

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.

Prague—reached *via* Flushing and Dresden in about 30 hours—is a fascinating city and deserves a day or two for seeing its beauties. Anyone visiting Prague for the first time should read 'From a Terrace in Prague,' by Lieut.-Colonel B. C. Baker; and another excellent book is Major C. J. C. Street's 'East of Prague,' which gives a good description of the country but says nothing about the High Tatra, while a description of the Tatra appeared in the *R.G.S.J.* for September 1923, and is well worth studying.

One can take the night train from Prague with comfortable sleepers and arrive at Poprad-Felka about 9 A.M. next morning, where an electric train takes one to Stary-Smokevec (German Schmecks), a charming village at the very foot of the mountains. Here there are two hotels and quite first-class accommodation, but in July and August it is wise to secure rooms beforehand by writing to the Bad Direction, Stary-Smokevec.

We had telegraphed for rooms from Prague, but on arrival we found the village quite full, so we tried the Kohlbach hotel, reached from Stary-Smokevec by a cable railway in 20 minutes. Here we found exactly what we wanted, a small mountain inn right up amongst the hills, very reasonable and with the most perfect cooking; and although the sanitary arrangements were far from perfect, and the only bathroom 5 minutes' walk from the hotel, we stayed here very happily for three weeks. It is an ideal position for exploring the valleys and mountains. German was understood and spoken almost everywhere, the people were very friendly, and we received nothing but kindness and civility wherever we went.

For active mountaineers there is any amount of work to be done amongst the Tatra mountains, the climbs ranging from easy scrambles to exceptionally difficult rock problems. There are no glaciers and practically no snow in summer.

There are three centres from which the various districts can be explored. On the W. is Czorbaer See, the largest lake on the S. side of the Tatra, and here are several hotels; in the centre is Stary-Smokevec, and to the E., Tatra Lomnitz. These three villages are connected by a fine road and an electric railway. In connexion with each of these main centres are several alpine huts where one can sleep, and in most of which good food can be obtained. Thus about 1½ hours from the Czorbaer See is the Popper See hut on the banks of the lake. This is a small, comfortable hotel from which beautiful Mengsdorfertal and the Trummertal can be explored. Then midway between Czorbaer and Schmecks in the Felka Tal is the large and

comfortable Schlesier hut, from which the Gerlsdorfer Spitze and the surrounding peaks can be readily tackled. Above Schmecks is the Kohlbach hotel already mentioned; at the junction of the Gross and Klein Täler is the Gemse hotel; near the head of the Gross Kohlbach Tal is a small hut in bad condition, where one could spend a night at a pinch, and at the head of the Klein Kohlbach is the fine Terry hut, a good centre for exploring the Lomnitz, Eisthaler Spitze and the mountains of this group. About  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours' walk from Tatra Lomnitz is the Friedrich hut on the banks of the Grüner See, where you get excellent food, and which forms a very good starting-point for exploring the Papyrus Täler and surrounding peaks. On the N. or Polish side there are two good roomy huts, the Roztoka hut and the Fischsee hut, and three other very small huts with five or six beds apiece.

Guides are to be found at each of the centres, and are controlled by the Czecho-Slovakian Alpine Club, and we heard well of them, but the climbs we were able to accomplish were guideless. The weather in August 1924 was hopeless in the Tatra, constant heavy rains making for days together any serious expedition out of the question. The High Tatra rise on the S. side very abruptly out of the plains, and, seen from these plains, give the impression of a huge rock wall. The warm S. winds, laden with moisture from the plains, strike this rocky barrier and condense in mist. Day after day it would start clear and bright at 5 A.M.; by 6 A.M. wisps of mist would appear, and by 7 A.M. all the upper regions were enveloped in a dense fog, and it usually began to rain. Time after time we would start at 5 or 5.30 A.M. for some peak—for a good many interesting climbs could be easily done in a day from our hotel—only at 8 or 9 A.M. to be driven back by a perfectly bewildering mist.

Our first expedition was the Schlagendorfer Spitze, 7972 ft., rising abruptly above the Kohlbach hotel, nothing, really, but a pretty fatiguing walk; in fact, it looked so simple that we—the late Dr. R. G. Rows, Mr. Reginald Graham and the writer—made a bee-line for the apparent summit regardless of the warning given by Lord Bryce about the horrors of the Krummholz zone. The bases of all these Tatra mountains are densely covered with fir trees, mostly spruce firs, and above these is invariably found a zone some half-mile deep of dwarf pine trees, the *Pinus mughus*, and known locally as 'Krummholz.' Lord Bryce calls it 'this hateful little tree,' and with reason. Not more than 8 or 10 ft. high, with

interlacing straggling branches, too strong to bend, too low to get under, and very difficult to climb over, they form an almost impenetrable barrier. Into this pine wall we stumbled on this our first ascent, and it took us  $1\frac{1}{4}$  hours of really hard work to force our way through this half-mile of wood. On emerging from it we were all suffering severely in our tempers and our garments. Nothing would induce us to face untracked Krummholz again!

The Schlagendorfer Spitze was very deceptive. Time after time we thought we had reached the top, only to find a higher summit beyond. It was exceedingly hot, and our first expedition, undertaken for training and to get the lie of the land, so that a prolonged lunch rest excuses the absurd time of 6 hours to the summit, by which time mists were down and we saw absolutely nothing; it should be done easily in 4 hours.

Another excellent training climb is the Kleine Vysoke, which rises to the E. of the Polnischer Kamm. There is an easy path from the Kohlbach Hotel, skirting the S. flank of the Schlagendorfer Spitze, leading to the Schlesierhaus, a big and well-found hut in the Felkatal on the S. bank of the pretty Felka lake, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $1\frac{3}{4}$  hours from the hotel. From here the track ascends the Felka Valley, at first through the 'Blumengarten'—which even in August was indeed a garden of flowers and a wonderful sight, though not producing anything startling from a botanical point of view—and so by a steep but easy path to the crest of the ridge, Polnischer Kamm, 7169 ft.; then, turning E., the crest is followed to the top of the Kleine Vysoke, 7894 ft., a quite sporting little rock scramble of 700 ft. The day was perfect, and at last we got a magnificent view of practically the whole of the High Tatra from Krivan on the extreme W. to the Lomnitze Spitze in the E. We were standing at the apex of a circle of peaks and ridges. Continuing the arête S.E. was the rocky Warze, and beyond this the imposing mass of the Schlagendorfer Spitze. In the other direction the ridge drops down to the Polnischer Kamm and continues W. and then turns S. The sharp arête is punctuated by a series of huge gendarmes and culminates in the Gerlsdorfer Spitze, 8654 ft., the highest point of the Tatra. The ascent of the Gerlsdorfer Spitze along this arête is long, but by far the most sporting of the various ways of reaching the summit. Messrs. V. T. and L. A. Ellwood did this climb and, I understand, found it very interesting. We made two attempts on the Gerlsdorfer Spitze by the ordinary route from the Schlesierhaus, but on both occasions were defeated by weather conditions. I fancy the

present route must be much the same as that described by Lord Bryce, but now the only really difficult part of the ascent, up a steep and smooth slab some 45 ft. high, has been 'improved' by a whole series of stanchions and chains, but without them it must have been a very stiff proposition. Above this, as far as we were able to force our way in the blinding mist, there was nothing in the way of difficulty and we did not find it necessary to put on the rope, and from what I could learn it was the same sort of rough scrambling to the top. On another occasion from the Polnischer Kamm—the actual boundary between Czecho-Slovakia and Poland is considerably further N.—we dropped very steeply down the N. face of the pass to the little Gefrorener See, and then turned sharply E. up a very steep gully to the Kerbschen, a well-marked narrow cleft between the Kleine Vysoke and the Roten Flossturm, and over this pass to the head of the Gross Kohlbachtal, a really lovely valley, and so home, a most enjoyable 8 or 9 hours round.

It was not until we had been a fortnight in the Tatra that a chance came of climbing the Lomnitzer Spitze, the second highest peak of the district, 8560 ft. From our hotel we went up the Klein Kohlbachtal, and in an hour reached a big overhanging rock, locally known as a 'Feuerstein,' which in former days was used as a bivouac. Here we turned off to the right and followed a narrow track to the entrance of a great rock couloir, locally known as 'die Lomnitze Probe,' but it is not in the least difficult; then between some fantastic rock towers 'die Kapelle.' Steep grassy slopes followed by very tedious coarse moraine brought us to 'die Moses quelle' on the N.E. side of the final pyramid. Here the real climbing begins, and it is wise to remember that this is the last sign of water you will see.

The climb begins in an open rocky couloir and continues along a more or less pronounced arête, with a steep slab, again 'improved' by a series of chains. We then turned S. and descended 80 ft. into a wide stone couloir, where we left our axes. A little higher is an awkward corner with a hanging, quite unnecessary, chain, by means of which the climber swings himself round the projecting rock. We gradually bore S., and eventually reached the summit on the S.W. side, without finding it necessary to put on the rope. There are six main climbs on the Lomnitzer Spitze with five variations, of which one or two are reputed quite difficult. As usual the view was very limited by mists, but the Eistaler Spitze across the valley looked a fine rock mass and gives a very sporting climb from the Terry Hut.

One of the stock climbs of the district is the ascent of the Meeraugspitze, a sort of local Rigi, quite simple but a very fine view, so early in our stay Graham and I set off by the 7 A.M. train from Schmecks for Czorbaer See, walked to the Popper See, and from there missed our way and turned up the Trummer-tal and eventually arrived at the Eisse, considerably to our disgust, as it was then too late to rectify our error. It is, however, a lovely valley, and from a little peak above the lake we got a fine view of the Tatra Spitze, the most beautiful of all the Tatra mountains. Later we made an attempt on this peak, but had to retreat discomfited before a blinding snowstorm.

An interesting expedition was to the Grüner See, 2½ hours from Tatra Lomnitz, beautifully situated at the foot of an imposing array of peaks. To the N.W. the fine rock mass of Karfunkelturm rises very conspicuously, and to the S. the Kesmarker Spitze and behind it the Lomnitzer Spitze are seen to advantage but, although it was one of our few really fine days, the peaks were all more or less covered with mist, and satisfactory photography was out of the question. After an excellent lunch at the Friedrichs hut we walked up to the Kopa Pass, leading down to Javorina and Poland. We had hoped to make this hut a centre for exploring the Papyrustaler and the mountains at their head, so well described by Dr. Alfred von Martin in the *Zeitschrift* of the D.O.A.V. for 1908, but the weather never gave us a chance.

Foiled in our attempts to climb, we decided to try our luck underground, and so paid a visit to the ice caves at Dobschau, about 30 miles S. of Schmecks. We took train to Poprad and a carriage and pair from there, and the drive itself through the country of the Zips was most interesting. Arrived at Dobschau the way to the cave leads up the sides of a steep hill, covered with flowers, and with butterflies flitting about in the bright sunlight. There was a large party of Czechs waiting to descend, and we entered with them and climbed down some wooden steps some 30 or 40 ft. and found ourselves in a world of ice with the temperature at freezing. We were in a huge chamber 400 ft. long, floored with ice and with three enormous ice columns reaching to the rocky roof. From this chamber a flight of wooden stairs descends to a second chamber past an ice wall 400 ft. long and 80 ft. deep. The cave is well lighted with electricity and the whole effect is most weird and impressive.

Another interesting underground excursion is to the Bela Cave at Barlangliget, about 6 miles from Tatra Lomnitz. Here

before the inn door the quaint old guide collects his scattered visitors by means of a diminutive trumpet and then leads off to the cave, which is over a mile long and contains magnificent specimens of stalactites and stalagmites. The drive from Schmecks to Zakopane in Poland, over the Zdiar Pass and through miles of fir woods, is very beautiful and affords striking views of the Polish side of the Tatra mountains. From Zakopane it is only a five hour train journey to Krakow, a picturesque old city full of records of Polish national history. Poland is, however, a very expensive country to visit, for not only is the exchange against us but there is a State tax of 40 per cent. on foreigners' hotel bills.

In the principal touring centres of the Tatra one does not notice anything characteristic in the way of dress, but in the outlying villages plenty of extremely picturesque national costumes are to be seen. The women wear Wellington boots—we saw one woman remove hers when it began to rain, tuck them under her arm to keep them clean, and continue her walk barefoot. Brilliant skirts, generally red, and a blue embroidered apron, a red bodice heavily embroidered with gold or silver, big white puff sleeves, and a brilliant red kerchief on the head produce a very striking effect. The men wear white stuff trousers, embroidered with red down the outer seam, white shirts fastened at the neck with a big brass clasp and with elaborate red embroidery at the wrist, and over this a sleeveless leather jacket, embroidered in green or red, and a round cap adorned with red feathers. Some of the houses in the less frequented districts are very striking, being built of unhewn logs, dark brown in colour, the interstices being stuffed with mud, coloured blue or white. The window frames are painted red and the roofs are made of long wooden shingles.

The flora of the district is rich, and the botanist will find many interesting plants, but as the Tatra proper is entirely granite the number of species here is necessarily limited, but to the S., in the Little Tatra, limestone appears and with it a greater wealth of plants. Here in August the sides of the road were blue in places with the lovely *Campanula carpatica* and growing near it *Sempervivum arenarium*, with its big heads of white untidy-looking flowers. The outstanding feature in the Tatra is the extraordinary abundance of the lovely Willow Gentian (*Gentian asclepiadea*), its spikes of bright blue trumpets, two or three ft. high, producing a splendid effect. Mixed with this, in the upper valleys, were great quantities of a dwarf Monkshood (*Aconitum paniculatum*), not growing more than a

foot high. Of other Gentians the gorgeous *Gentiana ciliata* was common and *Gentiana frigida* was found on Kleine Vysoké and *Gentiana cruciata* in the Little Tatra, but nowhere any sign of *G. acaulis*. Above 6000 ft. *Campanula alpina* was fairly abundant everywhere; I have never met it before either wild or in cultivation and I think it is rare; it is very effective with its clusters of sky-blue hanging bells looking at first sight like a *Campanula barbata*. In the woods *Campanula persicifolia* was plentiful. Another striking plant was *Senecio abrotanifolius*, with its brilliant orange flowers very like the mountain Arnica. Of Saxifrages there was a poor show owing to lack of lime, but I found *Saxifraga retusa* on the flanks of the Lomnitzer Spitze. *Swertia perennis*, a rather unusual plant, was fairly abundant in the marshy ground, and *Delphinium fissum* was found in the higher valleys. *Primula minima* was abundant above 6000 ft., mostly as a saxatile plant firmly wedged between the rocks and quite unlike its mode of growth on the Sella Joch or on the top of the Pitzberg above St. Ulrich, where it carpeted the moorland ground. I found no other sign of any other *Primula* at all.

There is an excellent guide to the Tatra by Dr. von Komarnicki called 'Hochgebirgsführer der Hohen Tatra,' in four convenient volumes, with several good sectional maps and full descriptions of all the climbs. There is also a useful German map, 1:50,000, both published by Turistik & Alpinismus, Kesmark, Budapest. There is a portfolio of paintings and drawings of the Hohe Tatra, by the late Mr. E. T. Compton, in the Alpine Club, which give a wonderful idea of the character of the district. The 'Skizzen aus der Hohen Tatra,' by Günter Dyhrenfurth and Dr. Alfred von Martin, in the *Zeitschrift* for 1908, are very instructive.

## SULDEN AFTER THE WAR.

BY WILLIAM ELLIS.

A GOOD deal has been written about Sulden, but on going there this year I felt it was being rather neglected as a climbing centre with unusual facilities. I met only two English climbers at Sulden. Although I cannot say anything new about the various climbs, this note may interest some of our members and cause them to put in an occasional season in this delightful district. There may be a feeling that since