



This extract from a Climbers' Club Journal has been made available by kind permission of the Climbers' Club as copyright for the author has expired.

Copyright remains with The Climbers' Club. It is provided in electronic form for your personal use and cannot be used for commercial profit without seeking permission from The Climbers' Club.

Journal: 1899

Author:

© Copyright 2010

A "HIGH LEVEL" WALK

FROM THE BRENNER TO THE BERNINA, WITHOUT GUIDES.

BY HENRY CANDLER.

CLIMBERS who are ambitious of forming a practical acquaintance with the topography of the Alps will find a good example before them in the expedition so graphically described by Sir Martin Conway in "*The Alps from End to End.*" To many of us both time and means are wanting to carry out such an extensive enterprise in one journey. But the route may very well be divided into sections, to be "joined on" to one another as opportunities occur. It was in pursuance of some such plan that the present walk was undertaken.

The Tyrol offers many advantages to mountaineers who wish to gain experience in climbing without guides, and who are not sufficiently practised to attempt the more formidable ascents in higher ranges. The peaks are lower and the glaciers less extensive than those of the Western, Central and Southern Alps. There are very few summits above 12,000 feet, whilst the vast majority are considerably below this height. The district is liberally supplied with huts, admirably situated and well provisioned, by the German and Austrian Alpine Club; and by the use of these huts expeditions of moderate length can be made, without the discomforts of unnaturally early starts, and without the labour or expense of porterage for provisions and fuel. Seasoned climbers will perhaps scoff at these remarks as condoning the luxurious spirit of the age; but we are a degenerate race, and cannot afford to despise such aids as our advancing civilization provides. There is certainly one great drawback in this "climbing made easy," inasmuch as it attracts only too many who are quite out of harmony with the true spirit of the mountains, and who never would have dared to brave the hardships of the heroic age of climbing.

The route we proposed was briefly as follows:—Starting from Steinach on the Brenner road, to strike south-west up the Gschnitz Thal and traverse the Stubaier Alps to Sölden in the Oetz Thal; ascend that valley to the Hochjoch Hospiz, cross the Oetz Thäler group via the Weisskugel and descend the Matscher Thal to the Vintschgau valley; then, turning south up the Sulden Thal, to cross the Ortler range to Santa Caterina, and thence proceed westward to the Bernina Pass, taking on our way some of the little known peaks of the Dosdè-Piazzì group—a walk of about a hundred miles.

After a short stay at the charming, old-world town of Innsbruck our party of three took train to Steinach, an hour's journey up the Brenner Railway, and spent the night at the Steinbock, a very comfortable hotel. Next morning (July 13th) we started on a seven hours' tramp up to the new Bremer-hütte (7,350 feet) at the head of the Gschnitz Thal. It is a charming walk up to Gschnitz, the highest hamlet, the path leading over green meadows beside a clear stream fringed with thickets of willow and alder; bold rock peaks overtop the fir woods on either slope of the valley, and at its upper end the Schneespitze, a sharp snow cone, showed now and then through the cloud rents. There is no inn at Gschnitz, but we were provided with an excellent lunch at the house of the curé. Two miles beyond Gschnitz the path zigzags up the side of a deep ravine to circumvent a big waterfall, passes near a gloomy lake, and finally up a steep rocky spur, where snow lay deep in every hollow, to the ridge on which the hut stands overlooking the Simming glacier. The caretaker was absent, but a friendly Saxon climber and his wife helped us to cook our *erbsuppe* and initiated us in the ways of the D. u. O. A. V. houses. The weather had been cloudy and threatening all day and in the night snow fell heavily. Next morning (14th) we started for the Nürnberger Scharte in a fine driving snow and dense mist. Despite the compass we managed to lose our direction and get involved in some complicated snow slopes, and were at length compelled to beat an ignominious retreat to the hut and thence down to Gschnitz again. The curé here, as is often the case in remote alpine valleys, combines the duties of innkeeper with those of parish priest; he joined us in a friendly chat over cigars and wine after supper, and a very courteous, well-informed gentleman we found him. Our comfortable quarters here soon reconciled us to our unpropitious start. The storm blew over in the night, and next morning in brilliant weather we strolled leisurely back to the Bremer-hütte. Just above Gschnitz, through the Sandesthal, a narrow valley running south, there is a splendid view of the Tribilaun, a massive and precipitous rock pile, said to be the best climb in this district: it is best reached from the Pflersch Thal on the south side. A plunge in the cold clear pool of a burn on the way up was very refreshing. The hut was full of excited German tourists (we never met an English climber on this journey), whose uproar continued far into the night and made sleep difficult. 16th July—Started at 4 a.m., in perfect weather, for the Kaiserin Elizabeth-hütte on the Becher. A scramble over hard winter snow and easy rocks brought us in 1 hour 15 minutes to the crest of a ridge whence we overlooked the upper end of the Stubai

Thal. The Wilder Freiger was now in sight, a broad, flattened snow peak, flanked by bastions of cliff on the south; to the left of it rose the sharp conical rock peak of the Becher with the hut perched on its summit. Crossing the level upper nevé of the Simminger Ferner we came to the brink of a steep declivity, down which we scrambled by snow couloirs, ice glazed rocks and scree to the right moraine of the big Gröbl Ferner. (We ought to have passed to the south of the Aplerer Feuerstein before making this descent, thus striking the glacier at a higher point). A two hours' tramp up gentle snow slopes, under a blazing sun, brought us to the Freiger Scharte. From this col we climbed the Wilder Freiger (11,245 feet), in $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, going up easy rocks and snow on the south-east ridge and crossing a plateau of nevé between the lower peak and the summit. From this point there is an admirable view of the Stubai group, which presents, roughly speaking, the form of a horse-shoe, open to the north-east, where it encloses the upper branches of the Stubai Thal, and culminating at its apex in the Zuckerhütl (11,540 feet.) Descending on the west side of the mountain by steep rocks, which were now smothered in snow, and down which we went face inwards kicking steps very gingerly, we crossed the nevé to the foot of the Becher, and climbing its sharp north ridge reached the hut (10,411 feet) on its summit in 35 minutes from the Wilder Freiger. A finer situation for a hut it would be difficult to imagine. The Becher, which is a southern spur of the Wilder Freiger, stands on the rim of the Übelthal Ferner, an undulating basin of spotless nevé about two miles in diameter, encircled by peaks of no great height but exquisite in form and contour. The circle is broken on the east by a gap through which the glacier sinks in a steep ice fall towards the Ridnaun Thal, and through this opening a magnificent view of the distant Dolomite ranges is displayed. They presented from this point a confused array of steep rock peaks, fantastic in form and rich in colour; walls, towers, domes and pinnacles, mingled with clouds, their hues changing from blue to purple and purple to red as the sun declined. Despite the fascination of the scene the cold on this exposed summit drove us early into the hut and our bunks. 17th July.—Feeling stiff and scorched from a hot and tiring first day on the snow we resigned ourselves this day to complete idleness. Various incidents enlivened the time. A porter arrived staggering under a load of about 100 lbs.; the poor fellow was knocked up by the heat and labour and was very ill. Three ladies with a small dog and guide were visible for hours toiling over the snow towards the hut. Choughs and snow-



ZUCKERHÜTL AND WILDER PFAFF FROM THE BECHER.

Photo. by FRITZ GRATL,
INNSBRUCK.

finches paid us a visit: the chough always turns up where any pickings are to be had. There was, moreover, always the amazing view of the Dolomites to fall back upon. 18th July.—Started at 5.30 a.m. for Sölden in the Oetz Thal. We roped at the hut, descended the north arête of the Becher and crossed the Übelthal Ferner west to the foot of the Wilder Pfaff (11,388 feet), which we climbed by the easy rocks of the east ridge, reaching the summit at 6.50. (These rocks are being converted into a staircase by the too zealous labours of the D. u. O. A.V.). The view was much the same as that from the Freiger. After a leisurely breakfast we descended a steep snowslope and crossed the head of the Sulzenau Ferner west-north-west to the Pfaffenjoch (10,598 feet), passing beneath the Zuckerhütl, whose steep, snowy cone stood out dazzling and spotless against a sky of deepest blue. A sharp descent over the Pfaffen Ferner, keeping at first near the rocks on its north side and then steering west-south-west across it, brought us to the icefall (1 hour 5 minutes from the Wilder Pfaff) where we struck a zigzag path, down the rocks on the right bank which led to the Windach Thal. Coming down from the col we passed a fine crop of the beautiful glacier Ranunculus growing on a protruding patch of rock. On the opposite south side of the glacier is a fine rock pyramid, the Geisskogel, which ought to afford a good scramble. On the path we met an old man toiling up with a huge load of wood for the new Hildesheimer-hütte; he looked so exhausted that we offered him the wine tin; without a word he put it to his lips and drained it eagerly, a look of intense relief overspreading his worn face as he handed it back empty. An hour's walk down a barren valley brought us to Fiegl's Inn, where night quarters may be had. It is a charming walk thence down to Sölden (4,595 feet) through a grand wooded gorge. We put up for the night at the inn "Zur Traube." One finds these homely Tyrolese inns very restful after the big Swiss hotels with their interminable *table d'hôtes*, where the polyglot babel of voices and ever recurring courses of tough veal and fleshless fowl are apt to pall on the wearied climber. Here the guest can order a simple dish at any time and have it well and promptly served; he is troubled with no hotel bill, but pays on the spot for what he orders. Wine too is cheap and, as a rule, very good and wholesome. Sölden is pleasantly situated in an oval basin of green meadows and corn patches, fringed with forest, with a view of the snow-capped Nöderkogel up the valley. The valley must be a populous one for the churchyard is crowded with graves; each grave has a cross of gilt iron scroll work, and crudely painted panels are affixed to these crosses depicting the deceased in their

Sunday clothes kneeling before an altar with attendant angels; when the deceased has met with a violent death, the artist represents the scene of the accident. Iron bowls for holy water are hung on rods at intervals in front of the long line of crosses.

19th July.—From Sölden to the Hochjoch Hospiz is a walk of about 7 hours exclusive of halts. We sent our rucksacks up to Vent by the post mule and enjoyed the luxury of a walk unencumbered. After skirting the meadows above Sölden the path enters a wild ravine and is carried above the right bank of the glacier torrent which thunders through a deep rock cleft below. At Zwieselstein the Oetz Thal divides, and crossing the stream we struck into its western branch, the Venter Thal. The track now led for some while through a grand pine forest, whose cool shades and delicious fragrance were most alluring; huge boulders overgrown with moss and fern lay scattered beneath the trees; gorgeous butterflies swarmed about every sunlit clearing. An open, grassy valley lay beyond, its slopes flecked with countless small torrents that gleamed like delicate lacework in the brilliant sunshine. At Heilig Kreuz we halted for a rest and lunch "Zum Curat," and a tramp of two hours farther brought us to Vent (6,205 feet), one of the highest villages in the Alps. Being the starting place for the Wildspitze, the highest peak of the Oetzthaler group, and also for the Hoch Joch, which is the *Theodule* of the Tyrol, the place is inundated with tourists. We had to wait some time here for the arrival of the post mule with our baggage and, fortunately for us, beguiled our time by an early dinner at the parsonage. It was interesting to find a colony of housemartins in this lofty and remote spot; we counted a dozen nests on the walls of the house. The valley again branches at Vent, the western arm (Rofen Thal) leading up to the Hochjoch. The weather was changing as we started; a warm south wind sprung up and the sky became rapidly overcast. It is a stiff $2\frac{1}{2}$ hour's walk up to the Hospiz (7,970 feet); above Rofen the last hamlet, the valley is very stony and desolate. On nearing the Hospiz we had a clear view of the Weisskugel, our objective for the morrow; it rises from the head of the Hintereis Ferner, a glacier which resembles the Aletsch in its broad level surface and long sweeping curve. The Hospiz stands close to the foot of the Hochjoch glacier, whose terminal moraine must be crossed in order to reach the Hintereis glacier. On the opposite side of the valley the Kesselwand Ferner descends in a grand icefall to join the Hintereis. The sharp peak of the Wildspitze is conspicuous about 5 miles to the north. Heavy rain came on just as we arrived. The prospect of a night here was not inviting; the

guestroom was densely packed with clamorous German tourists, but after a while we managed to squeeze into a smaller room, where we supped in company with thirteen stalwart guides. We went to bed, one could hardly say to sleep, in a crowded and ill-ventilated attic.

20th July.—The weather was so bad that we were obliged reluctantly to abandon any attempt on the Weisskugel, and at 6 a.m., feeling impelled to turn our backs on this cheerless shelter, we started for the Hoch Joch. A short track on the right bank leads to the level glacier above the icefall, and thence there is a very gradual ascent up a shallow snowy trough, whose smooth surface is unbroken by crevasses, to the scarcely perceptible saddle (9,060 feet). The Hoch Joch is certainly a very tame pass, though there is some fine ice scenery on the range which bounds it to the east. The crowd at the Hospiz was already dispersed, and could be seen straggling far up the glacier in long black lines. The scene was strongly reminiscent of the 'march to Klondike' that one so often sees depicted in the illustrated papers nowadays. We fell in with a Munich apothecary and his mother, a friendly and enthusiastic pair. The old lady, in bonnet and apron, stepped out bravely over the sloppy snow, carrying a rucksack and a stout umbrella. She deplored the growth of Alpine railways and giant hotels which, said she, "takes away so much from the poetry of the mountains." We breakfasted with them at a little inn near the south foot of the Pass. From this point the Schnalser Thal descends south-east to the Vintschgau. To follow this route would have involved a wide detour, so we decided to join our original route by crossing the intervening range to the west at the Oberetten Joch, a little glacier pass lying between the Aussere Quell Spitze and the Schwemser Spitze, about a mile south of the Weisskugel, and thus reaching the head of the Matscher Thal. We enlisted a stray guide here, a superfluous luxury, as the way was plain; but he was useful to carry things and to stamp down the soft snow for us. We sallied forth again at 10 a.m., and bearing west traversed slopes of grass and débris, mostly snow covered, to the *Teufel's Eck*, where we struck the left bank of the Steinschlag Ferner in $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours from the inn. Crossing this glacier to the southwest we reached our col (10,710 feet) in 45 minutes. The last slope was rather steep. The weather up to this point had been atrocious, but as we crouched under some rocks eating our lunch a freezing squall blew up from the other side of the pass, followed by a rapid clearing and bright sunshine. There was an imposing view of the Ortler group to the south and of the Silvretta to the west.

Scrambling down a bank of snow and over a choked bergschrund we rapidly descended the steep slopes of the Oberetten Ferner to the Karlsbader-hütte (8,700 feet), 40 minutes from the col. The turf around the hut was carpeted with a small purple primula (*Primula glutinosa*) which, though abundant in Tyrol, is (save in a few favoured spots in the Engadine) unknown to the Swiss Alps. A long descent over grass and stones and then level pastures dotted with ancient larches brought us to the lonely inn of Glieshof, where heavy rain kept us under shelter till 7 p.m. Then we pushed on to Matsch, arriving wet and weary, in a drenching rain, about nightfall. This village is a cluster of massive old stone houses, intersected by a filthy, cobble paved street. The 'Weisskugel' Inn at which we lodged is clean and comfortable.

21st July.—Weather again fine and hot. An hour's walk down the valley, with a splendid view of the Ortler mountains before us, brought us to Schluderns in the Vintschgau. Here, in order to save time and avoid the tedium of a long tramp over dusty roads, we engaged a *zweispanner* to drive us up to St. Gertrud in the Sulden Thal. The broad, fertile Vintschgau is quite on a scale with the Rhone Valley. Our route followed that of the Stelvio as far as Gomagoi, where we diverged to the left up the Sulden Thal, passing through beautiful pine forests with the cliffs of the Ortler towering on our right. We had tea at St. Gertrud, and afterwards an easy walk of two hours up to the Schaubachhütte (8,840 feet). This house is finely placed on a spur above the right bank of the Sulden Ferner and facing the Königspitze, Zeburu and Ortler. We encountered here the usual vociferous crowd of German tourists, many of whom appear to come to see the sun rise.

22nd July.—The morning was clear and cold, and there was a rosy alpine glow on the sharp peak of the Königspitze when we set out at 5 a.m. for Santa Caterina in the Val Furva. Our route lay over the Eisse Pass, Sulden Spitze and Langenferner Joch. The Eisse Pass is a gap in the eastern wall of a grand amphitheatre which encloses the crevassed upper basin of the Sulden Ferner. Going up the right bank of the glacier we made for a projecting spur which conceals the pass from view. In trying to avoid a maze of crevasses we soon found ourselves engaged in continuous step cutting on a frozen snow slope above them. As this sort of work grew monotonous we cut up to the rocks above, but they proved to be rotten and treacherous, and we soon took to the snow again. Presently we espied two porters threading the crevasses below us and evidently making for our pass, and after a

little more step cutting we rounded the spur and overtook them. They were carrying supplies for a new hut which we now saw above us on the pass. A well trodden zigzag up steep snow slopes brought us to the summit (10,280 feet) in two hours from the Schaubach-hütte. After a halt for breakfast we followed the ridge south of the pass to the summit of the Sulden Spitze (11,108 feet), which was gained in 50 minutes. The ridge is at first broad and shaly, but finally rears itself steeply against the summit in a very sharp crest of snow. The actual crest was frozen hard, as was its western slope, but on the east side, which had caught the sun, we kicked laborious footholds upwards, the keen wind driving fine snow in our faces which overtopped the arête. Just below the summit the ridge abuts against a corniced ice wall, which afforded an exciting scramble. The axe came into play, and a little hacking and hewing followed up by vigorous shoves and hoists speedily landed our party on the top. If one were disposed to judge an ascent by the character of the view it afforded—a principle which the writer by no means adheres to—then the Sulden Spitze should be a first-rate climb, for the outlook is superb. The particular glory of the view is the Königspitze, a lofty and symmetrical cone of snow supported on massive buttresses of blue-grey fluted cliffs. South-east a wide plateau of névé stretches to the foot of the graceful Cevedale snow peaks. To the north lay the upper Vintschgau with its chain of lakes shimmering in the sunlight. The Austro-Italian frontier crosses the summit of the Sulden Spitze. Descending the south slope we reached in a few minutes the Langenferner Joch or Passo de Cevedale (10,720 feet) whence there is an abrupt descent of several hundred feet over rock and snow in the Cedeh glacier. Crossing this to the south-west we got on to the moraine and below it came upon the Campanna Cedeh, an Italian Club hut, which bore an elegant Latin inscription. Here two Austrian guides tried vainly to persuade us to stay and climb the Königspitze with them next day. On the Alps below the hut were large flocks of sheep, a big handsome breed with lop-ears, straight, silky fleece and Roman nose. Opposite the Forno glacier the path turns sharp to the west and descends a deep gorge; the rocks here, of mica-schist, shone like quicksilver in the blazing sun. Below the gorge the valley spreads out in a level grassy basin, and here the village of Santa Caterina lies. The place seems to have altered but little since Leslie Stephen wrote his charming and humorous description of it nearly thirty years ago.* The life of the village still centres about that huge ugly barrack, the Stabilimento di Bagni, and the visitors

* See *The Playground of Europe*.

are mostly Italian, amongst them many priests in black cap and cassock. There is another hotel now, the Albergo Tresero, where, during our two days' stay we fared excellently, and which possesses in Luigi Baldassari the most accomplished of waiters. An amusing incident occurred here. Two Germans had set out for the Passo di Gavia, and in the evening one of them returned greatly excited to say that he had lost his companion. The chief guide, who spoke German, was summoned, and after a lively discussion agreed to go in search of the missing man, but, on the point of starting, he halted and announced firmly "*aber unter fünf gulden geh'ich nicht!*" On the 24th, two of our party made an interesting ascent of the Tresero. We took with us a young porter, one Valentino di Pietro Compagnoni [perhaps a son of the guide who was with Leslie Stephen in 1869]. Leaving the hotel at 3.15 a.m. by lantern light we followed a rough track through the woods on the west side of the Val Gavia for an hour, crossing the stream at the Ponte delle Vacche. Mounting steep grass slopes for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours we reached the foot of the Tresero glacier, where we halted for breakfast and fixed Mummery spikes in our boots. After we had surmounted the steep snout of the glacier the graceful snow pyramid of the Tresero came in view. Facing us was the long, easy south-west arête by which the ascent is usually made. To the left a much steeper arête descends directly towards Santa Caterina. Turning north across the névé we made for this north-west ridge, striking it above the point where it springs from a steep cliff. Loose, shattered rocks presently gave place to a heavily corniced snow arête, which grew very steep towards the summit and cost us over an hour's hard work at step cutting. Above us a slender cornice overhanging the summit became almost transparent as the sun-rays filtered through it, producing an exquisite effect. We reached the top (11,820 feet) at 9.20, or in 5 hours from Santa Caterina, excluding halts. A huge cornice overhung the steep ice slope on the north face of the mountain. Santa Caterina nestling in the green meadows more than 6,000 feet below reminds one of Grindelwald as seen from the Wetterhorn. There is a good view of the neighbouring Adamello and Presanella groups. Descending by the ordinary route, plunging and glissading down the snow slopes, we reached the foot of the glacier again in half-an-hour, and the hotel in $2\frac{1}{4}$ hours, from the summit. In the evening we drove down to Bormio, which Baedeker describes as "an antiquated little Italian town at the entrance to the Val Furva, with many dilapidated towers." Here we found very comfortable night quarters at the Albergo della Torre.

25th July.—Having engaged a strong, active lad, one Sertorelli Costante, to carry our supplies, we set out at 8 a.m. for a long tramp to the Italian Club hut on the Passo di Dosdè (9,351 feet). A short way up the Stelvio road we diverged to the left into the Val di Dentro. At Semogo, the last hamlet on our route, we rested and refreshed ourselves at a rustic inn, and then entered the Val Viola Bormina, which we followed for some miles by a mule track over pastures dotted with chalets. A turn in the path disclosed a grand view of the snowy Cima di Piazzì set in a frame of dark pine forests. The glacier presented a formidable array of ice cliffs, but a sinuous ridge of snow running up the middle of it seemed to offer an approach to the steep final slope of the mountain, which was seamed by a huge bergschrund. Ahead of us rose a fine rock peak, the Corno di Dosdè, which guards the entrance to the valley of that name. On nearing it we crossed to the right bank of the Viola. We halted for lunch and a noontide *siesta* in the shade of some larches, and Costante fetched us a pail of fresh milk from a neighbouring chalet. Following up the stream which emerges through a picturesque gorge from the Val di Dosdè, we crossed some remarkable glaciated rocks and entered a secluded, grassy hollow. Marmots whistled about the rocks and scurried off to their holes as we passed; once a ptarmigan got up right under our feet, and, unhappily, one of her chicks was trodden on and crushed. In front of us was the triple-peaked Cima Viola, its three summits, rising one above the other towards the south, presenting from this point a long line of precipices. We crossed to the left bank of the stream near the Dosdè chalets, and followed the west branch of the valley, which is stony and crossed by numerous streams. A long pull up tedious moraine and soft snow brought us to the hut at 7 p.m. It is a small stone cabin scarcely discernible, at a short distance, from the big granite boulders surrounding it. A cheerless reception awaited us. The key would not turn, and to gain an entrance we were obliged to force the lock with a pickel. Water stood an inch deep on the floor, the stove was choked with sodden ashes, and, worst of all, there was no fuel. However, we swept out the water, and by carefully raking together various odds and ends, we at length got a fire, boiled some cocoa, and concocted a remarkable *pot pourri*, to which every item in our larder contributed. This hut appears to be but rarely visited; the visitors' book contained scarce a dozen entries since the opening in 1891.* The situation is most romantic, the hut standing on the

* For a description of this group, see Mr. Coolridge's interesting paper, "To the Cima di Piazzì and back," in the *Alpine Journal* for November, 1898.

brink of a steep declivity of rock overlooking the head of the Valle Vermolera, which is hemmed in by a wall of fantastic cliffs and aiguilles; in the hollow lies the Lago Negro, which was now frozen.

26th July.—Starting at 5.45 a.m., we made the ascent of the Cima Viola (11,103 feet), which rises on the east side of the Passo di Dosdè. Crossing a hollow in the glacier and traversing a steep little snow couloir, we struck the foot of a long rib of firm granite rocks which we climbed for about forty minutes; above these rocks we found the track of an earlier party, and followed it up steep *névé*, and across a *bergschrund* to the south ridge, by which we gained the summit in 1 hour 20 minutes from the hut. An hour sufficed for the descent, and after some time spent in cleaning up at the hut and arranging with Costante for repair of the lock, we set forth again at 10 a.m. for the Passo di Corno. This is an old smugglers' pass across the ridge which connects the Cima di Saoseo with the Corno di Dosdè, and forms the boundary between Italy and Switzerland. Traversing the moraine below the glacier on the north-east flank of the Saoseo, we turned north-west and reached the pass (9,620 feet) in $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours, after a toilsome ascent over grass and scree, where the snow was still deep, and finally up terraces of rock. The pass is a mere notch in a razor-like ridge of red granite slabs. The bold crags of the Corno di Dosdè, springing abruptly from this ridge, offer some inviting problems to the rock climber. To the west lay the beautiful snow peaks of the Bernina group, in the foreground of which the huge, crevassed icefield of the Palü shone with dazzling brilliancy. Farther south the isolated peak of the Disgrazia cleft the air like some gigantic fin. The rocks fell away steeply on the west side of the pass, and nearly 3,000 feet below was a lake whose turquoise blue waters were fringed with vivid green turf and scattered larches. Letting ourselves down a narrow crack below the notch, we descended by snow-covered rocks to a ravine filled with large granite boulders, the passage of which required great nicety of balance. On reaching the lake we enjoyed a refreshing cold plunge, and lingered for some time on its grassy banks. In the background the grand precipices of the Saoseo made a fine setting to this exquisite spot. Beyond the lake we struck a path which led down to the Valle di Campo; near the foot of this valley we diverged to the right and following a short cut which traverses woods and pastures above the high road, reached the wayside inn at La Rosa, on the south side of the Bernina Pass, in $2\frac{1}{4}$ hours' walk from the lake. Our return to the beaten track was signalled by an

A "High Level" Walk.

utter collapse of the weather, and certain projects of extending our route across the mountains of the Engadine were perforce abandoned.

It is to be feared that the intrepid rock specialists of the Climbers' Club may find this narrative of a "high-level" walk in the Alps prosaic and devoid of thrilling episodes. The only apology for offering it is that much of the ground traversed seems to be undeservedly neglected by English climbers. The scenery through which our route passed is mostly of the highest order, whilst the route itself offers many interesting digressions, some of which the writer has endeavoured to point out.

[The climber will find Part I. of "Der Hochtourist in den Ostalpen," by Purtscheller and Hess (Meyer's Reisebücher, Leipzig and Vienna, 1897) an invaluable guide to this district. Some excellent maps of the Oetzthal and Stubai groups have recently been published by the German and Austrian Alpine Club (in four sheets, scale 1:50,000). Sheet No. 522 of the "Topographischer Atlas der Schweiz" includes the Cima Viola. For the Ortler group the "Special Karte" of the German and Austrian Alpine Club (1:50,000) is fairly good.]
