

ALPINE NOTES.

MONTE LASTE.—SEPTEMBER 23, 1874.—Mr. M. Holzmann sends the following note:—Following the cart-track which leads from Cimolais up the right bank of the Cimolina we turned after 35 minutes to the left to enter Val del Campol. A very rough track begins in the bed of the torrent, soon changes into a narrow footpath on the right bank, and crosses after a short time to the left bank, where it rises rather rapidly. Another footpath mounts steeply on the right bank to the pastures on the east slope of Monte Duranno. The path on the left bank on reaching some grass slopes becomes less distinct. By keeping the direction nearly due N. we passed after 1 hour 10 mins. over some rocks to enter a thicket of half-burnt creeping pine, crossed after $\frac{1}{4}$ hour the bed of débris of the principal watercourse, and ascended on its right bank a less thickly overgrown slope, bearing a little N. of NW. After 1 hour, after having climbed a short rocky furrow, we turned NE. and moved on the SE. side of the ridge which connects the Duranno with Monte Laste just below its crest in 20 mins. towards a gap close to the S., the base of Mte. Laste, the *Forcella di Campol*, 1,560 mètres above Cimolais, whence it is possible to descend into the SE. branch of Val Montina by following some ledges along the W. slope of Mte. Laste. Although it did not seem impossible to ascend a couloir which leads straight up to the final slope of Mte. Laste, we turned SE. and went in 5 min. up to a projecting buttress above which rises to E. a wall of rock of great steepness which offers less difficulty than might be expected, as the dolomite is here unusually sound, every ledge, even if only half an inch broad, affording perfectly safe hold to hand and foot. Having climbed the wall in $\frac{1}{2}$ hour we came to a slope of débris on the S. side of the summit. By keeping close to the rocks on our left hand, and thus wheeling rapidly round to the N. and W., we ascended the slope and gained in 15 min. the top of the rocks. There facing N. we walked over débris in 10 min. up to the summit of *Mte. Laste*, 1,977 mètres above Cimolais, considerably higher than the Mte. Duranno. It commands a very fine view including a large extent of the Adriatic, almost the whole dolomite district, great part of the Tauern range, &c., &c. Having returned to the top of the rocks from which in the ascent we had at last moved, we faced E. and came in 10 min. from the summit to a gap between the latter and a secondary peak on its S. side, the *Forcella del Mte. Laste*, 222 mètres below the summit. Thence we descended a couloir which falls into a SW. branch of Val Frassini, taking to the rocks on its right bank when the couloir itself did not allow of further progress. These rocks, especially when seen from below, look as smooth as a slate-covered roof of hopeless steepness, but they are quite easy, the slabs overlapping in the wrong way and being as sound as the rocks of the SW. base of the summit. After 1 hour, on reaching the growth of creeping pine we held more to the S. side of the slope, but when we approached the lower precipices, we thought it preferable to cross over to the N. wall of rock, close to which we found a faintly marked footpath which led us to the foot of those precipices. Thence following a

path on the right bank of the torrent bed we soon fell into the track which comes down from the northern and principal branch of Val Frassini, shortly after also into that descending from Val S. Maria, entered after 1 hour 20 min. the valley of the Cimolina, and returned in $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours to Cimolais. (Guide, Santo Siorpaes.)

THE GRAND COMBIN FROM THE COL DU SONADON.—Mr. Durnford, with Daniel Ballay of Bourg St. Pierre and Anton Ritz, left Bourg St. Pierre on the afternoon of August 27, and after $2\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. of easy walking up the Valsorey, reached a spot upon the rocks a short distance below the couloir on the Sonadon route, where the party encamped for the night in the open, no shelter being available. At 4.30 on the 28th, they started in misty and threatening weather, and pursued the ordinary Sonadon route till within a short distance of the col, when they turned to the left and halted for breakfast at 6, at the foot of the rocks. At 6.30 they proceeded at once to attack the rocky face of the mountain, and after about an hour's climbing over steep but not difficult crags reached an arête, the SE. face of which overhangs the deeply indented cleft which here runs up into the mountain from the NW. side of the col. It became here necessary to cut steps for some distance up an extremely steep ice slope, till another stretch of rocks was reached. These turned out to be very rotten, and great care was required to avoid detaching the most solid-looking pillars, one of which, dislodged by Ballay, did actually fall upon the rope, and almost severed it. After passing these rocks the weather became worse, and for the rest of the day was a mixture of snow and sleet. Another half hour's step-cutting up a still steeper ice slope landed the party on the more gradual snow ridges which lead to the peak, which was reached at 10.5, and almost as quickly left, there being no view and the wind intensely cold. The descent was made by the ordinary route and the Col de la Maison Blanche to Bourg St. Pierre, which was reached at 4.30, the whole expedition lasting 12 hrs. including halts. Owing to the weather these were less demanded than would have been the case on a hot day. The expedition is strongly recommended as by far the best route for the ascent of the Grand Combin. Mr. Durnford tried the mountain in 1873 from the col itself, but was stopped by the formidable wall of rocks a few hundred feet below the summit, which forms so conspicuous an object in the views of the mountain as seen from the Valpelline and Val d'Aosta; but from this point the view was as good on all sides but the N. as from the summit. In 1874, of course, there was, owing to the weather, no view. Probably from no point do the Graian Alps, especially the Grivola, and the rich middle distance of the valley and town of Aosta, look so well.

Daniel Ballay had not heard of Herr Isler's ascent of 1873, and maintained that this was the first ascent from the Sonadon; but from the account published in the 'Jahrbuch' there seems no reason to doubt that the Swiss climber attained the summit. It is, however, to be remarked, that he states that he was unable to find any relics of former ascents, whereas on the highest peak there certainly is a bottle containing the cards of travellers for many years back. The route taken by Herr Isler was much longer, as he, for some unexplained

reason, started from a point at the head of the Val de Bagnes, and was so late in the day that the rocks were considered unsafe, and the ascent was made to the left of the route taken by Mr. Durnford's party, and apparently upon the snow and ice the greater part of the way, so that the summit was not reached till 2 P.M., and the col, in the descent, till 6 P.M.

The expedition might very well be made from the Valsorey châteaux if a night under cover is preferred.

THE GROSSE WINDGELLE.—During a short visit to the Maderanerthal last summer I ascended the Grosse Windgelle (August 21) with a view of settling approximately some doubts as to the comparative height of the two peaks of the mountain, the depth of the cleft between them, and the absolute height of the mountain itself. These were (1) my own statements in the 'Alpine Journal,' No. 43, that the distance between the peaks was not 30 yards and the depth of the cleft not 50 feet; (2) the assertion of H. P. Thomas, Esq., who ascended the mountain last year, that the peak not yet ascended was 50 feet higher than the other; and (3) the opinion expressed by Messrs. Moore and Walker, viewing the Grosse Windgelle from the Oberalpstock, that the latter mountain had been much underrated and was nearly equal in height to the former. Messrs. Noon, Bode, Thomas, and Morshead joined in the expedition. We had Albin Baumann for first guide, Joseph Gnos for second, and further took a porter who carried a ladder 15 feet long, with a view to ascend the second peak. I found the ascent more difficult than in July 1866, as there was much less snow, and we had to cut steps for the last 200 or 300 feet. The ladder was found unavailable for its intended purpose, but served to shorten the ascent over a crevassed part of the Stäffel glacier. We all agreed (1) that the depth of the cleft was between 100 and 150 feet, and the distance between the peaks from 70 to 100 yards; (2) that the peaks were as nearly as possible of the same height. Sitting on the first peak I could see over the other the pyramid of the Weisshorn for a depth of several thousand feet. [I also learned from J. M. Trösch, who made the first ascent, that Herr Hoffman used a level without detecting any appreciable difference between them.] (3) that the Oberalpstock looked higher than the Grosse Windgelle by all the 462 feet extra given to it by the Federal Survey. An aneroid observation, however, gave the mountain a height of 10,665 feet, 200 feet above the F.S. But the instrument is by no means reliable.

Looking at the Oberalpstock from the Grosse Windgelle we thought that the northern peak might certainly be reached from the Regenstein Firn, but that it would not be possible to cross the depression between that and the highest summit.

The route by the W. side of the icefall of the Brunni glacier, avoiding the circuit round its head, and shortening the ascent of the Oberalpstock by nearly two hours, has been followed several times, but the bergschrund seems likely to present difficulties late in the season.

I found the guide Joseph Maria Trösch, the elder (of Silenen), who was reported to be suffering from rheumatism both in 1872 and 1874, looking very well and in apparently good health. He expressed him-