25 m. more brought us to our last night's bivouac. About half an hour sufficed to pack up our belongings, and then, instead of returning by the way we had come the previous day, we descended by the Schönbühl glacier to its junction with the Zmutt, which we followed till it led us into the track from the Col Durand. It took us 3 hrs. 40 m., walking without a single halt, to get to Zermatt, which we reached at 8.40; but during the latter part of the way we could only go slowly, owing to the darkness, so I have no doubt it is a quicker route than that taken on the previous day, which had occupied 6 hrs. walking (but uphill) exclusive of halts.

I am sorry I am unable from personal experience to compare this route with the usual one from the Evolena side, as I have not made the ascent by that way; but Christian's opinion is that the new route has the questionable advantage of being more dangerous, and the decided pull in being shorter and more direct from a chief mountaineering centre like Zermatt. The chief disadvantage, leaving sleeping quarters out of the question, is that, except in perfect weather, and with exactly the right amount of snow, I think the expedition could not be made without great risk. I should recommend anyone wishing to try it to do so when there is a good deal of snow on the mountains, for if *it is in good order*, I believe any reasonable amount would only make the ascent at least, the easier; whilst with no snow it would be simply impossible, owing to the number of ice-steps that would be required. There is no doubt that the day of our expedition was as favourable as possible, as the snow of two days before was compacted and well frozen; there was enough of it to enable us to get on as a rule without cutting steps in the ice beneath, and yet not so much as to come down with a run.

A TOUR IN THE ALPS IN 1800. Edited by the Rev. J. Sowerby.

During the summer of 1875, when travelling in Switzerland, I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of a gentleman and his wife who were following the course of a tour made by his father, then a young man of 20 years, in the year 1800, in the hope of finding in the visitors' books at the hotels some record of his passage; but no entry was to be found of an earlier date than 1824. On his return to England he was kind enough to send me the manuscript account of his father's tour, of which the following is a brief summary. It extends to 170 closely written pages, besides a chapter on the natural history and productions of Switzerland. Though containing various invocations of Nature, Freedom, and Solitude, and other reflections written in the inflated

style not uncommon at that period, the narrative is often simple and natural. The account is interesting for several reasons. The difficulty of communication and the want of accommodation which existed at that time, compared with the facilities of the present day, are very remarkable. The armies of France were then struggling in almost every conterminous country to extend their conquests and the principles of the Revolution. Especially in Switzerland during a great part of the year 1799 armies of various nations amounting to not less than 150,000 men engaged in a sanguinary struggle, had penetrated to her remotest valleys, so that the country was reduced to a state of almost complete exhaustion.

Starting with three companions from Brigg in Lincolnshire, the writer and his friends embarked at Hull. They reached Hamburg after a passage of 7 days. As there was no communication by post, they were obliged to purchase a carriage of strong basketwork without a cover, for which they paid 100 guineas. They left Hamburg on Sunday, July 28, with six horses. The postilions, each with a long pipe and a rusty old French horn, with skins for saddles, sometimes with stirrups, sometimes with none, presented an amusing sight. The harness was of rope, so rotten that if one horse pulled harder than another something was sure to break, and at least 1 hr. a day was spent in repairs. The inns on the way were so bad that they now and then preferred sleeping in the carriage. They took the route by Hanover and Cassel. At the former they admired the King of England's stables. The latter they thought the handsomest town they saw abroad. They now began to approach the theatre of war, which then extended from Central Germany almost without interruption to the Mediterranean. There was at present an armistice, but the armies were in position busily preparing for a conflict soon to be resumed. Before reaching Darmstadt a party of marauders threatened to molest them, but made off on finding they were well armed. At Darmstadt they remained 4 days to get a passport through Frankfurt. This was in the hands of the French, who were said to allow persons to enter, but not to leave the town. They got through easily, and without further incident reached Rastadt.

After crossing the Rhine three times in boats they entered Switzerland. 'The country,' he writes, 'is almost desolate; the French have made such havoc; burned and destroyed whole towns.' They reached Geneva about the end of August all safe, except the carriage, which was damaged beyond repair. The town was then strongly under French influence, and much against their will they were obliged to wear tricolor cockades. Early in September they started for their tour in the Alps, going by way of Bonneville and Cluses to St. Martin. Here the increasing badness of the road obliged them to change their carriage for the peculiar vehicle called a *char-à-banc*. This he terms 'a species of jolting wheelbarrow, the most infernal vehicle ever invented, compared with which walking is a comparative luxury.' He did not himself make trial of it; for whilst two of the party went round by the road following the great bend which the Arve makes to Servoz, he, with his remaining friend, who carried a fowling-piece, and was attended by a spaniel, crossed the ridge in the same direction. Leaving the path in

search of game they got into various difficulties on the ridge, but at length rejoined their friends and the road not far from Servoz, which they reached late in the evening. Next day, on reaching the village of Bossons, the sight of the glacier of that name inspired them with such enthusiasm, that though late in the day, they obtained guides and alpenstocks, and insisted on ascending to it. They were, however, too late either to cross it or even properly to enjoy the many novel sights their first glacier presented, and much dissatisfied they descended to the Priory (Chamonix). There were then two inns, and at that kept by M. Tairraz, they were, he says, 'in every respect as well off as if we had been in the best hotel in London.'

Their first excursion was to the Col de Balme, where they enjoyed the view of Mont Blanc and the Aiguilles for which it is so renowned. The next day they visited the Montanvert and the Mer de Glace. Here they were much struck with the grand appearance of the Aiguille du Dru—'a perfectly unattainable summit.' They descended upon the glacier, of which he writes thus: 'At its upper extremity is the Periades, a steep rock of which only the summit is visible from the Montanvert. From thence to the lowest point of the glacier it is 6 miles long and 2 miles broad; but this is only a very small portion of it. One would form but a small idea of this noble valley of ice were a person to content himself with viewing it from the Montanvert. It is by descending upon its rough and unequal surface that you behold its majesty and alone can judge of the height to which these glacial waves transport themselves. Sometimes sudden gulfs, but in general deep and extensive vales, separate these vast masses, in whose arrangement almost a regular order and disposition are observable. Chasms also, often of a prodigious depth and filled with water of a deep blue from the reflection of its pyramids, appear in different directions and stop the progress of the adventurous mountaineer. In this case, after having carefully observed their direction, he surmounts the icy eminences and glides down the succeeding glens with surprising address and rapidity. The method of accomplishing this, a difficult task to unaccustomed persons, is to stand firmly upright, leaning rather backward on your long pike, to which you entirely trust, and with whose assistance you retard, accelerate, and sometimes even at will put an entire stop to your progress; but this is a feat of which all alike are not capable.'

There were then two buildings at the Montanvert, the half-ruined cottage built by the Englishman Blair about 1780, and the so-called Temple built by the 'vain and ostentatious' Desportes, the French resident at Geneva, only about a year before. The interior had already been damaged by some Genevese who regarded Desportes as a traitor. This building remained for more than 30 years the only shelter for visitors to the Montanvert. It was there at the time of Professor Forbes's first visit in 1832; but was soon replaced by a more commodious erection at the expense of the commune of Chamonix. On the following morning the party paid another visit to the Glacier des Bossons, which they succeeded in crossing. In the afternoon they separated; two going in quest of botanical and mineralogical specimens, the others to visit the ice-cave of the Arveiron and to examine some woods in search of game.

Bad weather put a stop to further expeditions in this neighbourhood, and they left Chamonix by the Tête Noire, taking with them Marie Couttet, who had accompanied Saussure as guide for 16 years.

Warned beforehand of the probable behaviour of the French petty officers stationed at Val d' Orsine, they concealed their money in their stockings and hats, and by this stratagem got through unspoiled. At Trient they were charged exorbitantly for very bad accommodation—15 francs for soup, black sausage, and a night's lodging. Next day they crossed the Forclaz (whose height he much overrates), and without descending to Martigny followed a cross route to Sembranchier and ascended the Val d'Entremont to Bourg St. Pierre. A detachment of French Valaisan republicans was stationed here to overawe the neighbourhood and to make requisitions; but the only inconvenience they suffered was that of sitting down to supper with a party of French soldiers. Entering next morning on the steep ascent to the Hospice, they were struck by the number of skeletons of animals, and also by human remains; from which they inferred the great danger of this pass during the storms of winter. The presence of these in unusual numbers was perhaps due to the passage of Bonaparte's army on May 17, 18 (the same year). They were received at the convent with the same hospitality which now distinguishes it. In the afternoon they ascended the 'Roche Polie,' a mountain so called because the final rocks are covered with a kind of crystal varnish which makes it a conspicuous object from a distance. On the way the sportsman endeavoured without success to circumvent the sentinel of a colony of marmots. Couttet consoled him by telling him the marmot was the hardest of all animals, and that a charge of shot would hardly ever kill it. He was more successful with a white partridge, but the bird fell out of reach. At the top they found the rock quite black and reflecting like a mirror. He ascribes to this mountain a height of 11,280 feet, and says that it had attracted the attention of Saussure and other men of science. [Guidebooks of the present day make no mention of this fact, and there is no peak of such an elevation within any reasonable distance from the Hospice for an afternoon's excursion.] They stayed on the summit, enjoying the view till the call of Couttet warned them to return. After an evening enlivened then as now by the pleasant and intelligent conversation of the fathers they retired to rest. 'Ornamented,' he says, 'as my bedroom was on all sides with symbols of Catholicism, it would have been a hard task to count the number of Virgin Maries with which it was embellished. In spite of the solemnity with which age had decorated these, in spite also of a confessional which stood opposite my bed and called loudly for the exercise of my repentance, the balmy hand of sleep stole over me.'

After attending matins, and leaving, as is now usual, their remembrances in the 'trunk' (poor-box) of the chapel, they descended by St. Rémy to Aosta. They gave them a most wretched room at the Post, and it was not till after much strong expostulation that they succeeded in getting a better. 'To confess the truth, I could not help applauding the servant who, mistaking us for French, had determined to give us good cause to rue the effect of our misconduct. A short conversation

sufficed to convince them of their error, after which we were served in a few minutes to a really delicious dinner. "It is long," said the waiter, "since we had the pleasure of serving a pheasant to an Englishman;" but he spoke it so frankly, that we thanked him for the compliment. The fellow!—how had he stirred within me the recollection of my native country! I felt the fire of patriotism blaze within me; and but for the rude mountains which closed the north, I could have gazed on the horizon and have fancied I beheld her happy cliffs.' After examining the sights of Aosta they walked on in the evening to Nuz, a village at the entrance of Val St. Barthélemy. The behaviour of the people at the inn aroused their suspicions, which were strengthened when on retiring to rest they endeavoured to put them in separate rooms. The bedroom contained 'three beds and a couple of chairs, but fortunately no trap-door, such as we had observed in the next room.' Their alarm was increased on discovering that one of the beds was largely stained with blood. They barricaded the doors and windows and kept watch, resolved to sell their lives dearly. The night, however, passed without disturbance; the dawn was joyfully welcomed, and they walked to Châtillon to breakfast. Here they learned that two French soldiers had been murdered at the inn at Nuz the night before, and congratulated themselves on their escape. They proceeded up Val Tournanche, attracting everywhere the greatest attention from the country people, who continually left their work in the fields to see and question them. They passed the village of Val Tournanche about six, and reached the Châlets of Breil late in the evening. After a night on the hay, they started early to make the pass to Zermatt. Soon after reaching the snow they surprised a flock of the 'Snow Pink' (*Fringilla nivalis*), and the sportsman secured a brace for specimens. Approaching a steep snow-slope they saw two men, one at the foot of the slope having slipped down several hundred feet, the other laboriously descending by digging steps. They were two French soldiers in a ragged and wretched condition, deserters from the army then lying before Mantua. Having received no pay for ten months, and besides being wretchedly fed, they had determined at all risks to regain their country. They had made their way into this valley, and had now been in the village of Val Tournanche eight days, subsisting on the charity of the inhabitants. They had tried to get over the pass every day without success, and were again returning, defeated. The party encouraged them to make another effort, and they ascended the slopes together. On reaching the summit of the pass, the Mont Cervin attracted every eye towards it, 'a colossal obelisk perfectly triangular, composed of three different though parallel layers at an angle of 45°; its flanks too steep for snow to rest on; the sight of such a mass of rock, rising 4,000 feet above its base, baffles description.' This was the second passage made by travellers, but the first by Englishmen—Saussure having crossed it in 1789. The passage was, however, well known to the natives, and a regular commercial route between the Valais and Italy.

The writer calls this passage by the name of the 'Mont Rose,' as well as of 'St. Theodule,' and considers that the 'Mont Rose' is visible from the top. This is of course an error. The bearings by compass also of

different mountains are very incorrect; but in the absence of exact information or accurate maps, this is not to be wondered at.

On arriving at Zermatt they were received, after some difficulty, into the village inn; but they were so pestered by the crowds of natives who came to see them and ask questions, in what sounded like High Dutch, that they sent to entreat the hospitality of the curé. This was willingly accorded. From him they heard the story of the cruelties of the French in the valley. Enraged by the resistance of the inhabitants at St. Nicholas, they spared neither sex nor age in the indiscriminate slaughter; at Zermatt no resistance was offered, but they demanded the enormous sum of 500,000 francs [surely an error!]. The priest was bound and a poniard held to his throat till the sum was raised. The peasants spared no sacrifices to deliver their pastor from his dangerous position. Next day they found St. Nicholas in ruins; the only house where they could get anything to eat was the curé's, who supplied them with bread and cheese, weighing the cheese before and after the meal and charging for the difference. He produced an old atlas and asked them to point out their country on the map, and then observed with gravity, they were the first Englishmen he had ever seen. They walked on past Stalden and Visp, and late in the evening reached Turtman in the Rhone valley after a walk of 36 miles. Next day they visited the baths of Leuk and returned by the 'Gallery' to Sierre, which they found almost in ruins. They then went down the valley, passing Sion and Martigny, to Villeneuve. Here they hired a row-boat to take them to Meillerie, for which they were charged 25 francs, the distance being only 9 miles. The evening was beautiful, and the writer gave the reins to his fancy. 'If ever I experienced lively emotions, it was when my eyes, revolving from Clarens to Meillerie and from Meillerie to Clarens, brought back the memory of Rousseau. This was the most delicious evening of our journey. Oh! ye verdant scenes, ye glassy lake and woods and hanging rocks, ye towers and solitary hamlets, what happy moments ye recall to memory! Thrice delightful mountains, how ye expand the soul in the delight of sentiment; how ye beckon to it from the strife of cities and vain pomps of life to a safe haven of retirement amidst the charms of nature and solitude!'

Landing at Meillerie they rested in a poor inn till midnight, when they embarked in a fishing smack for Geneva. The take of fish, however, was so bad, that the vessel steered for Nyon, which they reached after a passage of 20 hours, and went next day by land to Geneva. Here they hired a house, and remained during the winter, which was very severe, intending to visit Italy in the following spring.

ALPINE NOTES.

Mont Blanc in Winter.—Three attempts to ascend Mont Blanc were made last January.

The first, on January 12, by Mr. Coolidge and Miss Brevoort, with the two Almers, was checked by a severe wind and bad weather at the Grand Plateau.