

8. THE COL DE LA VALPELLINE, FROM PRERAYEN TO ZERMATT; INCLUDING THE COL COURGNIER OR DU MONT CORNIÈRE, AND ASCENTS OF THE CHÂTEAU DES DAMES AND TÊTE BLANCHE MOUNTAINS.

BY FREDERICK WILLIAM JACOB.

UP to the time of the discovery of this Col, travellers passing from Zermatt to Aosta had two routes open to them. The first was by the St. Théodule Pass and Val Tournanche, with an alternative course (after crossing the St. Théodule) from the Val Tournanche over the intervening ridge, westwards, into the Valpelline—in either case a long way round. The second was by the Col d'Erin to Evolena, and thence, in a second long day's work, either by the Col de Collon or by the Col du Mont Rouge, the Valpelline. This route was frequently preferred, as it afforded two fine glacier expeditions. It involved, however, a long *détour*—along the two sides of the triangle, instead of the direct line by its base.

In the course of a series of expeditions, principally around Zermatt, in the season of 1860, during the earlier portion of which I was accompanied by my friend Mr. John Fisher, of St. John's College, Cambridge, I had been struck with the manifest indirectness of these routes to the Valpelline. It seemed to me that, if a passage could be made direct to Prerayen along the base of the triangle, and in one day instead of two, not only would the facility of access to the Chamounix district be sensibly improved, but the first link in the chain of an entirely new route satisfactorily forged.

Accordingly, when crossing the Col d'Erin, I had examined with the glass, as narrowly as was then practicable, the ice-fall and snow-field to the south of the Tête Blanche, and leading up towards the Col which I proposed opening out, and they did not seem to me to present insuperable difficulties. What obstacles might exist on the further side, in the snow-fields of the Zardezan glacier, it was impossible to foresee; for, being untrodden, nothing was known of them. Professor Forbes, in his "Travels through the Alps," says, in reference to this district, "It is, perhaps, only in this part of the Alps that such a prodigious extent of comparative table-lands of snow are to be found at such an elevation." It occurred to me, however, that, if I could attain some high point in the chain running southwards from the Matterhorn and the Dent d'Erin (or Dent d'Hérens, though Studer's map calls it Dent de Rong), I should be able to see somewhat of the Zardezan side of the contemplated Col, and be better enabled to judge of the nature and direction of the glacier and snow-fields which I should have to traverse, and of the practicability of effecting a passage.

In order to carry out this idea, I proposed, after crossing the St. Théodule Pass to Breuil, in the Val Tournanche, to go thence, over the chain, between that valley and the Valpelline, to Prerayen, ascending *en route* the mountain known as the Château des Dames. This chain and mountain are alluded to both by Mr. King, in his "Italian Valleys of the Alps," and by M. Le Chanoin Carrel, of Aosta, in his "Panorama of the Alps." Mr. King mentions a report of the existence of a pass between Breuil and Prerayen, but adds that it is steep and difficult, and that he could gain no information about it, save that it passes under Mont Cornière, and round the flank of the Château des Dames. The mountain he describes, as he

saw it from Breuil, as "one of the loftiest points in the ridge, and a smooth dome of snow, out of which rise some singular bare rocks; and they certainly had a remarkable resemblance to ladies marching up the snow to an Alpine castle;" whence it is supposed the name arose. M. Carrel describes the mountain thus:—" *Cette gracieuse sommité barre à l'est, la vallée de Bionaz. Elle est entre les hauts pâturages des châlets de Prarayé, au sommet de dite vallée, et ceux des Volpiglies à Valtornanche. Il en descend de beaux et bruyants glaciers;*" and in a subsequent passage he again testifies to its grandeur, by alluding to its glaciers as the source of the impetuous river Buthier. In the panoramic view of the chain attached to his book, the mountain, grand though I certainly found it to be, assumes, I think, a greater prominence than is justly its due. This I was enabled, I believe, satisfactorily to explain to him during the season of 1861, when, in a singular rencontre, I made the acquaintance of this eminent mountaineer, *littérateur*, and scientific investigator.

Professor Forbes also, whilst not mentioning the Château itself, alludes to the lofty chain of mountains forming this ridge, "over which he afterwards learned that a passage might be effected, though not without difficulty." At the time, however, of the expedition which I am now describing, I was unaware of the remarks of himself, of Mr. King, or of M. Carrel, on the subject, and had been simply led to the selection of this mountain as the base of my operations, from having seen it in the panoramic view. The description given by those gentlemen is, however, so accurate, that I regret that the absence of all previous knowledge of their observations, deprived me of so much additional pleasure in attacking the mountain.

I crossed the St. Théodule Pass on the 10th August, 1860, taking with me Johann Kronig of Zermatt, who,

with Peter Taugwald of the same place, and Franz Andermatten of Saas, had shared in my expeditions of that season. We fought our way over the Théodule in a heavy snow-storm and one of those bitterly cold north winds for which the Monte Rosa district has such an unenviable notoriety. On reaching the comfortable inn at Breuil, I inquired if there were any passage across the ridge to Prerayen by which I might approach the Château des Dames, so as to ascend it *en route*. I learnt that there was a Col, called the Courgnier, and that its track passed near the Château, but that it was very rarely used. Hence there was an additional reason for now crossing it; for, besides its contributing to the main object of the expedition—the new passage to Zermatt—it would enable me to see something of a district but little known. As to the Château, I was informed that it had never been ascended—was inaccessible—madness to attempt it—and so forth. The old, old story. Of course, the fact of its not having been previously ascended was quite sufficient to decide any Alpine explorer to attack it, so I immediately asked for an additional porter. Kronig and I had sufficient reliance on each other, from former wanderings, not to care for further assistance in merely trying a mountain like this. There was, however, no accommodation then at Prerayen, at which place it would be necessary to pass the night in hay. We must also be prepared to camp out, if required, further on; and we must take with us provisions for the three days which would doubtless be occupied in getting to Prerayen, and thence effecting the pass to Zermatt. An additional pair of legs to carry the provender, &c., was therefore not a choice, but a necessity. Only one native presented himself; but neither from his appearance, nor from the examination to which he was subjected, was I satisfied with his general qualifications. He professed to

know something of the Col Courgnier, and assured us that we should obtain at Prerayen milk, cheese, butter, bread, and perhaps an egg or two ; but inasmuch as those luxuries were not forthcoming when we arrived here, and as he led us wrong in descending the Col, I have great doubts whether he had ever previously been across. Eventually, as will be seen, he proved worse than useless,—indeed, a positive encumbrance, for he, of course, consumed his share of the provisions, of which we afterwards stood much in need. We were, however, in the onset, in happy ignorance that he possessed these additional qualifications as a guide. Discouraging as his examination had proved, we concluded he might at any rate be useful in carrying the provisions, and, as no one else would undertake the expedition, I was compelled to take him, despite my doubts. As a warning to future travellers, I gibbet him, by adding that his name was Maquigney Gabriel, or Gabriel Maquigney, if we discard the plan usually adopted in the Alps of inverting the Christian and surname.

At 5 A.M. the following day, August 11th, we started from Breuil in splendid weather, and in the enjoyment of a glorious view of the Matterhorn, Dent d'Erin, Breithorn, and other peaks around. Descending the valley towards Val Tournanche for a mile or so, we crossed the stream, and ascended the slopes bordering its western side towards a gap in the bounding mountains. Turning the gap, we entered a kind of basin, from which ran a valley down the chain southwards, and, in fact, dividing it into two parallel ranges. Winding round the head of this basin, on the north, we crossed the further ridge, and, keeping high up under its edge, came to a group of rocks at the foot of the Château des Dames. At this point we halted for the usual second breakfast, and, leaving there the rest of our

baggage, save a provision knapsack, which we retained for use on the top, we ascended straight up a steep snow-slope forming the base of the mountain, and in a north-east direction. A strongly-defined track in the snow was shortly explained by five chamois bounding from the rocks at the further side of the slope, within easy shot, and passing up before us. It was a tolerably good proof that the course which we were taking would enable us to get at least some height up the mountain, however we might afterwards fail to attain its peak.

On reaching the top of the slope, we found that a line of serrated rocks ran up northwards towards the head of the mountain, which was, however, concealed by intervening crags. Just as we topped the ridge, our friends, the chamois, who had been evidently waiting for us to follow them up, galloped down a snow-field to the east, and were soon out of sight. We ploughed up another slope, where the fresh fallen snow lay very deep, owing to the storm of the previous day, and the bad weather, for which the season of 1860 in the Alps will be long remembered, causing, as it did, the failure of so many expeditions. The toil inflicted by the depth of snow was, of course, now very much increased by the softening influence of the sun's rays, and we were continually plunging forwards into the usual little crevasses. The slope led us to some rocks above, very loose and *pourris*, through, under, and over which we wound for a long time, always steeply ascending. We hoped that each little peak which we attacked would be the last, but invariably found another rising beyond. At times we encountered parts which we could not climb. In such cases we had to descend to the steep and dangerous ice-slope below, and cut our way along, with the axe, as close to the rocks as possible, for, a few yards lower down, the slope fell off

very sharply, and ended in a precipice. In one of these little interludes we had a foreshadowing of our fate if we slipped too far; I missed my footing, and, in the effort to recover myself, my alpenstock, tried companion of many glorious Alpine expeditions, escaped from my grasp and slid away. At the prospect of its loss I could not refrain from uttering a mild exclamation. This, in the solemn stillness around, seemed somewhat unearthly, and so startled Gabriel, who was creeping up below us in an agony of fright, that he thought it the correct thing to follow suit with a loud cry, which very nearly destroyed the precarious balance afforded by his tottering limbs, in which case he would have toppled over after the alpenstock. To my intense delight, it buried itself in a little snow hummock below, which its weight did not disturb, but which would not have stayed our destruction if slipping down. In order to recover the priceless friend, and at the same time infuse into Gabriel a little of that confidence and pluck which was becoming necessary, we carefully let him down to the hummock by means of the rope. Cautiously he grasped the alpenstock, and we hauled him up in triumph. Shortly afterwards, one of those real dangers of Alpine exploration, a falling rock, whizzed close past my head in a highly unpleasant manner.

At length the rocks ended, and we gladly saw the top of the mountain not very high above us. But we found ourselves separated from it by one of those awkward places called an *arête blanche*, a ridge of snow, just broad enough for the foot, with a frightfully steep slope downwards on one hand, and, on the other, a precipice of untold depth. Over this, the ridge, wreathed up by the wind, hangs in a narrow ledge or cornice, through which the traveller may drive the alpenstock, and see space below as he walks along. These are the places which

frequently stop explorations if the wind is up: a sudden puff might shift the centre of gravity. Fortunately the day was magnificent, and scarcely a breath of air stirring; so, with care, we eventually got along the *arête*, and up a short snow-slope beyond. It landed us on the top of the Château des Dames, consisting of a little ridge of rock, on which the snow could not hold, but appeared to be wasted away almost as fast as it fell; we collected its melting drops to mix with our wine. But, first, we feasted on the splendid scene around us, increased as the enjoyment of it was by the pleasure which Alpine explorers feel on attaining the summit of a high mountain. Owing to its central position, the mountain commanded an extensive view, especially westwards, in which direction the eye enfiladed a line of snowy peaks, for nearly fifty miles away, towards Mont Blanc himself. Amongst these were the Vêlan and Graffeneire; and nearer the Mont Gelé, Otemma, Arolla, Collon, and others, of which little was then known. To the south, near at hand, rose out from the ridge a snowy cone, probably the Mont Gelé referred to by Mr. King. It was, of course, not the Mont Gelé just mentioned, in the main chain, on the further side of the Valpelline, and the ascent of which has been described.

But our principal satisfaction consisted in the fact, that the position, as expected, afforded us a view over the morrow's work. Right in front of us, towards the north, stretched up from Prerayen the great and unknown Zardezan glacier, hemmed in on the west by an almost unbroken line of precipices extending from the Pointe de Zardezan to the Dents des Bouquetins, whilst on the east several huge glaciers from the Dent d'Erin streamed into the Zardezan at right angles. Far away up the glacier we could see a tremendous ice-fall and system of crevasses, which made it more than doubtful whether we could force

the passage in that direction on to the snow-field beyond, leading to the Col by which I hoped to reach Zermatt. The east side of the ice-fall was bounded by a mass of rocks, interspersed with couloirs and snow-slopes, and the height of our position enabled us to see so far up these, that we conceived we might scale these rocks to the *névé* above, if the ice-cliffs in the glacier proved impracticable. All these points were carefully noted. In assailing new ground, it is obvious that the chances of success are increased by a previous recognisance; and though it is not every one who would ascend a high peak for such a purpose, yet the wisdom of that course was now plainly apparent, and became more so when on the glacier itself the following day. The object contemplated in hunting up and ascending the vantage ground upon which we now stood had, therefore, been perfectly successful. We had no efficient apparatus with which to ascertain the exact height of the peak, and could only make a rough estimate that it was something less than 12,000 feet.

The provision knapsack now claimed attention. The empty bottles were sent spinning over the crest of the mountain, and then, having been an hour on the summit, we prepared to descend. As a previously unascended mountain, I of course knocked from off its highest rock, and carefully bagged, this actual "top." We piled up the loose stones into a *homme des pierres*, or cairn, as a hint to any future traveller who might attain the peak that man had been there before him. Taking a last look around, we commenced a careful descent, for until we had recrossed the *arête*, and got down the rocks, our progress was necessarily slow. This was safely accomplished, and succeeded by some of those delightful glissades, to attain five minutes of which is worth hours of previous toil up steep snow-slopes. One of them was peculiar: a previous

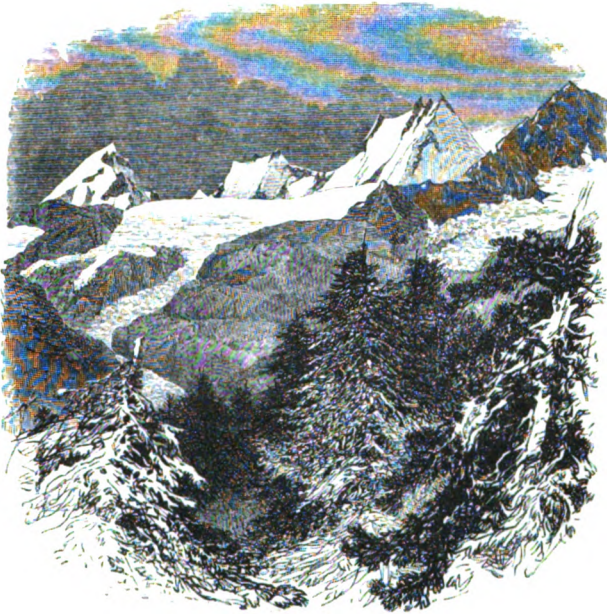
glissade had landed us on a little ledge of snow, doubtless caused by some protruding rock. From the edge of this ledge the slope again fell off, but so sharply in its upper portion that it seemed hazardous to attempt a glissade down it. Lower down a mass of ugly rocks was waiting to receive us, if, as seemed probable, the rapidity of the descent either toppled us headlong down directly we started, or prevented our stopping ourselves in time on the less inclined part below. Kronig peered over the brink, evidently calculating these chances. Then, as if half ashamed at hesitating at anything in such a successful day, he uttered a wild jödel, dropped over the cornice, and shot to the bottom of the slope. He planted himself firmly above the rocks, so as to check me if I tumbled over, or came down too fast. The place looked ugly; but I had no notion of being beaten, especially just after removing a mountain from the unascended list. So I shot down also, and brought myself up safely a few feet above him; but it required all my effort, and my good alpenstock bent almost into the form of a sickle under the heavy strain. Kronig gave a grunt of satisfaction, and we then set to work laughing at Gabriel, who shook his head at the shoot, and crept slowly down by the rocks. He descended very slowly, and seemed too frightened to trust himself to more than an occasional sliding step. We were frequently obliged to wait for him. Sometimes, losing his balance and footing, he came down rather more quickly than he intended, in that undignified attitude peculiar to the inexperienced glissader; when he reached us, we used, under pretence of checking his mad career, to dig him in the ribs with our alpenstocks, and provoke from him thereby divers exclamations of anything but delight. I became more than ever convinced of the absurdity of his calling himself a guide.

By the time that we had reached the rocks where our baggage lay *caché*, the sun had become so powerful that I was glad enough to creep under the partial shade offered by a rock, whilst the men repacked and refreshed again. Winding up amongst rocks and snow-patches, and finally a softened slope, we gained the top of the Col Courgnier, about 9500 feet high, and descended its further side by glissades, towards a gorge in the ridge, down which we were to pass to Prerayen. But we were not yet at the bottom. Gabriel, who professed to have been this way before, insisted on keeping high up, whilst we wanted to descend at once. The result was that we fell into a maze of difficulties in getting down, which our route would have avoided. Eventually we reached the gorge, and wound down it to the cattle Alp below. To this succeeded the usual forest; we beat through a tangled mass of underwood at its edge, and emerged into the Valpelline at a point about a mile below the solitary and highest *châlet* of Prerayen.

Crossing the torrent from the Zardezan glacier above, we quickly made our way to this *châlet*, passing *en route* two or three others seemingly deserted, and the smallest of chapels. It is a not uninteresting fact, that in these valleys, however few the *châlets* around, there is generally a small chapel where service is performed, though at long intervals. The passage of this Col Courgnier, or Col du Mont Cornière, need not occupy more than five to six hours; this is of course directly, and without diverging for the ascent of the Château des Dames.

Gabriel had assured us of accommodation, though indifferent, at this *châlet*. To our great annoyance the place was locked and barred; there was not even a dog about. The herdsman was evidently up on some Alp with his cattle. Fortunately the door of the hay-loft over the cow-

house was open. I took off my wet boots, lit my pipe, and lay down in the hay, whilst the men unpacked the provisions. The meal over, I despatched Kronig and Gabriel, in different directions, to reconnoitre for the herdsman, whilst I strolled up a little hill standing out in the valley. But no signs of the Alp, cattle, or herdsman could I see. The hill was surmounted by a rude wooden cross, part of which had fallen.



HEAD OF THE VALPELLINE.

Looking down the valley, I watched the shades of evening deepen into twilight, and then into darkness. A picturesque gorge terminated the view in this direction. Behind the hill, up the valley, a jutting slope shut out the end of the Zardezan glacier. To the north-west, lay the gap leading to the Col de Collon and Evolena, whilst on the

opposite side, the actual peak of our Château des Dames was concealed by a nearer though lower summit.

Descending to the châlet, I found the guides returned without any tidings. Matters looked awkward. We had relied on finding here milk, bread, butter, and cheese, at least, to eke out our provisions, and we had therefore dipped largely into our stores. It seemed likely we should be on short commons the following day, when, in an untried expedition, we might require more food than usual. We had calculated on adding some hot milk to the coffee which we had brought with us for the evening meal, before retiring to the hay for the night; we must cut off this luxury, and tumble into our quarters at once, like primitive burghers, but not like them to save candles and fuel, but because we did not possess either of those effeminate indulgences. Whilst preparing for this cheerful ending of our day's labours, two small boys arrived from the Alp. It appeared the herdsman slept there, and only came down once or twice a week. The arrival of the boys was accidental. Visions of hot coffee, before surrendering myself to the *mauvaises bêtes* in the hay, floated over my senses. In reply to our inquiry, they said we might sleep there, and should be supplied with milk and bread, but they did not think they should be doing right in letting us have cheese or butter. The bread was black, and so hard that we had to chop it with the axe and boil it in milk before we could get our teeth through it. To introduce successfully the bread and milk into one's mouth with the huge wooden spoon or soup-ladle, was an operation requiring some ingenuity. English mouths are not so capacious as Piedmontese. Travelling accustoms one, however, to many departures from refinement, and eventually I managed pretty well; but I could not overcome the feeling engendered by the excessive dirt, and, worse

than all, smell, of the hovel, so I retired, and rolled myself up in the hay for the night, adopting the usual plaid precautions against *mauvaises bêtes* and gaps in the roof.

*August 12th.*—My safeguards against the enemy had not been effectual; so, after a bad night, I was glad to turn out soon after 3 A.M., and perform my ablutions in a trough, whilst the guides prepared breakfast. Not knowing what work might be in store for us, I hurried on the preparations, but it was nearly 4 A.M. before we started, the morning seeming to promise a renewal of the previous day's fine weather. The information which I had expected to obtain by local inquiry was not forthcoming, in consequence of the absence of every one from the *châlet* but the two boys. I had contemplated, also, taking a native with me, if I found one who knew anything of even the lower part of the glacier which we were going to attack; for the previous day's experience of Gabriel had convinced me he was not to be relied on. Indeed, though I could not now secure further assistance, I would have dismissed him, but Kronig positively refused to proceed without Gabriel's assistance, at any rate in carrying the knapsacks. Leaving with the boys a remuneration, which appeared quite to astound them, I started, therefore, on this at least doubtful attempt, under as few encouraging circumstances as possible; but what is that to an Alpine explorer, especially when in quest of something unknown? It only nerves him the more.

As we walked slowly up the valley, to save ourselves for hard work later on, the darkness changed to dawn, and then to sunrise, with those beautiful effects of colour which snow mountains can alone afford. Oh, the glories of an early morning walk in such scenes! the bright crisp air sending the blood of the explorer tingling through his

veins with impulsive bound, and a sensation of that perfect health which mountain and glacier scaling so largely gives; the heart beating high with anticipations of the adventures before him—difficulties to be overcome—risks to be run—perhaps dangers to be encountered; and the joyful prospects of a successful expedition, after passing through scenes of mingled awe and beauty. With nervous energy he grasps his alpenstock still tighter, and thinks, in silent gratitude, of the great Giver of all this good, ere his pent-up feelings burst their bounds, and pour forth the voice in one wild pæan of jödel and song: “*Nous serons gais là-haut.*” Ah! who would change all this for the well-earned holiday fritted away in baking continental cities and miles of picture galleries, or of gorgeously-furnished palace rooms, in the gambling saloons of foreign watering-places, on the parades of Brighton or of Scarborough, or in similarly soul-less scenes! In very deed 'tis almost an insult to name them on the same page with the wondrous scenes of nature and her God!

Half an hour took us across the pastures and rough ground beyond, forming the head of the valley. Ascending rapidly we crossed the lateral moraine, and found ourselves on the Zardezan glacier, the ascent of which Professor Forbes says, “must be in some places very steep, though I should think not wholly impracticable, though it might probably be impossible to accomplish it (the passage) without sleeping out on the glacier,” and the “apparently inaccessible face” of which, Mr. King says, “he scanned, endeavouring to trace out a possible route up it.” At this early hour the glacier was in good order, so we pushed rapidly up it for several miles. It pursued an almost straight course northwards, bounded on the west by the black precipices extending from the Pointe de Zardezan to the Dent des Bouquetins, whilst on the east

stretched up a wilderness of snow-slopes and rocks from the Dent d'Erin, seamed by three secondary glaciers flowing into the Zardezan, and the bases of which we successively passed. The third was of great breadth, and the medial moraine, formed by the junction, was strongly defined. The whole scene forcibly reminded me of the Gorner glacier, and its tributaries from the Monte Rosa chain.

As we approached the ice-cliffs separating us from the head of the glacier, we perceived they were either impassable, or so difficult that to attempt their passage would consume more time than we dare risk, with an unknown névé beyond. Our recognisance from the Château had suggested overcoming this difficulty by endeavouring to scale the rocks to the east, which, therefore, we immediately attacked. Crossing its lateral moraine we left the glacier, and wound up steep slopes of snow, interspersed with patches of rock, sometimes bare, at other times covered with rough herbage; one of these was a perfect oasis of glorious Alpine flowers in a desert of snow; amongst them I gathered some of the finest specimens of the *Gnaphalium Leontopodium* I ever saw. Water became desirable; but the sun had not yet subjected this side to his influence sufficiently to free the runnels from the icy grasp of the night's frost. Higher up I contented myself with icicles. Some of the rocks were very difficult to traverse, the snow, melted during the previous day, having frozen into sheets of ice in the night.

We made straight for a kind of couloir, half glacier and half snow-slope, running up to the ridge above. The lower part of this couloir was well covered with snow, so that we easily ascended it, only occasionally having to use the axe. Higher up, and amongst the rocks, at times every step had to be cut. Scrambling and rope-hauling suc-

ceeded, and we emerged from the ridge on to the edge of an extensive névé. Away stretched the snow in a kind of undulating plateau or basin, hemmed in by rocks or snow-peaks; whilst from the east descended a secondary glacier, broken up in front by séracs. At the further side of the basin, and almost due north, rose the white top of the Tête Blanche, to the south-east of which lay the proposed pass. There seemed no unusual difficulties in the way. It was clear that we had taken the right direction by ascending the couloir, for it was almost in an exact line with the Tête Blanche, whereas we should have gone unnecessarily round if we had attempted to scale the ice-cliffs.

It seemed to me, moreover, that from this névé, and from the ice-cliffs below, a passage in the north-west direction, and to the north-east of the Dents des Bouquetins, exists to the west arm of the Ferpêcle glacier and Evolena. It may be more difficult than by the Col de Collon, but can scarcely be any longer, and assuredly must exceed it in interest as a glacier pass. If practicable, it will form a most valuable auxiliary in passing from Aosta to Evolena in a long day.\*

We now observed what, in the excitement of climbing the couloir and rocks, had escaped notice,—viz. that the weather appeared about to change, for a mist was already creeping over the snow-field. I insisted on immediate progress, so as to gain a look over the Col, if possible, before we became enveloped. At a quick pace we started across the névé. Gradually the mist thickened round us, and we became fog-lost. Still I would not give in. The mist seemed of that bright colour which often indicates its yielding to

\* Since this was written the new sheet (No. 22) of the Federal Survey has been published; it quite confirms this suggestion. The engineers appear to have crossed the Col, for they give it a height of 3418 mètres or 11,214 feet, and name it the "Col des Bouquetins."

the influence of the sun, and it might still lift up its veil, even though only for a moment, and enable an observation to be taken, as had so providentially been the case in other expeditions. Even if it did so, the difficulty here would be greater; for, on those other occasions, its lifting up disclosed land-marks, by which the guides had directed their way, when the pall again closed over us; whilst here, on this untrodden snow-field, even in clearest sunlight, there would be no familiar points to guide us, and all would be conjecture.

At length, after floundering some time through treacherous snow, we came to a dead halt; we seemed to be getting into a maze of crevasses and ugly ground; a consultation was held; Gabriel's hitherto subdued murmurs now took open expression, and he boldly urged immediate return, vowing it was impossible to proceed. Impossible! a word the pedestrian but rarely admits to his vocabulary. Return! what Alpine explorer does that until almost all hope is past? I would not hear, therefore, of abandonment yet. Fortunately Kronig, eager almost as myself to make the pass, yet remained firm, I knew, however, the dispiriting influence which the fears or evil prognostications of one guide have on his fellows, so I promptly shut up Gabriel. Again, as on former occasions, a gap in the mist for a moment disclosed a point beyond. Taking our bearings from it, we concluded we were not far from the direction upon which we had decided as most likely to lead to the Col; so we pushed forward, despite Gabriel's rebellious murmuring. After a time we came to another halt. The mist was thicker than ever.

It was now also accompanied by a thin snow-shower, which seemed to preclude all hopes of a sufficient clearing to enable an observation to be taken. Where we were we knew not. Kronig was also sensibly less eager in going

forward. I had been convinced throughout that we were much too low, and had urged Kronig to keep higher up, and more to the right or east, in order to reach the ridge under the Tête Blanche. That this course was the correct one was seen the following day.

Meanwhile the guides were wishful to keep the line of our present track, if we went on at all; for Gabriel never ceased urging return, and Kronig, though he did not yet quite second it, now began to drop hints about its wisdom. I urged a further trial. After another deep plough we arrived at the foot of a steep couloir, running up between some rocks;— that is, it appeared to do so, for the mist prevented our seeing more than a few yards up the slope, from the edges of which we could hear the ice breaking off and falling in showers near us. In the hope of obtaining a clearer view above, whereby to judge what direction we should now pursue, Kronig disengaged himself from the rope and prepared to cut his way up the couloir. This and the falling ice extinguished the last spark of Gabriel's courage. He became absolutely terrified, and, throwing off the rope, declared his firm resolve to go no further. I was a few feet above him, and could only with difficulty restrain myself from placing my alpenstock, like a lance, in rest, and charging down upon the coward. My original estimate of his unfitness as a guide was now more than confirmed. I did not deign to remonstrate with him, or ask his assistance. Indeed, he had been of little more use than carrying the provision knapsack. I felt sure that if the pass was to be effected, Kronig and I could do it better without Gabriel, and, as for the knapsack, I could carry that also myself rather than the attempt should fail. So I did nothing more than order him to bring the knapsack to me. Abashed, he laid his burthen at my feet, whilst I wound round my shoulders, his, and Kronig's end of the

rope, and prepared to follow the latter up the couloir by the steps which he had cut in ascending, he having now disappeared in the mist. Hardly had I done so when a shout mingled with the noise of the falling ice, and Kronig's form, looming out huge and spectre-like from the mist, appeared, and he bade me wait. He carefully descended, and explained that he had been to the top of the couloir, and some distance on the plateau beyond; but the mist there was still more dense, and he had not been able to obtain any view. I could now, therefore, no longer refuse to admit to myself that we must return.

If there is a situation where disappointment is keenly felt, surely it is when an Alpine explorer is compelled by adverse weather, or other circumstances, to abandon an expedition, especially when it has the charm of untried ground to add to all its unequalled pleasures. But there was no help at hand. The snow fell thicker. It was another reason why we must return; in an hour it would obliterate our track over the névé, deep though our steps had laboriously ploughed. In fine weather the footmarks would be our only guide to the gap in the rocks by which we had ascended, even if we could be certain where it was, considering the devious course which we had pursued in the mist. If difficult in clear weather, much more so would it be in fog and snow storm. We calculated, however, that the track would remain distinguishable sufficiently long to enable us to reach the gap, and yet allow us a few minutes previously for the refreshment which we so much needed, it being now many hours since our early breakfast. The halt would also give such slight chance as there was for the weather clearing. In these altitudes, storms come and go rapidly and unexpectedly: knowing this, Alpine travellers never throw away the faintest speck of hope. If they did, many of their successes would be

unperformed; and they all know how a steady faith and perseverance have often led on to victory, when even hope seemed left behind. Accordingly, I clambered up to a ledge of rock and sat down to feed. The falling snow supplied the place of butter on our bread, and iced the wine most gloriously, whilst occasionally a huge flake, tired of being tossed about by the wind, would rush for shelter into Gabriel's ever open mouth: at least one's appetite remained intact, however else the expedition failed.

But we must be moving. The snow falls heavier, and we struggle across the névé only just in time before our tracks are quite lost; nay, during the latter part they are gone entirely, but the rocks, looming through the storm, lead us safely to the gap.

The descent thence to the couloir below was no easy matter, increased as it was by the new fallen and still falling snow, which concealed foot-hold, and made the rocks more slippery. Midway down, and in a most awkward part, Gabriel, who was at the end of the rope behind me, became terrified, and threw off the rope, vowing he dared not go down so fast! Hear that, ye Alpine explorers! a guide committing the absolute treason of throwing off the rope, when, without it, a slip of those in front might be fatal. For, in those awkward descents, the last man plants himself firmly, whilst the others descend a few paces, supported by him with the rope; and when they, in turn, have secured anchorage, precarious though it be, the last man drops down to their level, protected by them in like manner against a slip. I said not a word, coiled Gabriel's end of the rope round my arm, and, cautiously descending, holding up Kronig below me in turn, ere long reached the couloir. We descended it by the steps cut in ascending, and were soon glissading down the snow-slopes which we had so laboriously ascended in early morning.

At times, in crossing the patches of rock between the glissades, we halted to allow of Gabriel, still far behind us, getting nearer. His ridiculous aspect, when he trusted himself to a mild and cautious slide on the snow-slopes, — it could scarcely be called a glissade, — was some compensation for the annoyance and delay which he had occasioned us.

In due time we gained the glacier below, and passed rapidly down it, Gabriel leaping little crevasses in splendid style. The snow-storm of the higher region was here heavy rain, and we were fast becoming drenched. The prospect of another bad night in the hay at Prerayen, with reduced provisions, was not cheering. I began to discuss the propriety of pushing forward at once down the Valpelline to the first inn, and on my way to another district, abandoning the attempt to effect the pass, for, even if the day following should be fine, the quantity of new fallen snow would be a serious bar to success. With this view, or, in the alternative, to get the herdsman to descend with us to the *châlet* at Prerayen, and increase our accommodation for the night, we left the glacier before reaching its foot, and, winding up the mountain-slopes on its west side, reached the Alp, where the men were herding the cattle. Of all the Alps which I have seen, and at which I have stayed the night, this one certainly was the wildest; and not unnaturally so, situated as it is at the head of an almost unknown valley.

Generally speaking, there is a hut for shelter of some kind. Here, on this wild rocky slope, we found huddled together, in a kind of cave under a projecting rock, the herdsman and two or three assistants. Talk of Rembrandt scenes! nay, see this picturesquely gloomy hole, in drenching rain and mist. In a corner, a heap of hay and dried leaves, covered with the superfluous garments of the

men, forms the bed; in front of which hang sacks and cloths in order to keep out, if possible, the driving rain and wind. From sticks, wedged into the crannies of the rock, hang the few articles of personal comfort which they require; and, of more importance, the various implements used in their work of herding and cheese-making. The wild hair and clothing of the men, and their caudal appendages, in the shape of one-legged milking stools, strapped on behind, wagging as they walked, but equal their rough and weather-beaten, yet honest faces, and contrast strangely with the little attentions which they immediately bestow upon us—unwinding my dripping plaid, and offering bowls of milk. On this, Kronig and Gabriel, who had been assiduous in their attentions to the brandy during the day, immediately seize, while I take a sip of whisky out of my pocket-flask to keep out cold, whilst discussing matters with the herdsman. The weird picture is completed by the numerous cows standing on the slopes outside dripping with rain, and looking as if they wished to share the little shelter which the rock afforded; for there was barely room for our three additional figures. The bells on the necks of the cattle clanged dimly and fitfully in the damp heavy air, mingling occasionally with the wind's wild whistle. Oh! how different to that cheering sound which, heard afar on some bright evening, betokens your approach to civilisation and food, after a hard Alpine expedition. But I must stop, or I should fill pages from the wild weird scene, in true consonance, as it was, with the mournful feelings imbuing an Alpine explorer, when returning from an unsuccessful expedition. It appeared these men had, from their eyrie, seen us go up the glacier in the morning, and theirs were the shrill whistles which we had heard, and attributed to marmots. The return of the two boys from the chalet had explained

the unusual appearance of human beings on that glacier, and they were loud in their expressions of wonder at our undertaking such an expedition. They informed us there was no inn nearer than Valpelline, five hours down the valley, and that was an indifferent one. The herdsman offered, however, to return with us to the châlet, and endeavour to improve matters for the night; so we were soon down on the glacier again, and thence reached the châlet by the route by which we had ascended in the morning.

On the way I became so dissatisfied with the events of the day, and the not very pleasing prospects for the night, that I again reflected upon the advisability of pushing on at once for Valpelline. My appetite also hankered after the flesh-pots of Egypt; to wit, something decent to eat, instead of the blocks of black bread, chopped with the hatchet, and soaked in milk, upon which highly nutritious food the reduced state of our stores would necessitate our supping. But I did not like to give in: my time was drawing to a close; I must effect the pass; the weather might not beat us back the following day. At any rate, I would see how it then looked. I would put up with anything—even a second night—for the chance of success; if the worst happened, I would go down the valley the following morning, revenge myself against the present short commons by devotion to multitudinous *tables d'hôte*, and push on to another district, or return with fresh supplies and again attack the pass.

Whilst the fire was being lit in the odoriferous hovel, I divested myself of my wet garments, rolled myself up in the hay, lit my pipe, and tried to think I was warm and jolly, which I wasn't. In due time my valet (for your guide becomes a valet, and a good one Kronig was) announced that our luxurious repast was ready. A clean

cheese-cloth covered the small portion of the dirty table allotted to me as the "Herr," and the old herdsman had unlocked from his stores a piece of *fontine* as the smaller cheeses are called, being the inferior and second gathering from the pan after the proper cheeses are extracted from it. The small amount of meat left was sacredly reserved to reward the efforts of the following day. And thus we feasted with appetites such as only mountaineers are blessed with. And then we lit our pipes and huddled over the fire, and became as merry as ever.

The herdsman was a fine old fellow, and told me much about his hard, but free, occupation. But every one knows all about that from guide-books. No more than others whom I had encountered on this, the Italian side, did he talk of the bosh and clap-trap, "free and united Italy," in the terms of rhapsody adopted by some people who know nothing about the matter. He did not appear to think it would be any very great advantage to the untrammelled and active mountain livers and inhabitants of northern Italy, to have joined to them the lazy treacherous natives of the south. "It might be all very well, but they were nearly eaten up with the increased taxes occasioned by Sardinia's ambitious policy."

Retiring for a while, the herdsman returned to say he had made up a kind of bed for me in a cupboard in the adjoining building; but having in our investigation on the preceding evening peeped through the window and seen that dormitory, I was not so enamoured with the recollection of it as to venture on even a second inspection. However gorgeously appareled it might be, I should not take off my own garments, and therefore I might just as well go back to the hay, where, at any rate, I should have air (and plenty of it, too), instead of being stifled in a fusty cupboard. Give the mountaineer a plaid, a bundle

of hay, and a knapsack for pillow, and he is contented enough after a hard Alpine day. In the matter of his enemies, the *mauvaises bêtes*, the chances would be equal. So, not to hurt the old man's feelings for his kind attention, I told him a decided little fib; namely, that I had been so pleased with my former night in his hay, that I should be only too glad to have a second tumble into it; whereat he smiled approval. So Kronig and Gabriel crept into the cupboard, after shutting me up in the cattle-shed alone with the bats, owls, mice, fleas, and other "such small deer."

And this time I had a tolerable night, and never was happier than when Kronig awoke me soon after 4 o'clock next morning (August 13th), and, in reply to my anxious inquiry, informed me that the rain was over, and the day promised to be fine. Hurrah, for the pass yet! I thought, was up in a jiffy, shaking off the hay, and dipping my head in the run of water outside. But sodden boots had to be got on, the fire lit, coffee and milk boiled, and knapsacks re-arranged, so that it was 5.45 A.M. before we started.

Kronig was as dissatisfied as myself with Gabriel, and perhaps piqued at the failure of the preceding day, though it had been due to the weather alone, and not to any fault of his. It was obviously his interest to effect the pass. He would get high pay from me; it would add to his fame as a Zermatt guide, and to his employment by those who would doubtless follow in our footsteps. When, therefore, I positively refused to let Gabriel again accompany me, and offered to carry, throughout the day's unknown toils and trials, my additional share of the baggage (there being no one available as porter), and challenged Kronig to attempt the pass with me alone, the honest fellow's face lighted up, and he said he would go with me

unassisted wherever I went. He warned me, however, of what we were undertaking; not only should I have to carry the increased weight, but the work before us might prove very difficult. In all this I must take an additional share, as well as of the extra strain on the rope, where only two are working instead of three. I felt, however, so bound to effect the pass, that none of his warnings made me hesitate; and we had seen enough of each other in former excursions to have mutual confidence, and to feel tolerably certain that, if the pass was practicable for three, it would be for two—he at one end of the rope, and I at the other,

All this had been settled the preceding night, in firm resolve to try again this morning, if the weather was favourable. Hence the now re-arrangement and division of the baggage and other preparations. I shook hands with the jolly old herdsman (who would scarcely accept our proffered remuneration, and seemed so doubtful of the success of our enterprise, that he half hinted at expecting to see us again before night), and resumed our route of the preceding day up the valley, where Kronig soon joined me.

The morning was beautiful, and, as we descended on to the glacier, we looked back at the Château des Dames, on whose hitherto untrodden summit we had stood two days before. As the sunbeams caught her peak, she seemed smilingly to flash her eyes in encouragement of our renewed effort. How I loved her for that same, and hugged it to me, as augury good.

Now, I had resolved to push on at the fastest pace possible, so that, should the envious mist again enshroud us, we might, at least, have got so far up the Col as to get a view, and venture to proceed, even though in mist. We should be the better enabled to march rapidly, because

for the first part of the day we should have the advantage of going over familiar ground. Hence I said nothing to Kronig, but quietly pushed forward at my best, and so much so, that I noticed him at times hang back, as if slightly distressed; but a natural pride and enthusiasm restrained any outward sign in the good fellow, though he was, of course, more heavily loaded than I.

In this way, with scarce a pause, we ascended the glacier and couloir, and gained the gap in the rocks at 9.45 A.M., being little more than half the time consumed the previous day when clogged with Gabriel. And yet the steps which we had so laboriously then made were of no avail now, quite obliterated, as they were, by the heavy new-fallen snow, which always adds so much to Alpine labour. These rocks are called on some maps *Papilles Rouges*; on others the *Dents des Bouquetins*,—having, I suppose, formerly been a resort of the now all but extinct *Bouquetins*; but, as this name is more properly applicable to the range on the west side of the ice-fall, the rocks have, to avoid confusion, no name attached to them on the map illustrating this paper.

I scrambled up the last rocks to the gap in eager haste, and almost sickening fear whether we should, as on the preceding day, find the *névé* beyond enveloped in mist. But, happily, no! Away stretched those undulating snow-slopes, glistening in unclouded sun, and bounded on the north by the range leading up to the *Tête Blanche*. In this chain we distinguished the couloir, at the foot of which the storm had, the previous day, stopped our further progress. It showed clearly how far out of the right direction we had then gone in the mist and storm.\*

\* The *névé*, as well as the glacier, is called on some maps *Zardezan*. The general features around seemed so little to agree with those depicted, that the positions assigned, like the name of the rocks just mentioned, may

The unclouded view confirmed also the belief formed on the previous day, in the existence of a new passage to Evolena, as a rival to the Col de Collon. But I bore in mind the resolve to push on as fast as possible. After only five minutes' halt, therefore, despite our rapid ascent, we plunged into the snow, keeping east of our direction of the previous day, the track of which, deep though it had been ploughed, had been quite obliterated by the storm. On we struggled, sometimes up snow-slopes, then across one, and down into a kind of snow valley on the other side. At length the long-hoped for Col came in sight. The toil was great, owing to the increased depth of snow, and the almost insupportable heat and glare; yet scarce a moment's pause was taken. The prize was almost in our grasp, and something might occur even yet to snatch it away; so on we pushed, straining every nerve. And then high mountains began to appear beyond the Col as we rose. A few steps more, and hurrah! we were on the top, and scanning eagerly the further side, in order to see if there were any difficulties in the way of a descent.

Again not a speck of mist to hinder observation. From our feet stretched steep slopes of snow, much cut up with crevasses and ice-cliffs, but amongst which it appeared possible to thread our way to the névé of the Zmutt glacier below, and join the route from the Col d'Erin, a short

be equally questioned, and not improperly, considering so little is known of the district itself. Alpine exploration is now, every season, making great inroads into the accuracy of the maps, not only supplying palpable omissions, but knocking out, as devoid of existence, mountains, glaciers, &c., shown on even Government charts. Hence it is not an unreasonable supposition, that many parts of the maps have been concocted in the bureau of the engineers, by substituting a fertile imagination for the trouble of surveying the localities themselves. Since the exploration of this pass,—in fact during the present winter,—the before mentioned sheet of the Federal Survey has been issued. It comprises the entire terrain of the "High Level" route, and will probably contribute, more than anything else, to throw open the district to a larger number of our countrymen.

distance above the Stockhi. That plateau once attained, we knew the descent could be easily made thence to Zermatt, for we should be on old ground. In joy and gratitude, we therefore considered ourselves entitled to treat the pass as won.

Owing to the rapid pace at which we had come, it was only 10.50 A. M. We sat down in the snow, in enjoyment of the magnificent scene around us; but as the view was the same as that obtained shortly afterwards from higher ground, I shall postpone until then its description; for at our left hand, or north, rose up the beautiful snow-top of the Tête Blanche (appropriately taking its name from this top), and the *cacöethes scandendi* irresistibly impelled me towards it. We should have plenty of light left to reach Zermatt, and so complete the pass, even allowing time for unforeseen difficulties, and yet to ascend the Tête Blanche previously; and what mountaineer, finding himself near a peak which he has time to ascend, can resist doing so. There was the additional attraction of its being a new mountain,—that is, not previously ascended.

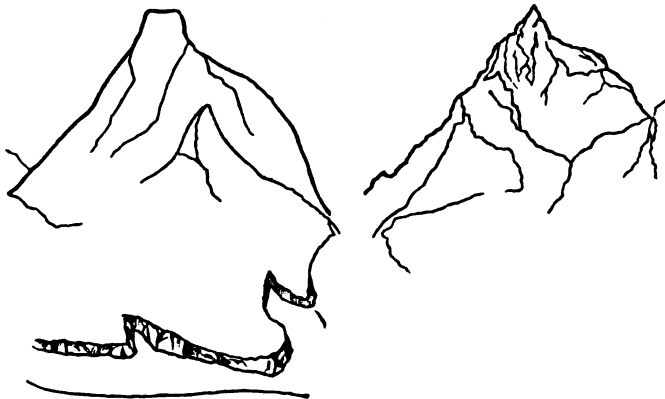
Cachéing the baggage in the snow, we again put on the rope, and at 11.10 A. M. started in pursuit, climbing almost straight up. We found no difficulties; it was simply a question of labour, the snow being deeper than ever. However, recent success had produced an excitement, which would have carried us, I believe, up half a dozen Têtes Blanches; and ere long we stood on the top, which consisted of a sharp ridge of snow, twisted up by the wind into a ledge just broad enough to walk along. This ridge seemed to descend gradually on the north-east to the Col d'Erin, whilst on the south it broke off precipitously, hanging over the new pass, and the snow-field which we had traversed below. The height of the Tête Blanche is 12,307 feet, that of the Col d'Erin 11,418 feet; and as

that Col was evidently lower than the new pass, I estimated the height of the latter at 11,600 feet, which would agree also with the apparent height of the Tête Blanche above it.\* And when I regarded our track in the snow to the gap in the rocks by which we had ascended from Prerayen in the Valpelline, and, turning round, looked in the direction forwards to Zermatt, I felt that this new pass, abridging, as it did, the distance between the two valleys from two hard days' into one easy day's work, might be appropriately named the Col de la Valpelline, which name it thereupon received. It has been crossed several times since; and when more generally known, it will probably become a favourite, not only for the superb snow and glacier scenery which it offers, but as being, firstly, a not unworthy rival to the Col de Collon, in passing from Aosta to Evolena; secondly, a communication between Zermatt and the Châlet d'Otemma, as conjectured by Messrs. Buxton and Cowell; and thirdly, the most direct route between the two principal points of interest, the centres of the chains of Monte Rosa and Mont Blanc, and a link of the "High Level" route, the first in order of time, though the last in the present sequence, which the expedition of this day thus forged.

Whether it was our success, or the brilliance of the day, or the real superiority of the scene around, I cannot say; but I do not think I ever enjoyed so glorious a view. The central position of the mountain, surrounded by a vast snow-field, bordered by lofty peaks, gave it peculiar advantages. Besides the well-known view from the Col d'Erin, it displayed a prospect in two directions, which

\* Since this account was written, I have become indebted to Sir T. Fowell Buxton for a boiling point observation taken on the Col in the following year, which gives it a height of 11,687 feet. Mr. Tuckett, who crossed it the same year, considers that this is perhaps 50 to 100 feet less than the real height.

that Col cannot; namely, first on the side, which the mountain itself hid, embracing the line of familiar peaks, stretching south-westwardly to Mont Blanc; and secondly, to the north-east towered up the wondrous Dent Blanche and sharp-edged Weisshorn, with the Bernese Oberland beyond. In front was the mighty obelisk of the Matterhorn, with, nearer still, the Dent d'Erin, little less in height; whilst beyond the eye ranged over the many other well-known mountains and glaciers of the Monte Rosa district. The Hochste Spitze of Monte Rosa herself,



THE MATTERHORN  
FROM SUMMIT OF COL DE LA DENT BLANCHE.

THE MATTERHORN  
FROM THE SUMMIT OF STOCKHL.

however, seemed hidden by the Matterhorn. Was not this a sight worth hours of toil to attain? Let those say who know what it is to stand upon a high mountain-top in golden sunlight, and see the neighbouring peaks crowding round to welcome them. In ascending, I had noticed strongly developed, what is sometimes seen in deep, new-fallen snow; namely, the blue, shimmering light emitted from the holes in the snow formed by the alpenstock.

We scudded down the mountain, and rejoined our baggage on the Col, after an absence of little more than an

hour. The descent to the plateau below, through unknown crevasses and ice-cliffs, and only one at the rope's end to check any fall of the other, was next to be undertaken. The baggage was, therefore, carefully re-adjusted, and at 12.15 P.M. we began to descend, each step being well secured, and the rope kept constantly taut. The value of this was presently seen. Down plopped Kronig into a crevasse; but I had my heel well planted, rope tight as a drum, and alpenstock firmly fixed; so the strain never reached that jerk often so fatal, and, though much lighter, I easily checked the heavier falling body. Kronig did the same for me shortly afterwards.

The névé was treacherous, so we made a diversion on to sounder snow. Occasionally we were stopped by some yawning crevasse or towering sérac, and were obliged to go back, or take the obstruction in flank. The edges of the crevasses were fringed with enormous icicles, and displayed the well-known ethereal colour. Kronig threaded the difficulties as a gourmand selects the dishes in a Parisian *table d'hôte*. And so, in time, we reached the snow-slopes below. Some glissades succeeded, and we began descending the rocks of our friend the Stockhi.

At the first run of water we halt. It is now 1 P.M., and, as we have eaten nothing since breakfast, and have ample daylight before us, we feed luxuriously,—that is, so far as time is concerned; for the provisions, short the previous day, are of course shorter commons to-day. We stay an hour thus employed, and pleasantly too, for even a crust is relished by a glacier appetite. Gazing into the mighty rifts and spotless snows of the Dent d'Erin and towering Matterhorn opposite, we hold high festival, under the blue vault of heaven. We are soon down the remaining rocks, glissades, and slopes, and on the lower level of the Zmutt glacier once more. The sun is fiercely hot,

and we are very glad to get shelter in the forest below, the glades of which, and little nooks of hay-making, seem prettier than ever. Having time to spare, we stop at some of these lovely spots, and at the last one, before approaching Zermatt, get under a waterfall and have a refreshing attempt at an *al-fresco* toilet, sorely needed after two nights in the hay, and in order to make an entry into Zermatt in respectable guise.

And so, at 5.30 P.M., we strolled into Zermatt all right, though, despite the difficulties of a late start, and much new-fallen snow, we had, in less than twelve hours, not only effected a pass between points which had hitherto occupied two long and hard days, but had also ascended a mountain *en route*, and loitered away two hours of the time. It will be seen, therefore, that the Col de la Valpelline may be comfortably traversed in about ten hours, with an hour additional if the ascent of the Tête Blanche is included in the excursion.

And did not I revenge myself for the privations of the last few days in the matter of food? The dinner, to which I shortly afterwards sat down, would have been a treat to even an alderman. The whole resources of the establishment had been evoked in a wonderful culinary effort. Good Seiler, the landlord of the Monte Rosa hotel, presented a bottle of his choicest wine, as the *honorarium* of a new pass. Divers pipes followed, and at a late hour I retired, not to hay, but to a bed, in that serene state of mind and body which a successful day of Alpine exploration insures in a way which no other occupation can.

It only remains to add, that a fortnight after completing the "High Level" route by the discovery of the Col du Sonadon, whilst Mathews and I left Zermatt, on our way over the Théodule to Turin and the slaughter of the Monte Viso, Messrs. Hardy, Prest,

Johnson, and Hudson, who wanted to get to Chamounix, turned off, at our recommendation, in order to reach it by the new route. They arrived at St. Pierre all right by the Cols de la Valpelline, Reuse de l'Arolla, and du Sonadon, but were beaten back by an accidental circumstance from the Argentière, or last day's work. Whilst the various links of the route had been supplied by the discoverers of these Cols and that of the Chermontane, Mr. Hardy and his party were the first who had traversed them continuously thus far. Meanwhile I made a forced march from the Viso, and joined Messrs. Hardy, Prest, and Johnson at the Col de Voza, whence we crossed over the summit of Mont Blanc by the Aiguille de Gouté and Bosse du Drommedaire, descending to Chamounix, whence, with Messrs. Messer and Brandram also, we passed over the Buet to the valley of Sixt and Geneva; and I was pleased to find that Mr. Hardy's party concurred in the opinion, that the new "High Level" route from Zermatt to Chamounix, and *vice versa*, combines a series of the most interesting excursions to be found in the Alps.