

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.)

**M**Y 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.'

At any rate we decided to follow the ridge. It was evident that it was not the ordinary route from the amount of small, loose stones, and we had a very pleasant little climb, portions of which were not quite easy. We rejoined the route up the S.E. face close to the summit. Here the discussion as to which peak we had done recommenced, but it ceased with the discovery of the name of the peak, Pizzo Bacone, in the summit-book. The guides had been misled by the local men, and subsequently learned that ours was a new route, namely, the S. ridge of the Piz Bacun. We returned by the chimney and gully in the S.E. face.

We next went to the Albigna hut and climbed the Ago di Sciora, being led by Christian Klucker, then 70 years old, who had less difficulty with it than I had. The next day we went over the Zocca Pass, and I got this photograph of the Ago but left half my lens on the pass. We descended to Masino Bagni, a delightful spot, and from here climbed the Badile by the ordinary route, which is quite easy, and then the Disgrazia by the *via Barone*, also not difficult. I cannot recommend this latter climb, as the Cecilia hut has been burgled so often that nothing is kept there: all blankets have to be carried up from San Martino. There is also only a very sketchy supply of cooking utensils and I think one plate, one knife, and two spoons and three forks. We returned to Masino Bagni and next day crossed over the Zocca pass again to get back to clean clothes and—sulphur ointment, an item of equipment that should never be omitted in Italy! We were extraordinarily lucky in that Josef Biner's sharp eyes found my half lens on the top of the pass under some stones. We then went back to Maloja and climbed the Piz Lagrev by the route described by Dr. Wilson in the 'A.J.' We then climbed the real Cima del Largo, intending the next day to go and have a look at Cleopatra's Needle, but in taking off some new crampons which I had been trying, I fell and injured my hand enough to prevent climbing.

The next year we had started in the Mont Blanc range, but got bad weather, and we thought it wouldn't be a bad plan to go to the Bregaglia again. My friend Rudolf was with me, and we had now as guides Peter Almer of Grindelwald and Franz-Josef Biner of St. Niklaus, whose names I had got from Captain Farrar. We travelled *via* Milan, where we found that they had just finished a general strike. Anxious inquiries about trains elicited the fact that they had run well all through the strike; but its cessation caused us to be 8 hours late in a run

of about 60 miles, and to miss a day. When we arrived we took provisions and went up to the Forno hut.

First we climbed the Torrone Orientale. The next day we did the S. ridge of the Bacun both up and down, and the following day the weather enforced rest.

Our next climb was the Cima di Spluga and the Cima del Largo, and we there had a most terrible experience. The weather was rough and windy, but we had done the Largo and returned to the ridge at the spot where one removes the scarpetti. We had each got on about one boot and one shoe when amid thunder and lightning it started to hail peas, then beans. This was unpleasant, but when the stones reached the size of well-nourished damsons, we feared our last hour had arrived. They came with terrific force and, though we hid our faces, our arms and bodies were battered and bruised. Had we been on the difficult part of the climb, I should not be reading this paper now. I have no doubt that the two Italians who were killed on the Badile that same day met this hailstorm.

The next day being a rest day we strolled up the Monte Forno, and the day after, the weather prevented an excursion. Then we decided to have a look at Cleopatra's Needle. Peter Almer was not well, so we went with Franz. We crossed the glacier coming from the Colle del Torrone and its bergschrund to the rocks on its W. bank, and from here followed rock terraces up to the col between the big gendarme, which resembled a hen on its nest, and the Torrone Centrale. We had hoped to find an easy way round this gendarme, but it is a thin plate of rock, and the choice lay between climbing over it, which, if possible, would be extremely difficult, traversing under it, also very difficult, or descending a long way and then mounting again. There was no time left for this last, so we returned. During our stay at the Forno hut we had met Herr Zürcher with a friend of his and the Engadine guide Risch. They were returning from the direction of the Torrone group, and they had with them enormous masses of rope. We immediately suspected an attempt on 'our' needle, and on questions being asked we were told they had been trying 'variations on the Torrone Orientale.' Subsequently we have discovered that they had tried shooting a rope over the needle by an arrangement of which a pistol formed part. Thank goodness, it wasn't climbed by this method.

Rudolf then had to go home, but I decided to have another look at the needle with the guides. This time, after mounting the rocks on the W. bank of the Torrone glacier for some

distance, we started across the glacier. The rocks are horribly rotten, but the ice traverse is as sensational as anything I have ever seen. The ice is at just about as steep an angle as possible, and therefore necessitated large steps right across the face of the glacier, but Franz cut all the steps in  $1\frac{1}{4}$  hours, more than 80 steps. We arrived at the col only to be met by a severe storm. Franz prospected a bit, but discovered nothing. Unfortunately, on the return, the rope loosed a stone on to Almer's forearm, inflicting rather a deep cut which subsequently suppurated and placed him *hors de combat* for some weeks.

A few days later we decided on another attempt and got an Engadine man as second guide. This time I insisted that we should get to the peak by going over the Torrone Orientale or as far below the summit as we could. The glacier was troublesome and the second guide a very inefficient step-cutter, so it took us over 6 hours to reach the Colle del Torrone. After a snack of food the struggle commenced, and after a tough fight with the mountain, which lasted 2 hours, Franz succeeded, by standing on the second guide's head, in hauling himself above the overhang. The only hold is one hand-hold and very slight knee-friction. He then progressed to within 50 feet of the top, but here found an overhang under which he must traverse. I understand he told the other guide to come on to the peak, but the latter refused, and as I knew I should not be good enough to hold him in case of accident, I did not offer. At this time the mountain was enveloped in cloud, and I made a number of attempts to photograph Franz from the slopes of the Torrone Orientale. I was just giving it up when the mist cleared for a moment. I got the camera out again and was just in time to get a photograph.

It was obvious now that we were almost certain to do the peak, given a good second man. We decided, therefore, to have another try the next year, and it had this advantage, that Rudolf would be with us again.

In 1923 we met Franz at Milan and proceeded at once to Campitello in the Dolomites for a week's intensive training. We didn't know that a new road had been made up to the Sella hut, or we should have taken the car right up there. The day after we arrived we went up to the Sella hut (now Rifugia Sella) and scrambled about on the Sella towers without accomplishing anything but some difficult rock-climbing.

The next day we decided to do the Fünffingerspitze and set out in due course. Our united knowledge of German however failed to make out, from Purtscheller and Hess, which was the

route, and Franz started straight up the gully leading to the Daumenscharte. The rock was very loose and we dislodged a good deal. The stones were flying merrily when we were hailed by another party. They asked if we were in the Schmittkamin. Franz replied that he didn't know but that we would stop if the others wanted either to come up or to cross the gully. We waited a long time but apparently they wouldn't trust us and went away. We continued up the gully, which gradually became difficult, until we arrived at a ledge on the true left wall of the gully with a sheer wall of wet black rock above it. At this stage Franz had no kletterschuhe, but he managed to tackle this exceedingly difficult bit with his nailed boots. It only just went, and he has told me since that it was a very near thing; with kletterschuhe it is very difficult, but with nailed boots almost impossible. At the top of the wall we found an 'Abseilring.' Soon we reached easier rock and then rejoined the ordinary route to the Scharte. Franz didn't think the wall on our left could be the right way to proceed and so decided to try the Daum direct, but we didn't get very far on that, so we traversed round it, eventually reaching a spiral chimney on the S. side. This got more and more difficult, and as it was our first day I eventually called a halt and insisted on returning. We found the ordinary route back and it was quite easy. Later we discovered that the Daumenscharte gully had been descended before but never ascended (unless it has been done since 1913).

We got into a thunderstorm on our return to Campitello and were neither of us well the next day, whether as the result of over-fatigue or something we had eaten, I don't know. Rudolf was worse than myself and had to rest for two days. Meanwhile I proceeded to do the Zahnkofel and then the Schmittkamin, both from Campitello direct. This latter we quitted to our left, but I think above the point at which the usual route leaves it. The whole 60 ft. of rope was out when Franz called me to follow. 'Sind Sie sicher?' I asked, 'ja' he answered in a tone which assured me that he wasn't. The first step was extremely difficult, and then there was a long exposed oblique traverse with no resting places, the pitch being about 70 ft. At the top we rejoined the ordinary route, stepped across the kamin again, and all was plain sailing. We returned by the ordinary route to find Rudolf awaiting us at the Sella hut. The next day Franz took him up the Grohmannspitze while I had a rest day. On the following day, Sunday, Rudolf and I had a little guideless climbing with Smythe, but I hadn't enough confidence in my powers of leading to complete the

third Sellaturn. We returned to Campitello, and then made arrangements for the Marmolata Südwand.

We started on the Monday for the Contrinhaus, and got a beautiful sunset which we photographed, and so were late for dinner. On the Tuesday we started at 3 A.M. and reached the Ombretta Pass in good time to see a most wonderful sunrise. At the *Einstieg* there are three chimneys and one should take the middle one, but Franz didn't like the look of it and so we took the left-hand one, meaning to traverse back into the other. For some distance there was no chance of a traverse, and when we eventually traversed a very exposed place to the right we still didn't reach anything that corresponded to the description of the ordinary route, so we eventually decided to proceed and make our own route. We climbed upwards and to the left, reaching a chimney of which one wall overhung in most places, forming, with the smooth flat slab of the other wall, a place in which one could get a series of jam-holds. In no place could we all three come together; in no place could we move more than one at a time, and at no single spot before the first terrace was reached did we find any easy rock. Eventually we arrived at the first terrace exhausted and parched with thirst, 5 hours after leaving the *Einstieg*. Rudolf had carried the sack the whole way, but we hadn't been able to get near enough together for him to get it off and get at the water bottles. From the first terrace we adopted the ordinary route, but we were all tired and took a long time. We were a little bit afraid that the porter would have departed and taken our boots down with him, but we found them safely on the summit, where we arrived nearly 11 hours after we left the *Einstieg*. We returned to the Contrinhaus by the W. arête and arrived there at dusk. A great noise burst on our ears as we opened the door, and we discovered a sectional gathering of the C.A.I. A gentle word to the proprietor enabled us to finish our dinner and depart before the gathering closed. We took a short cut under direction of the local porter, but I don't think he had ever tried it himself before. We arrived at Campitello at midnight and much regretted that we had ordered a car for 5 the next morning. After sleeping for one minute we were awakened for breakfast. To our disgust it was only 3.40, and we knew we daren't sleep another minute or we should have been late for the car. The drive was tedious but amusing. The so-called car lost bits of itself as we proceeded, and we arrived at Glurns at midday. After lunch the driver proceeded to point out so many fractures in the chassis that we decided to risk no further travel in his car,

and got on to Sta. Maria by the Post. The fireworks of the evening (August 1) were not observed by us that night, and we crossed the Ofen pass the next day, arriving at Maloja in the evening. Here we found our porter, Roman Lager, and after some delay started straight away for the Forno hut. We arrived a little before 11 o'clock, much to the disgust of the occupants.

The next morning, August 3, we started soon after dawn, and this time the choice of route was left to me, so we went over the Torrone Orientale, crossing well below the summit. We had just arrived at the foot of this peak when the weather, which had been threatening, took a turn for the worse, and after waiting for the best part of an hour we decided that Cleopatra's Needle must wait. We returned, arriving at the hut wet through. The following day, August 4, we started again at 5.42. Using our ice steps of the previous day, we climbed rapidly and reached the Colle del Torrone in  $4\frac{1}{4}$  hours. After an hour's rest the assault began on the needle. This has been described in the *ALPINE JOURNAL*, xxxvi. 60 *seq.* No artificial aids to climbing were used. Pitons were used only for holding a security belay or for double-roping. Half an hour, mostly occupied in these preparations, saw Franz on the peak at his first attempt, and the others were hauled up one after the other. After the first step the climbing still did not seem to Rudolf and myself at all easy, and there was a tricky place where in crossing a wide open gully the only way was to lean right out on a handhold; this had had enough with the other three, and it parted from the parent rock with me, the event being accompanied by the usual horrid sulphurous smell. The only harm done was a shock to the nerves of the others, as I instinctively landed with my feet to the rock. A little more difficult rock brought us to a small ledge, above which are a few yards of quite easy climbing. Then came the real excitement. Franz climbed up a crack to the top edge of a slab, the foothold being about an inch thick. Roman followed and stood by his side while he drove in a piton through which the rope was threaded. We were on the N. face of the peak and he then traversed on to the W. face to avoid the overhang. As he found this 'sehr schwer,' I can only imagine it was of the most intense difficulty. We walked up over the double rope. The overhang is so great that with my feet on the face beneath it my stomach was still touching the rock of the overhang. We crowned the peak with Lager's cap, a bright green creation.

To descend, we double-roped to the easy rocks referred to and

took off the rope, and we then went down to the little ledge which just held three comfortably. Another double-roping brought us a little below the point where I landed in my fall, and the third took us on to the top of the glacier.

We returned well pleased with the conquest of a peak where so many good men have failed. All we ask of others who climb this wonderful little needle is that they should not spoil it. I couldn't lead it myself, and anyone who can must be regarded as a first-class climber.

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### THE HIGH TATRA.<sup>1</sup>

By HUGH ROGER-SMITH.

I FEEL diffident about writing a paper on our expedition in 1924 as, from a climbing point of view, it was a fiasco owing to the weather, but our excursions into the valleys and over the passes enabled us to form a good idea of the climbing possibilities of the district. This paper, therefore, may be of use by affording some hints for explorations of a mountain range that seems to have been very much neglected by members of the Club, for, save a description of another disastrous season by Mr. Charles Candler in vol. xxx. 11, I can find no mention of the High Tatra in the *JOURNAL*. Lord Bryce visited the High Tatra in 1878, and a charming account of his stay there appeared in his 'Memories of Travel'; in fact, it was this book that fired me with a desire to explore the district.

The High Tatra is the name applied to a small group of mountains that forms part of the range of the Carpathians. The Carpathian mountains for the most part consist of low pine-clad hills rarely more than 3000 or 4000 ft. above sea level, and in the middle of this range the Tatra group shoots up to between 8000 and 9000 ft. It consists, for the most part, of extremely steep and rugged granite crags reft into fantastic shapes, with steep precipices falling to the valleys below, and lies between Czecho-Slovakia and Poland, the actual boundary passing through the range. It is barely 20 miles in length and some 10 to 12 miles in depth, so that an active walker can explore the district fairly thoroughly in three weeks or a month.

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<sup>1</sup> See map at end of this number.