were just as dilapidated as those of Bukovina, and we were not sorry to leave them. We hurried away to Sigetul Marmatiei, formerly Máramarossziget, where, after passing through the Roumanian and Czech passport and customs formalities, we joined a Czech train which would take us to the Tatra. It was like passing suddenly into Switzerland from a most backward valley in N. Italy, only the contrast was even more striking. The Czech train was punctual, and we arrived the same evening at Poprad, beneath the Tatra.

The Chamonix of the Tatra is Stary Smokovec (Alt Schmecks), $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Poprad. In the electric tram which took us thither, we met a man of commerce who advised us quite seriously to visit Russia, where living was so cheap! He then muttered "Tatra, Fatra, or Matra," I suppose Tatra is your mark? It appeared that Fatra and Matra were two smaller groups which rise to a height of about 5000 and 3000 ft. respectively. Apparently 'Tatra, Fatra, and Matra' was a sort of incantation of his like 'Soldier, Sailor, Tinker, Tailor,' and he fell to assessing everyone in the train according to his estimation of their climbing ability. He left us at Dolny Smokovec remarking 'Matra's enough for me.'

It was the middle of August and there was no accommodation of any kind to be had at Stary Smokovec. Good maps were obtainable here, and we procured a copy of Dr. G. von Komarnicki's excellent climbers' guide-book to the Tatra. We took the funicular to the Hrebienok or Kämmschen, where the hotels were also full, but we were told that there would probably be room for us at the Téry Club Hut, at which provisions were obtainable. This mid-August overcrowding made us wish ourselves back in Roumania, for there was an oppressive air of artificiality about Stary Smokovec. It seemed to us that the majority of visitors in Transylvania had been inspired with the love of the hills, but in Stary Smokovec merely with a love of fashion. We made our way hopefully up the Little Kohlbach Valley, and arrived at the hut just in time to book the last two beds. The hut is delightfully situated by the Five Lakes, beneath a chain of tempting rock peaks.

It was natural that we should choose for our first ascent

the Lomnický štít (Lomnitzer Spitze, 8640 ft.) which was till quite recently regarded as the highest peak in the Tatra, and seems to have been ascended by a local schoolmaster in 1615. It is now settled that Gerlach (Gerlsdorfer Spitze) is some 90 ft. higher than the Lomnický. The ordinary and easiest route is that known as 'Moses Spring' route, but from the Téry hut the 'Jordan Way' is more often followed. A pretty story is told as to the origin of the name, Moses Spring. It has been recorded by Lord Bryce, and I will quote it in his words.

'The Vice-President and another member of the Karpathen Verein were, with their guides, conducting some members of the Vienna Alpine Club to the top of the Lomnitzer. These latter gentlemen, as coming from the loftier Austrian Alps, had been a little contemptuous towards the less elevated Tatra, and in fact pooh-poohed the Lomnitzer. However, the stiff climb up out of the Kohlbach dale tried them so severely that on gaining the crest they declared they could go no further without something to slake their thirst. This the Vice-President promised them at a stream a little higher up. Unhappily when they reached the spot, no water was to be seen. The strangers then began to reproach the Herr Major. But he was equal to the occasion. "Let us invoke Moses," said he, "who could bring water from the stony rock, and give him ten minutes in which to do his work." Moses was accordingly invoked amid the jeers of the Viennese. Sure enough, after ten minutes, water began to trickle down the rocks, till before long a streamlet was running at which all could drink. The Major had noticed that the sun, in mounting above the rocks, was just striking a snow-bed which lay hidden in a cleft some yards higher up, and he knew that when the heat had had time to play upon it water would presently appear. He was therefore prepared to stake his reputation as an officer and mountaineer upon the event. In memory whereof the spot is called by the guides and others the Moses Spring even unto this day.'

We followed the Jordan Way, which was fairly easy to find. It led diagonally up the broken rocks beneath the Durný (Schwalbenturm) to a Col where a short traverse is made on the northern side of the ridge. The final climb might have been interesting but was spoilt by iron stanchions, chains, and similar artificial and satanic devices. The view from the summit should be very extensive, but we only caught glimpses of it through the mist. There was a curious metal cylinder

fixed near the summit. We unscrewed its cap and found it was full of visiting cards and other records of successful ascents.

Our climbers' guide mentioned a variation which would avoid the chains, and on the descent to the Col we took this alternative route, which was much pleasanter though not difficult. It was still early in the day and we looked about for further climbing. As the mists kept circling around us, we were not inclined to attempt any fanciful and complicated route of descent, so we started to traverse the ridge to the north-west. We surmised that it should be fairly easy to get down from one or other of the Cols in this direction. We were very careful never to leave the ridge, making many conscience climbs which could have been avoided, and so had some five hours of excellent scrambling before we reached the Téryjoch. We crossed about 9 or 10 named peaks.

On the Katzenturm we were troubled by the mist and could not find the narrow chimney which is the key to the route to the Joch. However we made a way down the northern side within about 80 ft. of the gully below the pass. As the rocks were very steep we thought it prudent to use a *corde de rappel*. As I was in the middle of the descent, the mist suddenly cleared, and a Polish party who were ascending the gully, tugging wildly at the chains, were so startled at seeing us, floating as it were, above their heads, that two of them fell right off their ample stances, and slid down the gully till they got entangled in the chains. For once our cord did not jam and so we were soon running down the long scree slopes towards the hut.

At supper that evening the climbers were divided into two schools, partizans respectively of Grat-Kletterei or Wand-Kletterei, the Ridge Climbers or Face Climbers. The face climbers considered themselves far superior to the others. They lauded scarpetti, and mocked nailed boots. As we watched the champions of Wand-Kletterei next day we marvelled at the eagerness with which they traversed away from the steep faces and joined the ridges.

After a morning devoted to photography we descended to the Kämmschen, and took the path which skirts the Slavkovsky Stit (Schlagendorfer Spitze) to the Schliesky Dom or Schlesierhaus, a glorified hut belonging to the Czech Tourist Club. It was very crowded and the greater proportion of the visitors were not mountaineers. The manners of some of the Czechs and Poles were extraordinary. They would emphasise their arguments by throwing their knives and forks violently

on to the table and spitting. Compared with the raucous shouting of these people an animated conversation of Frenchmen or Italians would be but a tuneful whisper. But one must make allowances for the fact that it was a mid-August crowd.

We had ascended the Lomnický by the ordinary way and descended by a ridge route, so we decided to reverse the process of Gerlach. Obedient to our tourist map we followed the green and red marks up the Velická valley, a rugged glen in which we heard several marmots, passing the Dlhe Pleso to the Polský Hreben (Polnischer Kamm) on the Frontier between Czecho-Slovakia and Poland.

An agreeable five hours of ridge scrambling from this pass brought us to the summit of Gerlach, 8737 ft. Sitting beneath the iron standard were two Frenchmen wearing the familiar badge, and we saluted them as colleagues of the French Alpine Club. They had come up by the ordinary route in the care of a Zurbriggen from Saas Fee and a local guide.

The ordinary route, blazed with its trail of green, seemed to us ridiculously easy at first, but later on, when a thick mist and heavy snowstorm came upon us, we were not too proud to look out for the marks. When we reached the iron staircase at the base of the mountain, known as Gerlsdorfer Probe, the ground was covered with three or four inches of snow. This was the beginning of at least a week of rain.

After waiting a day for the weather to clear we made our way round to the third main climbing centre of the Tatra, the hotel by the Popradske Pleso or Popper See. The two popular tourist excursions generally made from this Hotel are the ascent of the Rysy (Meeraugenspitze), the Rigi of the Tatra, and the pass to the Polish Five Lakes. There are 112 lakes in the Tatra, called locally 'Eyes of the Sea,' from a strange belief held by the natives that they had some subterranean connexion with the sea, and that the ripples which can be seen on the surface of the waters on calm windless days were caused by storms on the Baltic.

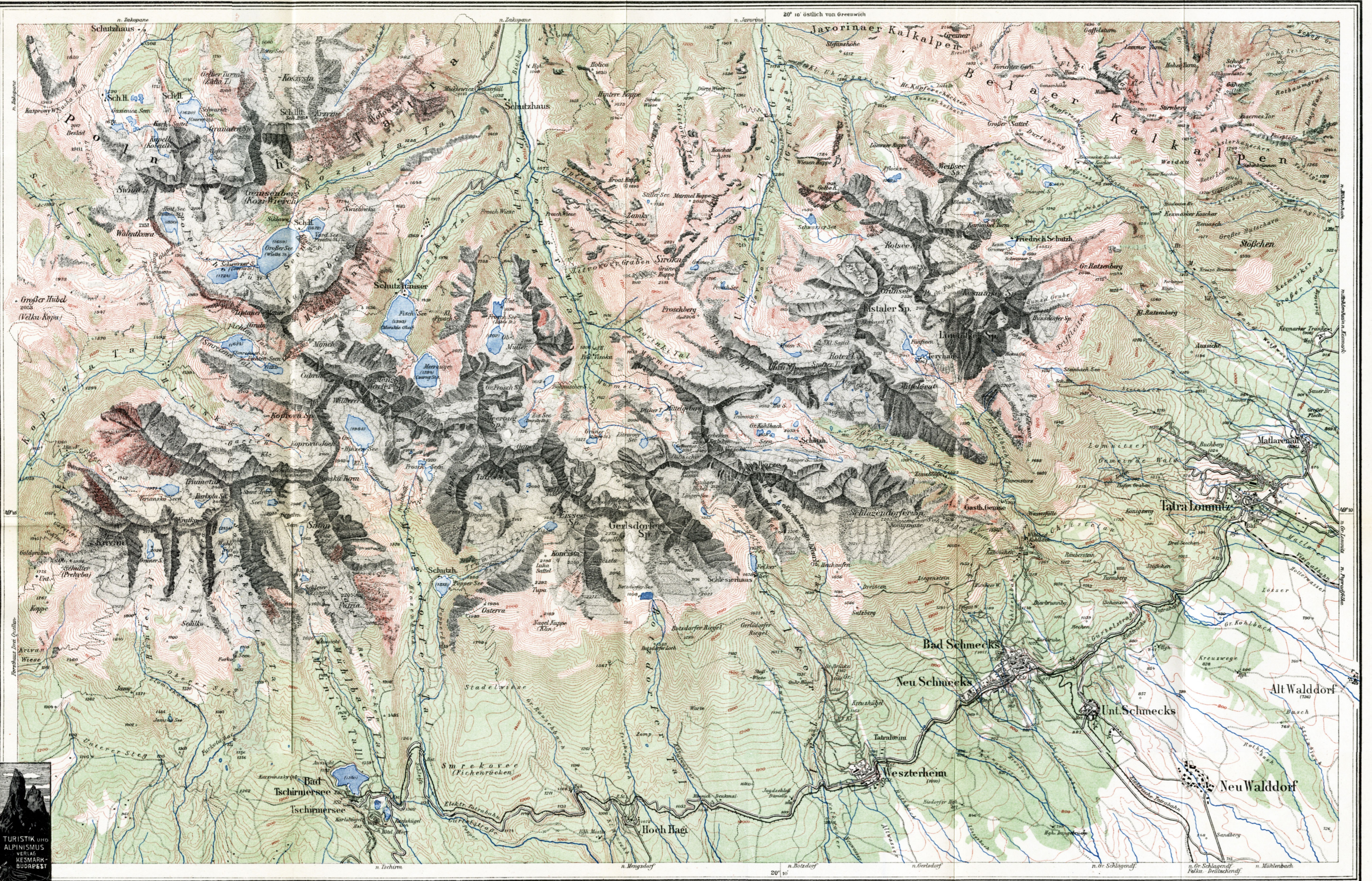
Thick mist and incessant rain rendered serious climbing impossible, and prevented our seeing even the tourists' 'sights.' As the bad weather showed no signs of abating we departed southwards to a land of sunlight.

What were our impressions of the Carpathians? With their entire absence of snow and ice they are, in the summer at least, no serious rival of the Alps. A devoted lover of the Dolomites might find a second climbing paradise in the Tatra. But the Southern Carpathians have a charm all their own. There,

DIE HOHE TATRA

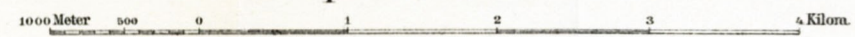
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Verlag: Turistik u. Alpinismus, Kesmark-Budapest.



Unter Mitwirkung von F. Dénes, Gy. A. Helly u. D. Reichart jun. entworfen von Dr. J. Višyázo. Felszeichnung entworfen von Dr. Gy. Komarúcki.

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Geländezeichnung und Stich von K. Dufka

life is more primitive, and the mountains more unspoilt, than anywhere in the Alps. There, at last, one may escape from the August crowd and enjoy the mountain undisturbed, and one's petty annoyance at the dirt and discomfort of the place will be more than appeased by the good temper and cheery disposition of the Roumanian peasant.

SOME CLIMBS IN THE BREGAGLIA AND THE DOLOMITES.

By N. S. FINZI.

(Read before the Alpine Club, May 5, 1925.)

MY first visit to the Bregaglia was in 1921. I arrived at Maloja *hors de combat* owing to some bad food. However, I managed, after a day's rest, to struggle up to the Forno hut, and on the succeeding day, with my sister and Dr Dent's party, up the Monte del Forno. One gets a fine view from this peak, but what struck one most, on topping a curve in the glacier *en route* for the hut, was the magnificent view of the mountains at the head of the Forno glacier. Speaking of this in the evening, I learned to my surprise that the splendid needle known as Cleopatra's Needle or the Ago del Torrone had never been climbed: attempted—yes, many times, but never climbed.

I had brought two Valais guides with me, Josef Biner and his nephew Adolf Schaller. At the top of the Monte del Forno some other guides pointed out several things to them, including the route up the Cima del Largo which I had expressed the intention of climbing. A couple of days later I started from Maloja to do it. One advantage of the Bregaglia climbs is that many of them may be climbed direct from the hotel without over-exertion or a very early start. We reached the *Einstieg* and started, quite correctly, to traverse to the left, but, although I urged that, later, we ought to bend back to the right, the guides would hear nothing of this, pushed on ahead, and we only all came together again at a pass which I said was between the Piz Bacun and the Piz Casnil, whereas they declared it to be between the Largo and the Bacun. 'Look in the book' they said 'and tell us which is the way.' I answered—'If this is the Cima del Largo you must follow the ridge, but there is nothing corresponding to the description of it here.'