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Ox Transport at Molveno.



Chapel at Pinzolo.



House at Pinzolo.

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WANDERINGS IN THE TRENTINO ALPS.

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WE left the ancient city of Trient on a hot morning at the beginning of last July, and, crossing the Adige, whose broad current sweeps smoothly down the level valley, we struck up the dusty hillside westwards. Our destination was Molveno, and in crossing the intervening ridge of Monte Gazza we hoped to get a good view of the Brenta Dolomites. The road presently wound through a deep rocky defile, emerging by the gates of a fortress to a pleasant open country of vines and maize. Leaving the road we turned down a rough lane to the lake of Terlago, and skirted its northern shore to the village, where we laid in provision of bread, cheese and wine. Then followed a toilsome ascent of nearly 4000 feet up the bare, stony slope of Mte. Gazza. From thickets at its base rose the song of many nightingales. The sun beat fiercely on our backs, our rucksacks were heavy and our muscles slack, and it was late in the afternoon when we at length flung ourselves limply on the level, flowery pasture of the summit ridge (5,700 ft.). Meanwhile heavy thunder-clouds were gathering westward about the Brenta peaks, and we caught but fleeting glimpses of their strange forms. Far below lay the turquoise

waters of Lago Molveno, framed in dark forest green. We scrambled down to the lake through beech scrub and spruce woods, losing the track and following a dry torrent bed. The ancient, massive dwellings of Molveno are clustered thickly on a knoll at the north end of the lake, and the Albergo Cima Tosa here offered us a rough but homely welcome. Let any who follow us across Monte Gazza start very early, and remember that no water is to be found *en route*.

Bad weather and other ills detained us at Molveno two days. The rain at times fell in cataracts, but a crowd of swallows nesting about the hotel poured out a ceaseless flow of melody, which cheered us in our enforced inaction. Lago Molveno is full of fish, which offer a livelihood to one Molveno family who nets them. We found the Alpine char (*salmarino*) a great delicacy, and the pike very good. In a wooded glen above the village I watched a party of Alpine Swifts hawking silently around. On the third day, as clouds still hung over the Brenta peaks, we turned southward to the Giudicaria. The fishermen rowed us down the three miles of lake, and we descended through a wilderness of boulders to the hamlet of Ai Molini, whence we contoured the hills for three hours through a lovely country, by narrow cobbled paths winding through vines and maize under shady groves of chestnut and walnut, the valley below bathed in the warm blues and purples of Italian summer. We struck the post road at the Baths of Comano, in time for lunch and the 3 o'clock diligence to Tione. The road thither passes through a wonderful gorge, twice crossing the Sarca torrent and passing *under* a waterfall and through a tunnel. We drove up the populous Val Rendena in the cool of the evening to Pinzolo.

Sultry, showery weather again prevented climbing for some days. Pinzolo is a charming place, but it lies too low (2,525 ft.) to be bracing in summer. The botanist and archaeologist will find plenty to occupy them in the neighbourhood. The frescoes of the Ballo di Morte at San Vigilio and San Stefano (early sixteenth century) are fascinating studies. Groves of ancient chestnuts above the village offer cool retreat, spreading



The Albergo Cima Tosa at Molveno.



Cima Tosa, from the West.



The Busazza, from Val Presena.

their shade over mossy boulders and tinkling rills, where the wild cyclamen flowers and warblers sing all day.*

On July 9th, a morning of doubtful promise, we set out with a serious determination to come to closer quarters with the mountains. Our objective was the *Carè Alto*, the great southern buttress of the Adamello ice field. The path thither lies for some two hours along the bed of the Val di Genova, at the mouth of which, perched on a solitary crag, the ancient chapel of San Stefano stands sentinel. The Val di Genova is a profound gorge winding for many miles into the heart of the mountains, dividing the ranges of the Presanella and Adamello. The track passes close beneath the Cascata Nardis, a singularly beautiful waterfall, where twin streams launch themselves bodily over the sky-line, and, uniting, are flung in a broad veil over the face of the cliff. An easy stroll through the forest brings one to the Fontana Buona, a snug cabin kept by a genial couple from Trient, where milk and wine, good food and beds are to be had. Beyond this point one crosses the river and strikes up the steep southern slope of the valley by a path which is not easy to find (it is marked in red paint). A steep climb, always in shade and on the right bank of the lovely Cascata di Lares, brought us to a grassy alp on the rim of a wide upland basin, at the far end of which we found shelter for the night in the Rifugio di Lares (6920 ft.). The situation of this hut is charming. Huge boulders of white, black-flecked Adamello granite, nestling in beds of crimson rhododendron under venerable larches, flank the hillside, over the shoulder of which peers the Lares ice-fall.

Starting at 4 a.m. next day, an hour and a half up the steep grass slopes and bare ribs of granite between the two ice-falls brought us to the level snowfield of the Lares glacier. The day broke cloudy and threatening, but as my guide Caola and I tramped up the gently rising nevé the sky gradually cleared, and a fine landscape was revealed. From

* Mr. Freshfield has eloquently depicted the charms of this romantic corner of Tyrol in his *Italian Alps*.

the point we had attained, near the base of the steep final pyramid of the Carè Alto, the peak of the Adamello appeared as an insignificant snowy hump on the vast expanse of nevé. Across the Val di Genova rose the Presanella, a shapely cupola of snow flanked by huge bastions of cliff. A delightful scramble along a slabby granite ridge, with a very sheer drop on the west side over the Val di Fumo, leads to the foot of the final steep but short snow arête. This arête usually involves much step cutting, but to-day the snow was soft and gave no trouble. Unluckily a thick cold mist enveloped the first summit when we arrived, and we did not cross the gap to the south and slightly higher peak beyond. The ascent occupied about six hours, and we got back to the hut in three more. The snow was very soft, and to avoid the last stretch of it we took to the right bank of the right-hand branch of the ice-fall. As this involved a rough scramble over loose stones, the fording of many torrents, and finally a climb *up* to the hut, we gained nothing by the variation. The fresh air and solitude wooed us into lingering another night at the Rifugio. We spent a lazy evening watching the lovely opalescent sunset tints on cloud ribbons drawn across the great rock walls of the Presanella, whilst the Alpine pipits flitted overhead with lively trills, and the clear, sweet song of an unseen Alpine accentor rose from the darkening hillside below. Hunger drove us early next morning from our shelter to the Malga di Lares, where we were hospitably regaled with polenta, cheese and new milk. Seventy beautiful little Jersey cows were being milked in a long stone hut. For a churn the herdsman used a deep wooden pail, with a wooden platter mounted on a pole to work the cream. We loitered down in sultry weather, through forest carpeted with rhododendrons in full flower, to the Fontana Buona, where we lunched on an excellent ragout of wild rabbit. Heavy rain overtook us on the way back to Pinzolo, and next day prevented a start for the Nardis hut and Presanella.

Four days later, the weather having become more settled I left the Hotel Pinzolo with Ludovico Caola at 2.45 a.m.,



San Stefano, Val di Genova.



On the Arête of the Carè Alto.



The Bocca d' Ambies.

with the intention of making a direct assault on the *Cima Tosa* from the west, and descending by the ordinary route to the Rifugio Tosa. We followed the highroad down the valley to the village of Giustino, whence a good military mule path leads up the hill through woods and along a narrow valley to the grassy ridge south of the Dos di Sabione, which forms the watershed between the Vall' Agola and the Val Dalgone. As we neared this ridge the Læres snowfields flushed rosily across the dark gulf of Val Rendena, and the day dawned cloudlessly. The precipices of the Carè Alto as seen from this point are very grand. Descending slightly from the ridge we entered a winding lateral glen, carpeted with *Rhododendron hirsutum* in full flower, and walled in by cliffs of red and grey dolomite. Here at 545 we halted for breakfast, in company with a party of choughs. A steep pull up from the head of the glen and we came to another ridge overlooking the down-like summit of the Sabione and distant Campiglio. A painful traverse to the right over scree, which slid from under one in masses at every step, brought us at length to the foot of a little glacier, and up banks of hard snow to a low gap in the ridge, which bounded it on the east. The *Cima Tosa* now rose before us: a sheer wall of rock capped with snow and looking hopelessly impregnable. Crossing a broad, level stretch of nevè we soon reached the *Bocca dei Camosci*, a herd of a dozen chamois preceding us, and found ourselves in the shadow of the great western cliffs of the Tosa. Only the steep and narrow *Vedretta d' Ambies* now separated us from the cliffs. This glacier is little more than a broad couloir; on the left it plunges suddenly out of sight towards the Val di Brenta, and on the right rises steeply to the *Bocca d' Ambies*, a fine gateway between the cliffs of the Tosa and the *Cima d' Ambies*. A few minutes step kicking up a steep and frozen snowslope and we took to the rocks, a welcome relief after a tramp of nearly eight hours. After a preliminary struggle up a wet and icy crack the rocks proved unexpectedly easy, and we soon gained an angle of the cliff above the *Bocca d' Ambies* overlooking the glacier on the other side, where we again saw

our herd of chamois. Thence we climbed straight up steep and shelving rocks without any difficulties, though parched by a burning heat, to the final snow cap and along the ridge to the highest point, which we reached at 1:30 p.m. Two hours suffice for the ascent of the final peak from the base of the rocks. The distance from Pinzolo is considerable, but as we loitered a good deal on the way our time of 10½ hours must not be taken as a fair average. We spent an hour on the summit, but clouds were gathering and the view limited. The steep buttress of the Crozzon rose invitingly at our feet, but the crags were plastered with snow and our limbs were too stiff to attempt the traverse. A rapid descent over soft snow and shelving rocks on the east side led to the brink of a *cirque* of cliffs, in the middle of which a chimney of about sixty feet gives access to the lower snow-field. This chimney is the solitary *mauvais pas* on the ordinary route, and it must be confessed a very modest one, though dripping wet. Plunging down soft snow to the foot of the glacier, we rounded the base of the Brenta Bassa, and emerged on a curious plateau of absolutely bare, grey limestone rocks, beyond which is the Rifugio Tosa. This is a substantial, two-storied stone house, kept by a family from Molveno. Nothing could exceed the bare rigour of its situation, surrounded by fantastic peaks with a foreground destitute of any sign of vegetation. The ungraceful mass of the Cima del Daino blocks out the view of the Lago Molveno. The Bocca di Brenta, a narrow gap between two great towers of rock, lies a short distance west of the house. Here I spent a chilly and comfortless evening, vainly trying to keep warm. A young German climber was my sole companion. Starting early next day I returned to Pinzolo through the Val di Brenta; a magnificent walk. The *Bocca* is gained in a few minutes from the Rifugio by a ledge of rock and a broad snow-couloir. The rock scenery on the west side is amazingly fine and weird. A long steep couloir of winter snow, followed by a chaos of boulders, leads down to the Malga di Brenta Alta. Here we got a draught of new milk and a wonderful view of the

towering Crozzon di Brenta, whose ruddy cliffs stood out in bold relief against the snow capped Tosa. A great barrier of cliffs separates the upper and lower alps. On the descent we passed a busy colony of house-martins, whose nests were plastered under rugged eaves of limestone.* Beyond the lower alp the path enters a forest of fir and beech, which fills the valley for some distance, and emerges by a saw mill, whence a lane leads up to the highroad from Campiglio to Pinzolo.

On the following day we drove up to Campiglio, a steady ascent of three hours, and strolled up Monte Spinale (6900 ft.). This is a delightful ramble for an off-day. The path mounts in easy gradients through a grand forest of spruce, and then over rich, flowery pastures to the long summit ridge. At the *Hofer* hut we lingered an hour in the vain hope that a tantalizing cloud-cap would be lifted from the peaks of the Brenta group. On a flat meadow beneath us a large herd of little brown cows were collected, and a boy brought us up a draught of fresh milk. The Spinale should be a paradise to the botanist. In an hour's walk up from Campiglio we counted over sixty species of plants, ranging from the familiar blue speedwell of our English lanes to gentians and edelweiss. The lovely Alpine Clematis (*Atragene Alpina*) is plentiful. Driving down to Pinzolo I saw the snowy pyramid of the Carè Alto irradiated by the setting sun, whilst through the cloud rifts the red cliffs of the Brenta and Tosa were lit with a magic glow.

It was with reluctance that I bade goodbye to my kind hosts and luxurious quarters at the Hotel Pinzolo, and once more set my face to the mountains. This time my goal was the *Busazza*, a fine rock peak lying to the west of the Presanella. Starting at 6 a.m. I had a pleasant stroll of five hours up the Val di Genova to the Bedole Alp, halting for a chat with Silvio Pali, the host of the Fontana Buona. The

* It is noteworthy that in alpine regions the house-martin often nests on remote cliffs, whilst swallows monopolise the village nesting sites.

Casa Bolognini, where I spent the night, is a picturesque chalet on a knoll at the end of an open grassy flat. Ancient forest rises steeply behind. Strolling up the path one comes suddenly upon a wonderful vision of the great ice-falls of the Lobbia and Mandron glaciers vignettted in a frame of larch and spruce. A torrent here thundered down the steep hillside, and the grassy slope above the forest was a veritable garden. The Martagon and Paradise lilies grew in profusion, the handsome orange-flowered ragwort (*Senecio abrotanifolius*), and many other showy flowers. The Casa Bolognini is the property of the Società degli Alpinisti Tridentini, an admirable society, whose headquarters are at Trient. This club has several well appointed huts in the Brenta and Adamello groups; it has organised a reliable corps of licensed guides,* and has not overdone the *wegmarkirung* or disfigured the peaks of the district with ropes and stanchions. The swampy meadow below the Casa breeds swarms of mosquitos, and I was grievously bitten before turning in to rest.

* The following extracts from the English version of the regulations printed in the Society's *Führer-buch* are worth quoting :

“6. Meanwhilst the mountain guide can except of long circuit where he serves as guide persons too young or of evidently weak constitution. In case of necessity he can refuse his concurrence.”

“7. . . . In case of refusal (*i.e.*, to take two guides) the guide can decline to take part in the circuit. Notwithstanding he shall ask the concurrence of a relative number of guides, in case that the danger of the circuit be extraordinarily increased by special circumstances as thus the bad weather, unfavourable snow, an unusual season, insufficient dress, imperfect cleverness of the tourist.”

“8. The guide is bound to behave in a polite and kind manner.”

“9. As soon as a guide chances to be informed of the disappearance of a guide or of a traveller, or that he should conceive a suspicion founded on the disaster of one of the tourists, he shall give notice,” etc., etc.

“10. It is strictly interdicted to the guides to conduct travellers into sites and inns which are not indicated by them.”

It should be noted that the guides of this district (with one or two exceptions) cannot speak German. Italian is the language of the country, and the men of Val di Rendena, though a much travelled race, speak little else. My guide, Caola, who had spent two or three years in Boston in pursuit of his calling as a knife and scissor grinder, knew scarcely a word of English.

Starting at 2:15 next morning, we squelched across the meadow by lantern light in pitch darkness, and toiled up the steep hillside to the Cercen Alp, whence another stiff pull brought us at dawn to the Baito Cercen, a stone hut on a meagre, stony, sheep pasture, whose slopes were purpled with clusters of *Primula glutinosa*. High above us on the right lay the Passo di Cercen, giving access to the head of the Presanella glacier. Bearing to the N.W. we entered a long, snow-filled ravine, the Canale di Busazza, which lies between lofty cliffs and leads up steeply to the small glacier crowning the eastern and secondary peak of the Busazza: the higher peak (10,920 ft.) does not become visible until this point is gained. Three chamois stood on a ridge of the glacier and watched our progress up the Canale for some time. A long, jagged and very narrow arête connects the eastern peak with the summit, and the traverse gave us an hour's most exhilarating scramble. The cliffs have a sheer drop on either hand, and one has to keep close to the crest, over and around granite slabs for the most part firm enough. At one rather awkward traverse Caola's pickel fell with a clatter down the rocks, but luckily stuck in a crack not far below, and was recovered without much difficulty. The ascent from the Bedole Alp, which involves a rise of 6000 ft., occupied about nine hours, including halts. We basked for an hour on the summit, enjoying a magnificent view over the wide snow-fields of the Mandron, Lobbia and Lares glaciers. The shapely peak of the Presanella rose hard by to the east, and far below to the north lay the broad sunlit Val di Non and the Tonale coach road. The glacier ranunculus and purple saxifrage were flowering in crevices on the south face of the summit ridge. We had planned a direct descent to the Val Presena, but there was so much fresh snow on the rocks of the north face that we judged it prudent to forego the attempt. We therefore scrambled back along the arête to the lower peak, and thence plunged and glissaded swiftly down the now soft snow-slopes of the Canale to the Baito Cercen. Thence a good track leads easily in three hours to the *Mandron* or *Leipziger-*

hütte, winding up and down round the southern spurs of the Busazza and Cima Presena. This is a delightful walk. The flora of these southern slopes is luxuriant. Edelweiss was abundant, and the dark purple Vanilla orchis scented the air. Amongst the plants in flower were *Gentiana lutea*, *punctata* and *acaulis*, *Veratrum album*, *Paradisea liliastrum*, *Lilium Martagon*, *Senecio abrotanifolius*, *Geum montanum*, *Anemone sulfurea* (*A. alpina* was over), and a host of others. The Leipziger hut stands at an elevation of 8000 feet, facing the splendid twin ice-falls of the Lobbia and Mandron glaciers. It is built of white granite, and is one of the most comfortable and well-managed houses of that enterprising society—the German and Austrian Alpine Club. There is grass in the vicinity, and the caretaker keeps cows and provides fresh milk; he even imports fresh meat from Pinzolo, a seven hours' mule journey. The bedrooms would do credit to any Alpine hotel.

Leaving the hut at 6:30 next morning and striking northward over stony slopes, past the frozen Lago Scuro, I reached the Passo di Presena by a steep little couloir of winter snow at eight o'clock. On the north side lay an extensive field of unbroken névé, from the eastern edge of which the peak of the Busazza, here seen end on, soared aloft with surprising sharpness. Descending the glacier and skirting a frozen lake, I had some trouble in hitting off the right track, which is very vaguely marked. After passing the Baito Monticello, it is necessary to keep high up on the left slope of the Val Presena until the Tonale road comes in view. At the Osteria Locatori, near the summit of the Tonale, I caught a ramshackle diligence down to Fucine and Malè, where I spent the night. Thence I made my way leisurely *via* Rabbi-bad and the Ultenthal to Meran.