



Chips from the ice-age in Norway 1881:

Tunsbergdal to Loendal.

By Wm. Cecil Slingsby.

On Sunday August 14th Bigdal joined me at Skjolden for a long campaign. I knew he was plucky, from an account given me by Mr. Puckle, who with Bigdal had followed my steps on the Riensbræ and there experienced adventures, which are to be found described in the dagbog at Vetti. Bigdal had also climbed Stølfnaastind one of the gems of Europe, and other mountains, and he now expressed his willingness to follow my lead where I would, and I believed him.

Should we begin at Styggedalstind and its untrodden pass or fare to the Justedal? Gulheim and I had intended to climb the former in November 1880, but had bad weather, and I agreed to come out again to Norway to do it with him and Halvar the brave, Halvar the strong, Halvar the willing. Now Gulheim had his hay to get in, but in three weeks he would be ready and would join us.

To Justedal again once more! The new amtskart, which I had just got in Bergen revealed to me the presence of a most striking glacier arm — the Tunsbergdalsbræ, long, flat, straight and narrow and leading up into the very heart of the great fond. There must we go.

To Røneid then by boat. The first Norst mile Bigdal and I conversed in English, but it was hard work and did not pay, so we began Norst, and continued it to the end of the chapter. After a lovely drive up the thoroughly Alpine valley of Justedal, an old friend of mine, we turned up to the left to Leirdal. Fifty minutes brisk walk found us at Leirgaard. From here is an easy walk over a low ridge to Beitestrandsvand.

We got a lad to row us over the icy waters of a lake, and parted from him at 9 o'clock, with a so-called hour's walk to a sæter before us. The valley proved to be one huge bog covered with pathless brushwood. As we expected, we got lost in a tangle of alder and willow. About 10 we got clear of the bush, and were on a large moraine, and saw towering above us an escarpment of rugged ice glittering in the starlight, a noble termination to a noble glacier. Our destination was Tvardal a tributary valley West, but the icefall of Tunsbergdalsbræ overlapped the mouth of the smaller valley. How were we to get into it in the dark? We made several futile attempts to climb the rocks near the ice, and just when getting a trifle dispirited we dropped on a pathway over the roches moutonnées and at 10.50 we were welcomed by a most hospitable old lady to the luxuries of a good building with a boarded floor, the latter, we who know what sæter life is thoroughly appreciate. There are two sæle (sæter-huts) here, and unfortunately they do not appear on the map.

To other persons, who I know will follow us to this sæter, I give the hint to keep as near to the river as possible above the lake. Many grand expeditions can be made from here, which will be suggested at the most cursory glance at the map.

Monday August 15th. Up at 3, should have been earlier, but were so late the night previous. Vigdal wisely put some ice nails I gave him, into his boots. After some delicious coffee and adieu to the woman and a child who was with her, we sallied forth into the clear cold air at 4 AM. Our ultimate destination we knew not, but first of all we must explore the big glacier arm. Ten minutes descent, and we reached the ice, just above its terminal ice-fall. We hacked our way upon the ice, but soon had to leave it for a few minutes to turn some large crevasses. Future adventurers would do well to ascend a little from the sæter, about 100 feet to a flat ledge of rock from whence is an easy way on to the ice.

We were soon fairly on the ice jogging along at a good $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour. The glacier, which is very fairly flat for some 8 or 9 miles, is well shown on the map. It much resembles the Aletsch glacier in the Alps. For several miles there was no particle of snow on the ice, and by zigzagging a little we easily avoided the narrow crevasses. Generally we kept to the West side. On either hand are fine precipices, and on the West a grand cul de sac of rock fringed with ice.

At 6.15 we had a thorough Alpine sunrise, the beauty of which none can know save those who have seen one. The grand orb of day suddenly touches the snowy crown of the highest peak with a delicious rose colour which spreads down the peak, and as it does so the snow passes through the softest gradations and most delicate tints to pure glistening white at last. Each peak in order of height receives the gladdening rays, and soon bright daylight takes the place of brilliant starlight.

After $2\frac{1}{2}$ hour's walk on bare ice we reached a thin film of snow which was too shallow to bridge over the crevasses, so there was still no need of a rope. To our right, just under some high cliffs, there was a depression in the glacier and some tiny tarns of deep blue water. The head of the glacier expands like a fan with steep rolling fields of snow which connect it insensibly to the great Tustedalsbræ, which stretches its lanky limbs like an octopus in all directions.

A line of crags, but little out of our way, tempted us to leave the snow and ensured for us a dry breakfast table. For half an hour we had a steep pull up rocks and snow, and at 8.25 we reached the top of the ridge, over which we could see the head of Krondal. Here we built our cairn and breakfasted. Now we must rope before we tread the dread wastes of snow. At 9.10 we set off, in spirits of the best and weather ditto. Ahead of us, beyond the slack in the snow field appeared a snowy dome, which the map told us was Bræens høieste Punkt, 6495, apparently an hour's trudge. What wonder then that we should bend our steps there, and most probably score another maiden mountain to the list we had down? At first it was nearly level, then steepish, and lastly about as flat as a billiard table.

At 12, noon, we felt we were actually on the top, but it is about the most topless mountain I have ever been on, I longed for a peak, and do wish mountains would always have welldefined tops. We prodded our axes down in the snow as far as we could, but no rock could we touch. Used as I was to large expanses of snow, I was not prepared to see such a Sahara as this. Excepting Lodalskåupe and some rocks N. W. there was nothing to be seen but undulating wastes of snow on every hand for many miles. All the neighbouring valleys had apparently vanished, and the snow fields far away beyond the Justedalsbræ proper seemed, by reason of the absence of peaks, and of their extraordinary similarity in height, and hump-backed forms to be really one great snow waste. Nothing whatever betokened the positions of Olden and Loen; but Stardal — a glorious valley — just appeared as a slight depression in the field. The day was beautifully bright, and all was clear except where I most wanted to see, namely Totunheim whose bashful peaks were coyly veiled with filmy clouds. The regal Galdhøpig and the Western Horungtinder I did once reveal themselves a short time, and the Reiser pass was plainly seen, but that was all. It was really a terrible place to be in, one calculated to make even the most calloushearted turn his thoughts to the Divine Creator, and to acknowledge His power and glory. Mountains have preached in many a sermon, much more earnestly than the parson from his pulpit.

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