

IN AND OUT OF THE KIENTAL.

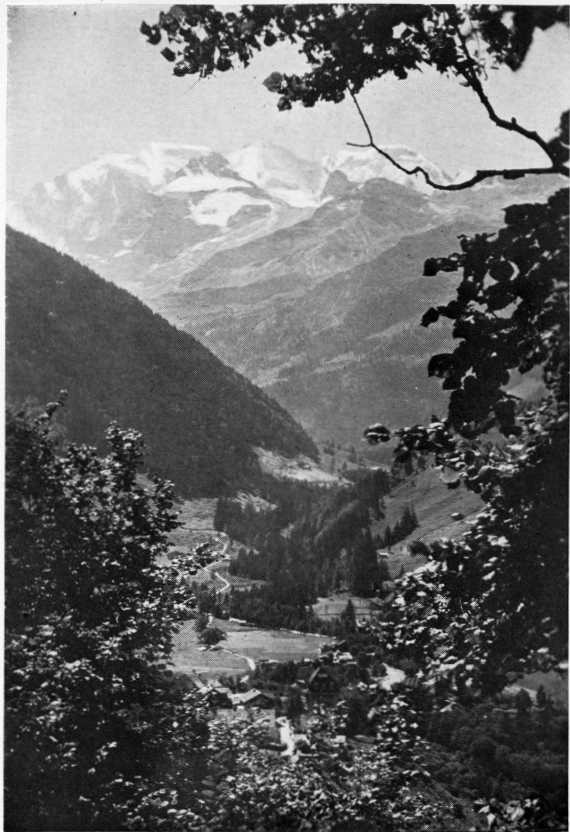
BY WALTER WESTON.

TO some members of the Club it will come almost with surprise to learn that, within an hour or so of turning their backs on the shores of the Lake of Thun, at Spiez, they may find themselves entering the gateway of one of the most charming valleys in the Alps.

From the cheerful little village of Reichenbach, on the Lötschberg line, the car-forbidden road climbs up beyond the quaint old church and the massive brown-walled chalets of the village through the shade of a great forest of dark pines and deciduous trees. The tall aisles are broken only here and there by some clearing that opens out a cluster of cottages gay with sunlit gardens or with window-boxes filled with scarlet geraniums, fuchsias, and many other flowers of every hue. The wayfarer may still recapture memories of earlier travel by traversing the few miles to the village of Kiental in one of the familiar old black and yellow diligences, with the blue-uniformed driver in his shiny black hat.

On approaching the village of Kiental a sudden turn in the road discloses a striking prospect of the peaks of the great barrier of the Blümlis Alp group. The contrast of their dazzling snows with the sunny pastures of the fertile meadows in the foreground and the dark pines of the forests in the middle distance is one of exceeding impressiveness. Such Englishmen as have visited the valley have usually been mountaineers *en route* for the passes and the club-huts at its head.

Beyond the village, to the left, a torrent descends from a secluded glen, the Spiggengrund, the existence of whose attractive upper reaches would never be guessed at from below. At length the road arrives at the entrance to Tschingel, where is a homely inn, the Alpenruhe, home of the charming and wholly unspoilt small people who form the family of the leading guide of the valley, Jakob Mani-Lauener—to his intimates 'Köbeli.' It is an oval cirque of level pasturage that here occupies the entire compass of the valley floor. At its farther end tall cliffs are surmounted by cleverly constructed zigzags up the wooded face of the opposing grey rocky wall. Near the foot of these a deafening roar is raised by the mass of water hurled down



Phot. E. Gyger Adelboden.

HEAD OF KIENTAL  
with Blümlisalp Group.



AERMIGHORN  
from Kurhaus Griesalp.

into a gigantic 'pot-hole'—the Hexenkessel—by the converging currents of two rival cascades.

After a heavy pull of a good half-hour our road turns a sudden corner, to pass through an old torrent bed with gigantic rock walls—a wild spot indeed—and gains the Gries Alp itself, supporting on its rocky platform the apparent cluster of large chalets resolving itself into an hotel, entirely in harmony with its surroundings, and arranged and conducted with an efficiency that makes it an attractive haven of rest, nearly 5000 ft. above sea level.

Delightful as it is as a headquarters for summer climbs, it offers in many respects equal inducements for a winter stay. Let it not be thought that the bolder spirits among the climbing fraternity will have to be content with expeditions of relatively moderate difficulty. In 'A.J.' 30, he will find the story of one of the most difficult climbs ever accomplished—the first ascent, by Geoffrey Young and his party, in July 1914, of the western or Rothe Zähne ridge of the Gspaltenhorn. The ascent of the Aermighorn by the face seen from the hotel is by no means easy, and the ascent of the Dündenhorn *direct* by the N. arête, both first done by Jakob Mani, is hard.

Add to these the *direct* ascent of the Morgenhorn from the Gamchi-Lücke, and you will have a choice of expeditions worthy of the prowess of the best of the Alpine brotherhood. On the off-days, all the more refreshing after such strenuous toil, no more delightful hours can be spent than in such solitudes as Agniboden, the pastures below the Dünden Grat, gay with *gentiana verna*, *soldanella*, and true 'alpines' of kaleidoscopic hues. Hard by here, or on some of the higher slopes at the base of the Wilde Frau, groups of chamois may be watched almost any day. For the valley is noted for its prolific herds, and Jakob has told me of as many as 400 in a favourable season.

To the mountaineer, however, of more moderate ambitions, there is a variety of expeditions—most of which were shared with me by my wife in a season some years ago—of which a few notes may be of interest. The first of the Blümlis Alp peaks was the Weisse Frau. The Wilde Frau and the Blümlis Alp proper we knew of old. Herr Scheurer, managing director and presiding genius of this remarkable hotel, suggests the feminine titles of these peaks may be due to the fact that much of the land hereabouts once belonged to the important nunnery at Interlaken. Legend also states that a cowherd on the Oeschinen Alp (on the Kandersteg side of the group), under the

influence of a handsome but unprincipled young woman, turned out his mother to starve, while for the entertainment of the damsel herself he built a staircase of cheeses to the Alp. At length, heaven's vengeance smote them with effectual force. The cowherd suddenly vanished in flame and sulphurous vapour, his seducer was transformed into the Wilde Frau, but his mother found ultimate and fitting transfiguration in the lovely form of 'The White Lady.'

On the walk up to the Hochtürli hut from the Gries Alp a delightful spot for a noontide halt is the Bund Alp. A spirited account of a lively night (lively for more reasons than one) spent there is given, with illustrations, in Roth and Fellenberg's 'Doldenhorn and Weisse Frau.' One is reminded of the description of a certain hill resort in Japan, described in a country guide-book as a 'pleasant place where most of the inhabitants feed peacefully upon tourists.'

From the Hochtürli hut a delightful climb brought us, in three hours—a considerable portion of which was spent in step-cutting on the final icy arête—to the top of the Weisse Frau. Our downward journey to the hut took us an hour and a half, and the afternoon saw us circling round the head of the Kiental, across the Gamchi glacier, and sunning ourselves, at tea, outside the cosy Gspaltenhorn hut.

The Gspaltenhorn, from which a year or two earlier we had been driven by a frightful storm, was our next objective, but the rocks above the Büttlassenlücke, being in shadow, were so thickly glazed that our attentions had perforce to be addressed elsewhere. A delightful scramble of a little over an hour and a half carried us along the rocky ridge that leads to the top of the Büttlassen from the Lücke. Two chimneys on the left edge of the arête and a curious little 'letter box' hole on the top afforded excellent scrambling.

When traversing along the top of the ridge the sheer drop of some 2000 to 3000 ft. on the side looking towards Mürren appeared quite sensational, but most of the climbing itself was comparatively simple.

Another night at the friendly hut, with two agreeable English climbers, was followed by a most delightful expedition up the Gspaltenhorn; indeed, the conditions were ideal, the day perfect, and our enjoyment, after the disappointments of hope deferred, complete. The gaunt black cliffs falling down sheer to the Kanderfirn filled us with admiration for Mr. Hasler's feat in scaling them, but the sensations suggested by the sight of the great gashed arête from the Gamchilücke, by which Geoffrey

Young's memorable ascent was made, were more akin to shuddering wonder. Our next step 'in the Kiental' was to get out of it to the Ober-Steinberg, by way of the Gamchilücke.

On my last crossing of this attractive little col I had passed the traces of two fatal disasters. In the one case a Dutchman and his daughter, guideless, fell into a crevasse on the Kiental side, the father being killed and the girl escaping with a broken arm. In the other, some distance below the Mutthorn, one of two German brothers—also guideless—dropped into a crevasse unhurt, but the other brother was killed.

From Steinberg, after delightful days off, we carried out a long cherished project in the passage of the Schmadrijoch, between the Grosshorn and the Lauterbrunnen-Breithorn and leading to the Lötschental. As we traversed the Breithorn glacier, there opened out the lights of Wengen, a chaplet of brilliants glittering far below. The climb itself was full of variety, its main feature being some 1500 ft. of interesting rocks to the left of the channel of a great ice avalanche, which we had watched falling some days before. On the way to the col we passed the remains of a little rocky shelter, built up against an overhanging cliff by a French climber and his guides the last time the pass was attempted, several years before.

We ascended the rocks until on a level with the Nollen, a great boss of ice that usually forms the crux of the climb. Here we crossed a steep icy couloir to its right side, and then found our main difficulties done with. The quaint little rocky gap that forms the actual summit of the pass discloses a striking prospect of the fine Bietschhorn and the other peaks across the Lötschental. Our upward way had taken us five and a half hours of steady but not very strenuous going, and we contentedly imagined that now 'all was over but the shouting.' But at the end of that hot summer the Jägi glacier was very 'dry,' and its tangled maze of crevasses took over three hours to get through in safety. As far as Jakob was aware our route was appreciably different from the general line usually followed.

That night the clean and cosy little inn on the Fafler Alp sheltered us comfortably. Our return to the Steinberg was to have been over the intricacies of the Wetterlücke, of which I had pleasant memories, thrice repeated. But the crevasses were unbridged and wide-jawed, so we gave them the go-by, and traversed the Tschingelhorn to the Mutthorn hut, from east to west, a route which Jakob stated had been made but once before.

This, of all our Alpine seasons the pleasantest, ended with a

traverse, from the Schwarenbach Inn, of the Balmhorn to the Altels by the airy little icy ridge that connects them. The walk up to the former peak we made in the company of a bulky local porter who carried the rope. The traverse, however, did call for its use, a fact which, at the airiest spot, led to his untimely interrogation to my wife 'Sind Sie schwindelig?' eliciting an indignant negative.

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THE FIESCHERWAND.

By W. H. AMSTUTZ (PRESIDENT ACAD. A.C., BERNE).

ON the afternoon of August 2 my friend P. v. Schumacher and I stepped out strongly for the Bäregg. My thoughts were, like Andreas Fischer's years ago, in the Mont Blanc range, for of a truth our design was not exactly pitched low! We were about to venture 'a new ascent.' Our bodily training was by no means at its height, but one thing was certain, our *moral* was all right, and this for the success of the present undertaking was of great significance.

From Bäregg the Fiescherwand presents a magnificent picture. From the Ochs or Kl. Fiescherhorn to the Lower Mönchjoch it is untrodden by the foot of man. In the middle of the wall a casual glance shows a steep arête starting in the Fiescherfirn and mounting a thousand metres high to the minor summit of the Fiescherhorn. Up that was our job! We had had it long in mind. In June we had made a thrilling ski-run over the Kalli to judge a bit closer of the possibilities, which convinced us that it must go. The wet days of July had played havoc, however, with the rocks. Snow, much snow, lay on the arête. This made us very undecided whether to wait a couple of days. Two sunny days would, we considered, alter a lot, work much alteration. Still, what guarantee had we in such a summer of such a thing? Besides, how could we be certain a second time of feeling the enterprise that now possessed us? Surely this year we had lounged about in huts perforce idle. So off!

But we had not yet done with our Tantalus trials. Scarcely had we left the inn when we ran into our fellow-member, R. Wyss. Our doubts started anew. Difficulties and fresh snow in the one scale; youthful exuberance and hope of fine weather in the other. We had also heard lately that an English