

CHAPTER III.
THE CHAMOUNIX DISTRICT.



1. THE PASSAGES OF THE GLACIER DU TOUR AND OF THE COL DE MIAGE.
2. NARRATIVE OF THE ACCIDENT ON THE COL DE MIAGE.

1. THE PASSAGES OF THE GLACIER DU TOUR AND OF
THE COL DE MIAGE; OR, A DAY IN A HEALTH-TRIP
TO THE GLACIERS.

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EVERY now and then there appears a disposition among certain persons at home to decry those expeditions to the "High Alps," which have become so much the fashion of late years. In the dull season of the year newspaper writers or correspondents, for want of something better to attack, set to work to write down the Alps or the Pyrenees. Ascents of peaks and passages of cols, unless excused by some distinct scientific purpose, are pronounced to be rash and profitless. As a matter of fact, it is not questioned that such adventures are numerous and accidents rare; but, say the wise utilitarians, why run any chance at all of rolling over the edge of a cliff or vanishing down a crevasse? Cui bono? Still, if that were all —

*"I demens, et sævas curre per Alpes,
Ut pueris placeas, et declamatio fias."*

"Break your own neck, if you choose,—be a nine days' wonder, and perhaps arrive at the distinction of a leading article on your death and your folly; but," adds the moralist, "you are worse than foolish if you selfishly tempt poor peasants with your gold to expose their lives to gratify your recklessness or your vanity. Notwithstanding all this excellent advice, Alpine excursions, undertaken with due precaution, and under proper guidance, are not

on the average attended with greater danger than other amusements involving physical exertion and the excitement attendant on difficulty or risk, when these are encountered and overcome by skill and activity. Nor is the profession of a guide more hazardous than that of many who in other ways minister to the sports and recreations of English gentlemen. Alpine perils there no doubt are,—let there be no mistake nor illusion on this head,—and these are no more to be despised or trifled with, particularly by the inexperienced, than are the dangers of the ocean. Winds and waves, rocks and shoals, however, are not held as furnishing sufficient reasons for consigning a yachtsman to Bedlam. The use of Alpine expeditions is of similar character with that of a run across a stiff country,—of a cruise at sea,—of a hard day on the moors,—or of many other exercises in which Englishmen indulge unrebuked. It braces the muscles, steadies the nerve, gives readiness to eye, hand, and foot, and fresh health and vigour to the whole frame. All, however, in a higher degree. Neither the breeze of the Atlantic, nor the clear air of the desert, nor the bracing atmosphere of Scotch hills or English downs, can vie for one instant with the inspiring, life-giving breath of the glacier. I speak from experience. I had been a good deal out of health, and not a little out of spirits, for two years. I had tried hard work,—I had tried relaxation from all work,—I had tried hygiene, orthodox medicine, and heretical cures. Nothing would do. In the autumn of 1859 I was persuaded to try Switzerland. It did not cure me, but it effected much. Before I left England it was pain and grief to crawl up a Malvern hill. Before I had been six weeks in Switzerland I made the ascent of Mont Blanc, and enjoyed it thoroughly.

On the 5th of September, 1859, we started from M. Eisenkramer's excellent hotel, the Union, at Chamounix,

intending to make a tour of Mont Blanc, and return by the Col de Miage. Our party consisted of three Englishmen and three guides. The English were Mr. George Sackville Lane Fox, the Rev. T. W. O. Hallward, and myself. The guides were François Cachat, François Couttet (Baguette), and Peter Bohren of Grindelwald. Fox had the preceding year made several *grandes courses* (including successful ascents of Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa), accompanied by the faithful Bohren. He had this season already crossed the Strahleck and other Oberland passes. Cachat had attended Mr. Wills over the Glacier du Tour, as those who have studied the transactions of the Alpine Club may remember. Lastly, Couttet, surnamed Baguette from his ramrod legs, and to distinguish him from another François of the same name, had explored one side of the Col de Miage with Mr. Coleman in 1858. Three better or more trustworthy guides could not easily be found.

We stayed the first night on the little inn on the Col de Balme, and proceeded next day by the Glacier du Tour to Orsières. When we left our sleeping-quarters the dawn was close and murky. It was somewhat dreary work crawling and clambering between light and dark over rocks slippery with the early frost. We reached the glacier, and plodded on over a wilderness of snow, dim, trackless, noiseless. So weird and unearthly was the scene, so congenial a haunt for spirits, that it would not have been startling,—nay, one almost expected at any moment to become aware of white-sheeted phantoms gliding beside or across one's path. After a while the sun dispelled the leaden-coloured mist, and then—

“ The bright beams of frosty morning danced
Along the spangled snow.”

As the sun rose higher, not only the early mist, but the

very atmosphere itself, seemed to disperse and disappear, while a flood of light poured down from above, and was reflected with such intense brilliancy, that the glaring snow-plain we trod on became as dazzling as the god of day himself. The only relief to the eye was afforded by the rich ochre of the truly "Golden Needles." They rose towering from the snow around, some shining in naked purity, others clad in mantles of glittering frost and encircled with coronets of sparkling diamonds, each different in form from the other, each varying from itself as the point of view was shifted, yet all alike bold and graceful; obelisks and pyramids such as no Pharaoh ever reared, pinnacles and spires such as no temple built with hands ever boasted.

Why the Tour is not a more frequented route I am at a loss to conceive. It is not difficult, and certainly is of surpassing beauty. The rolling fields of snow abound in crevasses; but as we were all harnessed with ropes they only afforded matter for merriment, as now one, now another of the party, blundering and floundering through the treacherous footing, had to be pulled up with a jerk, like some foundered screw. To the view from the summit no pen, not even Mr. Wills's, can do justice. It must be seen.

We followed generally the direction previously taken by Professor Forbes and Mr. Wills, till we reached the Fenêtre. Out of this we looked down upon the magnificent Glacier de Salena: then, wishing to take the shortest and easiest course to Orsières, we turned back from the Fenêtre, and, bearing N.E., crossed the Glacier d'Orny diagonally. On our way Bohren's keen eye detected the fresh track of a chamois: the animal itself we looked for in vain. Having reached the left or northern side of the glacier we skirted it, till, taking leave of the ice, we came

upon a rugged path among rocks. Presently we arrived at a little shrine where some peasants were offering up prayers for rain. Fortunately for us they did not prevail with their patron saint that day. Our road became gradually smoother, and after some windings led us directly down to the miserable little town of Orsières, our appointed halting-place for the night.

The following day we proceeded leisurely by the Petit Ferrex to Courmayeur, where we spent a couple of days in making the ascent of the Cramont and other minor expeditions. At least Hallward and I did. Poor Fox, fired with ambition to ascend the almost virgin Aiguille du Midi, left us before reaching Courmayeur, and, taking all three guides with him, went to sleep at the pavilion on Mount Fréty. The summit of the Aiguille had only been once reached, and that by a French count, several years ago. In the windows of the stationers or of the "general notion" shops at Chamounix may be seen a print entitled *Escalade du dernier rocher*, in which Count Ferdinand and his men are represented crossing an impassable gulf on an impossible ladder preparatory to walking up an impracticable cliff. Envious rumour, indeed, whispers that the Count only ascended by proxy,—that he sat down on a ledge some way short of the summit, and deputed his guides to plant his *drapeau* on that crowning height. Let it, however, be understood that it is rumour says all this, not I. Certain it is that on the afternoon of the following day Fox returned in triumph, having uprooted the Frenchman's flagstaff, of which he brought home the stump in his pocket, together with a fragment of the topmost peak. His own flag hoisted on Cachat's bâton he left flying, and this we afterwards had the satisfaction of seeing from Chamounix.

We rose at one o'clock on Saturday morning, the 10th

of September; and after breakfasting with what appetite we might at that hour, started from Courmayeur at 2 A.M. Our guides estimated that we might reach Chamounix in thirteen or fourteen hours. As, however, none of them knew anything of the ground on this side of the summit of the Col de Miage, and Couttet had only once been over the remaining portion of the route, it was thought prudent to allow an ample margin of daylight.

We picked our way over the rugged pavement and through the dark and silent streets of Courmayeur by the feeble light of a lantern; and followed the same glow-worm spark up the valley and along the Allée Blanche which looked black enough for anything. A dark night march, whether on foot or on horseback, is always a dreary, weary affair; and this one proved no exception. We walked on between awake and asleep in Indian file, each man instinctively or mechanically treading in the footsteps of the one before him. I indistinctly remember plodding over a stony beach, crossing and recrossing a little stream which there appeared no getting rid of; the oftener one crossed it the oftener one had to recross it. I was beginning to ask myself whether it were not all a nightmare, when I was roused by the voices of the guides who were making night hideous with their discord. My first fear was that some feud had broken out between our Oberland friend and the men of Chamounix. The dispute, however, was with a short stumpy porter from Courmayeur, who, in consideration of the guides being loaded with an extra quantity of provisions, had been engaged as a beast of burden to carry some of the knapsacks. We were approaching the huge moraine of the Glacier de Miage when the porter, thinking we were far from help, and therefore at his mercy, struck for a rise of 100 per cent. in his wages. In vain was he charged with

breach of faith,—in vain were Courmayeur men in general, and he in particular, taunted with being cowards before ice. The short porter was obstinate. Now, no Englishman can brook being beaten by a foreigner. Accordingly, meeting his obstinacy with more obstinacy, we told him without waste of time that his services could be dispensed with; and although he then began to propose terms of capitulation, these were not admitted. The knapsacks and haversacs were torn from him, and he was ignominiously dismissed grumbling, having had a night's work in carrying our things, and receiving for his reward a round abuse in French, English, German, Italian, and in various permutations and combinations of those languages. We had to smart, though, for our victory; for as we could not add to the baggage already put upon our guides, we had to divide the porter's load among ourselves, and found by experience how much a knapsack or a haversac, even a light one, adds to the heat and burden of the day.

It was now dawn, and as the light broke we all brisked up, and the day's work appeared to begin. All that had gone before,—the getting up in the dark, the candlelight breakfast, the night-walk, even the dispute with the short porter,—seemed to have belonged to some former day, and to have had no connection with the present.

We clambered up and passed over the terminal moraine,—the bar at the mouth of the great ice-river,—which, already extending for miles, threatens to block up the valley. We then came upon the Glacier de Miage itself. Our course lay plain and even before us to the foot of the col,—or at least to all appearance so. If we rose as we proceeded,—and I suppose that glaciers no more than streams “meander level with their founts,” in spite of Mr. Mont-

gomery,—the rise was gradual and almost insensible. Numerous crevasses intersected our path; but none offered any serious obstacle, and we advanced as rapidly and independently as if on an excursion to the Jardin. The air was fresh and cool, and there was no glare from the snow; as Mont Blanc, high on our right, kept the sun off us for hours after he was shining on other mortals. We only paused now and then for a few moments to peer down into the blue depths of a crevasse of more than usual beauty, or when the hunter Bohren, always all eyes for a chamois alive or dead, pointed out the skeleton of one of these creatures embedded in the ice.

On each side, to the height of several thousand feet, sprang sheer precipices, forming the banks of the frozen stream we were ascending. Their hoary sides were streaked with torrents of ice,—the feeders and tributaries of the great Miage. These mighty cliffs the glacier, in its awful strength, gnaws and eats away, as the Nile or the Mississippi wear down their soft alluvial banks, and carries down, as its silt, no mere particles of mud and sand, but vast boulders and fragments of friable rock.

Before us, to all appearance as inaccessible as any of the precipices on the side, though less in height, rose the col, in the shape of a crescent, with the horns pointed towards us. From its summit descended a snowy cataract, the foot of which appeared one vast chaos of crevasses, séracs, and ice-blocks. It was a very horse-shoe fall, save that its every feature—the headlong torrent—the watery abyss into which it plunges—the foaming surges and the flashing spray around,—all had been suddenly struck motionless, and, as if by the action of some Gorgon's head, turned into a solid mass. No wonder De Saussure, looking up at it from some distance, pronounced this to be an impassable barrier. Far again above col and cliff

towered up into the cold clear atmosphere, with sharply-cut outline, many a snow-clad peak, and high above all the calotte, crowning Mont Blanc. Looking round upon the walls of rock and ice that encompassed us, one was reminded of Sindbad in the valley of diamonds, and thought nothing save a rokh could extricate one from this depth. I do not think I ever saw a scene more wild, more desolate, more impressive. No life, no sound, no motion, not even a breath of air stirred. It was a realm —

“ Where matter dared not vegetate nor live,
But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
Bound its broad zone of silence.”

Yet stay; something has just moved, for high up from the cliffs on our left proceeds a gentle rattling sound. Bohren declared it must be a chamois, whose cautious tread had not prevented his attracting attention by setting some loose stones rolling. We scanned the rocks in vain for chamois, but as we looked up we saw the summits of the hills on the west edged with brilliant light. The sun has just reached them, and, melting the ice in their topmost couloirs, set free the stones which the hand of frost had hitherto held fast, but which now ran merrily rolling and bounding down their grooved sides. This was a hint to us that we had better hasten on and accomplish as much of our ascent as we could before the batteries of the couloirs should open fire in earnest. Still it was absolutely necessary to breakfast. We were now nearing the foot of the col, and a large flat stone resting on the ice, of convenient height and dimensions, offered itself in the double capacity at once of seat and of table. Half an hour's halt was therefore called.

It was now 6.30 A.M.; knapsacks were unstrapped and yielded up their stores of cold beef, cold fowls, hard boiled

eggs, German sausage, and bread, besides sundry bottles of red wine. Not thin sour vinegar, such as that by the aid of which Hannibal severed rocks and burst through the Alps, but canonised beverages,—St. Jean and St. George,—rivals in body and in spirit. No better provision can be carried on these expeditions than the sausage, which, if we had it in England, we should, for want of a better name, I suppose, call German. It is food compact, portable, pleasant withal, and stands by one on a long day better than anything I know. It involves no trouble nor loss of time in carving. With any knife you can in a moment lop off a foot or a yard according to your appetite. Its only fault, perhaps, is that it somewhat provokes thirst.

Punctually at the expiration of the prescribed half-hour we lighted cigars and set off. During intervals at breakfast the barricade we had to surmount was examined through a glass, and the most promising line decided on. Fox pronounced that we should reach the top at 9 A.M.; the guides more prudently said 10 A.M. We now encountered a rapidly ascending slope in some parts at the inclination of half a right angle. Our course was, moreover, rendered intricate by numberless crevasses, around, among, and across which we had to work. At one of these a serious accident was near befalling one of the party.

Fox was leading the way armed with his hatchet; immediately on his right was an upward slope of ice, so steep that I have seen many a wall further removed from the perpendicular. Presently he found his path intercepted by a yawning crevasse, fathomless as ocean. There was no apparent way of circumventing this, and Fox proceeded steadily, cutting steps in the icy slope, which here, receding from the chasm, became less inclined. He had advanced some distance over the gulf, and I was already standing on the first steps he had made, when suddenly I saw his feet

go out as if they had been struck away from under him ; he slithered down the polished surface of the gulley, like a tree down a timber shoot, and disappeared in the jaws of the crevasse. A thrill ran through me as I saw him go ; but in another instant I was relieved, when, craning down as well as I could, I caught sight of his hat and an arm, stationary, at a depth of not more than twelve or fifteen feet. Providentially he had lighted astride of a projecting piece of ice, which brought him up, and by instantly striking the pick of his axe into the wall of the crevasse steadied himself in that position : the guides, cautiously approaching the edge, threw him a rope, and he was drawn up none the worse for his slip. After this warning, however, we took further precautions. Bohren, round whose short person so many fathoms of rope were coiled that he looked like a walking capstan, was unwound, and we were put into harness, with Cachat as leader. The ascent became steeper and steeper, and the axe was in constant request. The sun, too, was now high, and the couloirs above kept up a frequent though desultory fire of stones ; but the crevasses, lying transversely before us, did good service by swallowing up these missiles before they could reach us. Couloirs, I should explain for the benefit of the uninitiated, are furrows or channels lined with ice or frozen snow, running down the sides or slopes of mountains, and along which any object, once started, shoots with incredible force and velocity. After a while, the ice becoming impracticable, it was judged best to bear to the left and get on to the rocks. This was accomplished with some difficulty, and now came a scramble almost straight up, by the aid of hands, knees, and feet,—now tugging each other up with rope ends,—now hoisting a friend on high with the butt end of an alpenstock, or drawing one's self up by the pick of an axe. The crags were composed of thin vertical layers,

fissile and crumbling, bearing out De Saussure's description, —“*des assemblages de feuillets pyramidaux extrêmement aigus* :” the projecting layers afforded the hold for the foot or the grasp for the hand, which enabled one to clamber up ; but the sharp edges cut the glove with which one seized them to shreds, or the fragment on which one rested for a spring upwards came treacherously off in one's hand or failed under one's foot. The col was quite unknown to the guides ; and consequently here on the rocks, as before on the ice, we were frequently brought up by an impracticable place, and retracing our steps, were now and then compelled even to turn off the arête and hew our way for a while up or across a couloir.

Nine o'clock had come and gone, ten o'clock was long past, and the summit was still far off. The sun was hot, rock and snow glaring ; and the knapsacks that horrible Courmayeur porter had bequeathed to us had become woefully cumbersome. We were feeling that raging thirst for inspiring which the High Alps can compete with the deserts of Mesopotamia. All the oranges, all the apples, were gone long ago ; snow in the mouth brought no relief ; we must have some wine, we said to Cachat, as we paused with him to take breath at the foot of a vertical wall of rock, leaving Bohren and Couttet to go ahead and look out for a road. Cachat produced the last bottle from his store, which I put to my mouth, fondly expecting a good draught of St. Jean. It was strong luscious Muscat, one bottle of which our host had insisted on our taking, tepid with the heat of the sun and with being churned in a havresac : for all that, we drank it down like so much water, but it afforded little relief to one's thirst. I looked at the ridge far above me, and bethought me of the bitter wish expressed shortly before concerning Mont Blanc by a gentleman toiling up it and in the agony of sinking into deep

snow at every step,—“ You infernal mountain, I should like to have you rolled out and sown over with potatoes ! ” A yell from Peter some fifty feet above, admonishing us to take the rock to the left, put an end to reflections.

At length, after more struggling and clambering rock work, we found ourselves really near the top of the ridge ; the séracs and precipices of ice that we had avoided by taking to the crags, lay below us, and immediately to our right stretched a small inclined plateau, covered with snow, leading to the summit. Of this plateau and its crevasses we knew nothing ; but it looked tempting, so we tied ourselves all together, like camels in a string, and with some difficulty got on to it. Crevasses were not wanting, but we were fortunate in hitting off bridges under the snow ; in one instance, if not more, they let the hindermost of the party through, but the rope made all safe ; the snow was in fair condition, and in twenty minutes from leaving the rocks the height was won. We looked at our watches ; it was just twelve o'clock.

The ridge on which we stood was about the width of an ordinary footpath. For all one could see, it went down sheer and perpendicular on the north side. But for this isthmus the range of Mont Blanc would here be completely broken through. To those who have seen the Devil's Dyke, near Brighton, I may perhaps convey some idea of the form of the deep channel scooped out by the southern glacier and closed by the precipitous col at its head, when I say that it resembles, on a gigantic scale, the ravine which so nearly divides the South Downs. The fiend, so runs the legend, had undertaken to cut through the chain of hills, and let in the sea to flood the Weald of Sussex ; but seeing an old woman's lantern, and mistaking it for the rising sun, he became alarmed, and, hastily abandoning his task, left unremoved the escarped bank, which, extend-

ing across his unfinished trench, still maintains the continuity of the Downs, and thus preserves from a watery grave the peasantry of the plain.

The view which burst upon us as we gained the summit was more extensive, but less wild, than that behind. At our feet lay the northern Glacier de Miage, bounded on each side, like its southern namesake, by precipitous faces of rock, scored by avalanches and torrents, but terminating in green slopes and a grassy valley beyond. In the blue distance lay the Jura mountains, and, I believe, the Lake of Geneva. The col itself forms a causeway connecting the Aiguille de Miage and other heights on the west with the Aiguille de Bionnassay and the peaks adjoining Mont Blanc on the east. From the angle formed by the junction of the col with the rocky slopes leading up to these last poured down a glacier, the effect of which we discovered later in the day. From the opposite angle made by the col with the Aiguille de Miage, avalanches came roaring and rushing down, apparently with the undeviating regularity of excursion trains, at intervals of a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. Looking back to the south we could see nothing but the long glacier we had walked over, scored transversely with crevasses, streaked longitudinally with moraines, and the crags that hemmed it in on every side. Seen in the early morning, as we stood far below them, the snow-capped summits of Mont Blanc and of his rivals affected one with a chilling sense of gloom. There was something so cold, so lifeless about them; they seemed like death's heads placed aloft in a sphere above human feelings, interests, and passions. Now they inspired no idea of sadness,—they glowed warmly in the brilliant light that suffused them; the distance between them and us was reduced; they seemed no longer so far removed from earthly ties and sympathies; and one felt that if one

did not admire them less, one loved them more, and hoped for a still closer friendship. All homage, however, to the monarch who is seen from here, as everywhere, throned high above the rest,—the very emblem of majesty and repose. Mr. Ruskin has an expression to the effect that mountains, besides the material duties of forming reservoirs of water and purifying the atmosphere, have the higher mission of elevating and ennobling the human mind. Mr. Buckle, on the contrary, tells us that mountains crush and degrade the intellect of man, and quotes in confirmation of his assertion a passage from Alison, the purport of which is, that mountain scenery has made the Tyrolese ignorant and superstitious. Whether our party were more ennobled or degraded by the scenes around us I will not undertake to say. Neither effect, however, was produced to such a degree as to put out of sight the matter-of-fact view of the case,—that the day was far spent, that a long steep descent was before us, and that, as nothing insures a steady head so well as a full stomach, it was advisable to dine without delay. Accordingly half an hour was devoted to recruiting our forces. At 12.40 time was called; we left our names in a bottle deposited on the top and girded up our loins. The cellar being now quite exhausted, and the larder almost so, the original load was thus materially reduced, and the guides were able to relieve us of our burdens. Baguette proceeded along the edge of the col in the direction of Mont Blanc, craning down and endeavouring to hit off the arête by which he had ascended and descended with Mr. Coleman the year before. There was some difficulty in finding the direction, and we began to think after all we should have to strike out a line for ourselves. Not that it seemed much to signify where one went, for to all appearance one might have dropped a plummet at any point. Just now, however, Coustet

exclaimed, "Here it is!" and plunged downwards. The rest followed.

The descent was almost entirely rock-work, by crags of the same character as those we had struggled up on the other side, with an occasional patch of ice or snow to give variety and relief. The first portion was decidedly fitter for quadrumana to climb than for bipeds to walk down. Great and not unreasonable were the exhortations addressed to the rear ranks by those in front not to send the loose crumbling masses of stone rolling on their heads. Towards the bottom there was more slope, the foothold improved, and one could dispense with the aid of hands and rely on one's feet and one's alpenstock. We looked in vain for chamois all day, though both Miages are their favourite haunts; and Couttet had in 1858 seen a herd of thirty or forty on the crags overhanging the northern glacier. Bohren was obliged to console himself by occasionally detaching some huge fragment of rock and sending it bounding down the dizzy steep till it was dashed to atoms on the glacier below, or swallowed up in one of its gaping chasms. Such a proceeding, particularly at critical points, is not encouraging; but Peter may have intended to convey a warning, indicating, more delicately than words could do, to his *Herrschaften* how they would go and where they would go if they did happen to make a mistake. When we reached the bottom we found that the glacier before mentioned as coming down from the east end of the ridge above, created by its junction with the main stream, a sort of storm in the ice, which resulted in many large crevasses, more especially in one which effectually barred our passage on to the level plain before us. Eastward the prospect was hopeless: we, therefore, skirted the crevasse for some way, going westward, till we found ourselves brought up by a wide couloir, which, as

the occasional discharge of a stone showed, was not altogether inactive. After a little deliberation it was decided that it must be crossed, though the operation was of the kind our guides most objected to; and justly so, for against stones shooting down a groove of ice with something of the force of a rifle ball, presence of mind, skill, and activity avail but little. Especially awkward is it for the man who has to make the way, and stand fire while cutting the steps. This duty Cachat took upon himself; nor was he long about it: his axe was soon ringing upon the ice, and scattering a shower of gems at every blow; till, by an incredibly small number of well-directed strokes, a succession of ledges was made, by aid of which we hurried across. As we passed over one of the party naïvely remarked that after all a couloir was the same as a brook, with this difference, that in a brook the water rolls over the stones, and in a couloir the stones roll over the water. Still the crevasse baffled us; it was either too wide to jump, or, if it seemed to come up to the rocks, a few soundings taken with a pole, so far as a pole could reach, proved there was no bridge, or none that would bear. The adventurous Bohren was out of all patience; he had, with magnanimous self-denial throughout the day, waived all pretensions to the post of honour and of danger in favour of the Chamounix men, on whose manor he was to a certain extent a trespasser. Muttering German reflections, rather disparaging to the courage of all but Oberland guides, he now rushed to the front, and looked with scrutinising eye at some snow that approached the rocks. It was too far below to be probed with an alpenstock; and, notwithstanding remonstrances from guides and travellers, he jumped upon it. He rolled over in the soft snow; but there was a firm substratum; and the problem of getting on to the glacier was solved.

This northern was the counterpart of the southern Miage, though less extensive. We crossed it diagonally, bearing towards its eastern side. Then came an enormous moraine that would not have disgraced the grinding and carrying powers of the larger glacier; and eventually we landed on a succession of grassy terraces covered with bilberries. After so many hours of rock and ice we thought walking on grass would be no exertion. These slopes proved, however, very steep and slippery, to a degree that appears peculiar to Alpine grass. Altogether this was the most wearisome part of the day. We missed our way, too, by following the bed of a tiny rivulet which led us astray. After the moist green hills and banks came a stony tract like the sea-beach, and having crossed this we arrived about 5 P.M. at some châteaux, called the Châteaux de Miage. Lying down on the fresh sod we drank some milk and finished whatever remains of food were to be found in the havresacs. Turning back towards the col from a distance it looked simply perpendicular, and showed no signs of being anywhere practicable: the valley seemed completely walled up by it. At the expiration of twenty minutes the party jumped up quite refreshed, and we set off for Chamounix, reckoned to be about fifteen English miles distant. In England the walk we had still before us would be considered a good day's exercise. But in the Alpine world innate or acquired ideas of time and space are totally revolutionised.

The path for some time wound up and round the side of a lofty hill. To ascend, after so many hours of incessant descending, was a pleasing change. It felt actually more refreshing and invigorating to the muscles than the repose by the châteaux. We pushed briskly on over the first hill down into a deep valley over the Col de Voza, and thus onward over hill and dale. Walking over such

ground seemed to require no effort, and with the cool of the evening every vestige of fatigue vanished. Then came the summit of the hills forming the southern boundary of the valley of the Arve. In tearing spirits, and with many exhortations to Peter Bohren to take care of himself on such dangerous ground, we raced down the slopes and terraces, coming down with a run into the dusty road a little below Les Ouches. At this village some of the party halted for tea. The rest kept straight on, and reached Chamounix a few minutes before nine; the second division came in about twenty minutes later. We had therefore taken, including halts, nineteen hours to accomplish our journey.

A hot bath, a glass of Vermuth, a supper which a Sybarite might have envied, but never could have equally appreciated, in the company of our trusty guides, fitly concluded one of the most enjoyable days of a health-trip to the glaciers.

It is impossible satisfactorily to take leave of the Col de Miage without alluding to the unfortunate accident, of which, since our passage, it has been the scene.

We little thought that two years later, a young traveller would be disastrously separated from his friends on that identical Col, whence we had so thoroughly enjoyed the wondrous scenery. We dreamed not that it would be his lot to be dashed from top to bottom of one of those fearful couloirs of ice, down which we had gazed with "bated breath."

A description of this accident will doubtless be acceptable to all interested in Alpine adventure, and no one is more capable of accurately narrating the facts than the Rev. Charles Hudson, who was a kind and constant attendant upon the sufferer.