

near the rocks which divide it from the Pioda Alp. Shortly before leaving the glacier, while descending a slippery piece of ice, a slight tug of the rope pulled me off my balance. I fell on my axe, and before I could disengage it I was in a small crevasse. Lawrence's steadiness prevented any chance of an accident, had one been possible, as the rope tightened before I was well in the crevasse.

Clearing the glacier and relieving ourselves of the rope, we traversed the wild and desolate upper part of the valley. Stopping for a few minutes at the highest *châlet*, we consumed bowl after bowl of milk, to the astonishment of the natives, and then, much refreshed, pushed on down the valley. The shades of evening were already gathering by the time the highroad to the Baths of Masino was struck at Cattaeggio, when a halt for a few minutes was called, to finish the remains of our provisions, with the help of a tap of very fair red wine of the country. In spite of the pace, the great highway down the Val Tellina to Morbegno was not attained until some time after dark. Along that dusty and apparently interminable road we pounded, finding the hot, sultry atmosphere of the valley most oppressive. Indeed, the only agreeable reminiscence of this part of the day's work is that not one of us lost his temper, or even indulged in the luxury of nagging. At last we heard a church clock strike ten, and though the sound seemed to come from far away down the valley hopes were expressed that at last we were within a 'measurable distance' of Morbegno. They proved well founded; we got in at 10.20, just in time to escape a heavy thunderstorm which broke over the place a few minutes after our arrival.

---

THE ALPS IN WINTER. By C. D. CUNNINGHAM.

THE photographs of Chamonix in winter which may be seen in the shop windows at Geneva give but a very faint idea of the actual appearance of the place. It is true they show the snow-covered roofs, the great heaps which have been cleared from the side-walks, and all have the icicles hanging from the eaves. But it would be hard indeed for any picture to convey that air of dreariness which seems to hang over the little town. The hotels are all closed; the gaudily-painted signboards are taken down. The pebble ornaments and crystals are stored away, and their place in the shop windows is filled by sheets of brown paper. There is little sign of life in the main streets, and even the jingle of sleigh bells brings few faces to the café windows.

Such was Chamonix as we saw it on January 19, 1882. We had come that morning from Chatelard, where M. Couttet met us, dressed as we had never seen him before, with three great coats and a muffler. But, like an old Zermatt friend whom we meet for the first time in Piccadilly, his altered exterior makes not the slightest difference in the hearty welcome he gives us. Half-an-hour's run in his sleigh brought us to that turn in the road where the long line of Aiguilles first comes in sight, the Midi, the Blaitière, and the Charmoz looking grander, and if possible more imposing, rising from the snow than when seen in summer against the green underwood of Les Plans des Aiguilles. Writing at the time when the scene was fresh on my memory, I compared the first sight of the valley to a picture, 'the lower half of which was in black and white, and the rest filled in with water-colours.' The sun threw over the valley a shadow which reached about half-way up the sides, a shadow so deep that it gave the trees and other objects the same uniform colours, and made them stand out against the snow as sharply as they would in a pen-and-ink sketch on white paper. Above this line of shadow all was sunshine, and the rocks and trees appeared in their natural colours. The beauty of the scenery of the Alps does not by any means depend entirely on its snow peaks and glaciers, but upon the wonderful contrast they make with the pines and green valleys beneath them. Perhaps we hardly realise how much the mountain streams, the cattle bells, the spring and autumn flowers, and the scent of the pines contribute to the beauty of the Alps, making them different from almost any other mountain range in the world, till we are reminded of it by their absence. So although the sun was getting higher and higher, and the lower part of the valley was coming more and more into sunlight, still the wide expanse of snow looked colourless and cold and dreary. Somehow it was not the valley we picture to ourselves at home when we think over our last autumn holiday, and look forward to our next.

The winter of 1881-2 was a most exceptional one. On leaving England I had no greater ambition than to cross the Mer de Glace, or possibly reach the Brevent. It was, therefore, a very pleasant surprise to find that the snow was in such good condition that the higher peaks might be attempted, and we determined, if it was possible, to ascend Mont Blanc. There had been six weeks of perfectly fine weather, which could not be expected to last much longer; so, in spite of having no previous training, there was nothing for it but to start at once, and five o'clock next morning found us making

our way along the little pathway leading to the Pierre Pointue. I was accompanied by the guides Léon Simond and Ambroise Borsoney, of Chamonix, having sent on a couple of porters the previous afternoon to the Pierre Pointue to prepare breakfast for us. No sooner had we begun to ascend the side of the valley than we commenced what turned out afterwards to be the most fatiguing part of the ascent. The path was completely covered with *verglas*, rendered all the more slippery by the huge logs which in winter are constantly shot down from the upper part of the wood. At all the steep turnings we had more step-cutting to do than is often required for Mont Blanc itself. Higher up, where we quitted the path and took to the *gazon*, the pace became still slower. If by ill luck we stepped between two clumps of rhododendron bushes where the snow had drifted, suddenly we found ourselves floundering about up to our waists. The path to the Pierre à l'Echelle being considered impracticable, owing to the state of the snow, we made a circuit by the little Aiguille du Tour, which brought us higher on the glacier than if we had come by the ordinary route. Once on the glacier all went fairly well. The snow lay deep as one sees it early in June, each step taking us over the knees. But on we struggled, as only those can do who know they are under fire of all the Chamonix telescopes. By four o'clock we had only reached the junction, and, as we could not possibly arrive at the Grands Mulets before nightfall, we thought it better to take to the rocks than follow the glacier. Not till two hours after sunset did we quit those slippery, ice-covered rocks and find ourselves standing on the little balcony in front of the cabin. Even here our troubles were not over. The door was completely blocked up by a huge heap of half-frozen snow, which had to be cleared away. Inside we found that water had dripped through the chinks in the roof to the mattresses and a pile of blankets in one corner. Some half-dozen bottles of asti had burst from the cold, and their odour, combined with that of some stale provisions left from the last season, produced an atmosphere such as would have made even a sanitary inspector feel uncomfortable. In less than ten minutes the crackling wood fire, and the reassuring sight which the contents of well-filled provision sacks never fail to produce when they are spread out, seemed to change the aspect of that uninviting hut. After supper came pipes and a bottle of what the guides called '*vin du Pays Écossais*.' Our talk ran on the chances of reaching the top next day. We had taken thirteen hours to do what in summer would have taken five or six. The long stretch of

snow-slopes above us looked even more uninviting than those we had come over, though seen through a cloud of tobacco smoke and under circumstances which seldom fail to produce a hopeful and confident frame of mind. As the correspondent of the 'Daily News' put it, 'we deemed it expedient to return.'

Thus ended our first excursion, which had been so far unsuccessful. Our next, we determined, must be a less ambitious one; so on the 23rd we left Chamonix, intending to make the tour of Mont Blanc, returning, if possible, by the Col du Géant. In addition to Léon Simond and Ambroise Bossoney, I took with me Ed. Cupelin. No pleasanter walks could be imagined than those across the Bonhomme and the Little St. Bernard. The ground was crusted over with crisp, hard snow. The winter sun shone brightly and tempered the keen mountain air. It was on the evening of the second day that we found a sleigh waiting for us before the little inn at Pré St. Didier, which soon brought us to the Mont Blanc, the only hotel then open at Courmayeur. Of the next four-and-twenty hours there is little to be said, except how we met Emile Rey, spent a night at Mont Fréty, and how, on the morning of the 27th, we commenced to climb the rocks above La Porte, their southern exposure rendering them free from snow and ice and making them perfectly easy. We reached the cabane at eight o'clock A.M., just at sunrise, when the first tiny patch of rose colour was appearing on the summit of Mont Blanc. As we stood there we saw in perfection what is, perhaps, the most beautiful and fascinating of all Nature's many wonderful effects in the Alps. We saw, one by one, every peak in that magnificent panorama assume first a warm glow, which grew brighter and brighter till the peaks shone and sparkled with that wonderful lustre which only fresh snow and sunshine can produce. The snow around us was hard and firm, and in first-rate condition, and in what seemed a very short time we reached the séracs. Here the snow bridges were firmer and the crevasses not so wide as in summer, and, owing to the coating of hoar frost on their sides, they had none of those beautiful dark greens and blues which we always associate with them. It was not till we reached the lower part of the glacier that we encountered any difficulty. At the Tacul the snow became so soft that we were compelled to put *circles* on over boots which the guides had brought with them. These are round pieces of netting stretched on circular frames, very much like Canadian snow-shoes in miniature. Here, too, we found what proved to be our constant experience,

that by far the most troublesome part of the day's work was the actual getting off and on the glacier. The steep piece of moraine and the ice-covered 'ponts' which we had to cross were no exception to the rule. Our progress on the glacier had been watched from the Monteners, and, on rounding the next little promontory of rock, we were greeted by young Tairraz, the son of the hospitable host, and by Joseph, the 'Herr Jost' of that most excellent hotel. Joseph held in his arms a bundle wrapped carefully in flannel, which he carried as tenderly as if it had been Joseph 'junior.' This contained a couple of bottles of *vin chauffé*, a compound which in skilful hands may be said to be the Swiss equivalent to the 'corpse reviver' of the United States. By four o'clock, twelve hours from leaving Mont Fréty, we were seated in the little smoking-room in the Monteners, and next morning walked down to Chamonix, where we were congratulated on having crossed the Géant for the first time in winter.

Once more our thoughts turned to Mont Blanc. The weather still continued fine; we were in very different training from what we had been ten days before. Our tracks to the Grands Mulets which we had made on our previous attempt were now hard frozen. The result was that on the afternoon of the 29th we again arrived at the little cabane, having spent less than half the time we had done on the former occasion. Starting next morning at 4, we arrived at the corridor by noon, the snow on the Grand and Petit Plateaux being in much better condition than we expected. We avoided the route by the Bosses, owing to the wind. From the cabane to the corridor we were completely sheltered from the wind, and did not feel the cold in the slightest degree. We were therefore considerably surprised on reaching the corridor to find that our tins of American turkey and chicken were so hard that it was almost impossible to cut them with a knife. Here we left our knapsacks, taking with us only a few hard biscuits and some brandy in one of Silver's ebonised flasks, which kept the liquor at a uniform temperature even on the summit. From the corridor to the top took three hours—three hours of hard work. We were in the shade, and at the same time exposed to the wind, which was gradually rising. With one exception this was the only occasion during the entire four weeks we were cut that we suffered from cold. The wind seemed to penetrate even my fur cap and muffler, and never shall I forget the contrast when we reached the summit and came into the full range of the sun's rays; I compared it at the time to going into a greenhouse on a winter's day. No words can convey

any idea of the grandeur of the view. The atmosphere was so wonderfully clear that we saw the distant peaks on the horizon just as sharply defined as if they had been in a panorama in a guide-book. Not the slightest vestige of mist was to be seen except in the direction of Geneva. It was one of those views which we see but once or twice in a lifetime, which one always remembers and looks back upon. The descent to the Grands Mulets was accomplished without difficulty, and by 4.30 we were at the cabane, where we spent the night, arriving at Chamonix early next morning. Little did we imagine the honours and glories which were in store for us in M. Couttet's garden. A brass band had been hired for the occasion, which struck up as soon as we entered. There was much hand-shaking, much clinking of glasses, and much drinking of Bouvier—all to the sound of Couttet's solitary cannon, which went off at short intervals like an erratic minute gun. Owing to the season of the year there was some difficulty in procuring the regulation bouquets, and those produced were composed chiefly of the gaudy paper flowers which one usually sees stuck in front of altars in country churches in France. The climax was reached when one of these was pinned on our coats by the 'gracieuses demoiselles de la localité,' as the local press styled them.

As yet I have said little or nothing as to the temperature. Owing to an unfortunate accident the thermometers which Mr. Casella selected for me were rendered useless, and I was therefore unable to make any exact record on the subject. As a rule the cold seemed to be less intense the higher up we went. The temperature of the Montenvers seemed milder than that of Chamonix, and on the two nights which we spent at the Grands Mulets we remained for some time on the balcony after supper, smoking cigarettes, without the slightest inconvenience. I have already spoken of the temperature on the summit of Mont Blanc. With the exception of a fur cap, which I only wore three times, and a knitted vest, my dress was exactly the same as it would have been for similar excursions in summer. I took an extra guide with me in case of our being overtaken by bad weather, or finding that we had more step-cutting to do than we expected. We did not stint ourselves in the way of baggage; among other things we carried a spirit lamp, with which we made several brews of tea, on the Géant, the Tacul, and other places where hot drinks are rarely to be had. Thus far I have tried to describe the special characteristics of a winter tour—the state of the glacier, the clearness of the atmosphere, and the temperature. During the four weeks we spent

in the Alps the weather was perfectly fine, and all our excursions were made under precisely the same favourable conditions. I will therefore detail very briefly our itinerary during the remainder of our stay.

M. Regices, the Procurator of the Republic, having to be at Chamonix on the 31st to superintend the Tir au Sort, the day following was fixed by the Mont Blanc section of the C. A. F., of which he is vice-president, for a *réunion*. They had arranged to go up the Buet, and kindly invited me to accompany them. Our party consisted of about twenty, including M. Couttet, Joseph Tairraz, Sylvain Couttet, M. Lochet, and several other Chamonix notables. M. Regices has written an elaborate account of the day's proceedings, which passed, however, without any incident, except those which naturally arise from the difficulty of getting a party of twenty under way, of whom ten were guides, who each had his own idea as to the direction to be taken. We left Chamonix in sleighs at 2 A.M., and did not return till 11 P.M. The following evening we were at supper in the Hôtel de la Poste, Brieg, having come there by the Tête Noire to Martigny, and then on by rail. It would be difficult to imagine the well-remembered Zermatt Thal under more beautiful conditions. The crisp, hard-frozen snow on the pathway and the keen breeze blowing down the valley made us almost forget that we had ever gone over the same ground under a broiling sun, half-choked by clouds of dust. Wherever a tiny stream trickled down the rocks it was transformed into a mass of icicles. The trees were silvered over with hoar frost, showing to perfection their beautiful outlines. Sometimes the rocks by the side of the path were coated over with ice three or four feet in thickness, and extending up some thirty or forty feet. It was dusk when we came to the turn in the road where the village of Zermatt first comes in sight. Everything was white; even the boughs of the pine trees had a thick coating of snow. The scene had that bleak, cheerless aspect which snow-covered hills always present after the sun has gone down. There was but one object on which the sun's rays still lingered, the Matterhorn, which stood out like a great stone beacon, all ablaze in the afterglow of sunset. The dead-alive look of the village outdid even the wildest conjectures made by tourists at *tables d'hôte* in summer as to its loneliness in winter. The hotels were of course closed, but M. Seiler's caretaker received us into his house above the post office till rooms in the 'Monte Rosa' could be prepared. The night will probably be long remembered by the Chamonix guides, from the unaccustomed

manner in which they spent it, each occupying a bedroom on the first floor. After supper the guides returned from having interviewed the Zermatters as to the probable condition of the Théodule, or rather the slopes beneath it, for it was always before arriving on the glacier that we experienced the greatest difficulty. Whether the Zermatt guides had attempted to 'draw' the Chamonix men or not I do not know. They returned, however, with a most exciting description of the probable avalanches, snow-drifts, and falling stones through which they said we would have to run the gauntlet. In order to shield us from these perils and dangers the Zermatt guides offered the services of two, or perhaps three, of their number to risk their lives on our behalf. There was, however, one drawback to this most disinterested sacrifice. The next day being Sunday it was impossible both to cross the Théodule and attend six o'clock mass. In their minds Providence seemed to be less intimately connected with the Théodule than the Riffel, which they were extremely anxious I should ascend instead, and cross over into Italy on Monday. The curé was apparently of the same mind. He offered, however, to split the difference; he would say the office at 5 o'clock. While matters stood thus the Chamonix guides happily recovered confidence, and in spite of many warnings we started next morning at 4.30. In taking our last look at Zermatt from some rocks near the glacier we heard the church bell and saw a number of tiny black specks, which we knew must be our devout friends of the previous evening. In order to gain an entrance to the Théodule hut we had to remove one of the shutters and clamber in through the window. We found the temperature so cold that we were glad to go outside again into the warm sunshine. We spent the night at Val Tournanche, the following day at Aosta, and left for the St. Bernard Hospice on the morning of the 7th of February. By 4 o'clock in the afternoon we arrived at the cantine below the Hospice and saw the *marronniers*, followed by a couple of St. Bernard dogs, making their daily pilgrimage to the little rest-house. Here, then, was the scene we had heard of so often—travellers overtaken by night, arrival of the monks and their faithful dogs (but without the spirit flasks and cloaks strapped round them which one always used to see in the picture books). Like many other things, the reality has very little resemblance to what we imagine it to be. At the sight of strangers the ill-kept, noisy curs commenced to bark furiously and sniffed at our gaiters in a way that made us tremble even at the thought of being, like the people in the altar-pieces, three parts buried in the snow and a couple of

paws planted on their chests, unable to move. Order being at last restored by the aid of a *piolet*, we started for the Hospice, where we were shown into a snug little parlour upstairs, with pictures of the Queen and Prince Albert on the walls and a couple of quaint oak chairs near the stove. Here, to my surprise, I was not the only guest. One of the chairs was occupied by none other than an agent of *Singer's sewing machines*, who had just come up from the Swiss side in hopes of getting an order for the workroom of the Hospice. He at once concluded that I must be a commercial traveller, and commenced conversation by condoling with me on the dulness of trade. Evidently he could not make out what my line was, for he reverted to the subject with much diplomacy at short intervals during the evening. Not even the excellent bottle of old muscat which the Père Clavandier put on the table after dinner drew any confidences on my side. The breakage of the thermometer which ought to have taken the temperature on Mont Blanc also prevented us from finding out the exact degree of tropical heat at which all the rooms of the Hospice are kept. In my bedroom there was a large stove almost red hot, not more than a couple of feet from the bed; and those who never have been wakened up in the tropics by the punkah ceasing to work can hardly imagine what my sensations were in the middle of the night. Can it be this to which Baedeker refers when speaking of the trials which the brethren endure in winter? 'It is at this period that the privations of these heroic men are most severe. All honour to their self-denial and devotion.' Next morning we walked down to Orsières with our friend the commercial traveller, who expressed great pleasure at meeting anyone who promised to testify to the fact of his having visited the St. Bernard in winter, a promise which I now take this opportunity of fulfilling.

At Orsières we engaged a couple of porters to carry blankets and wood to the Cabane d'Orny, in order that we might make it our starting-place for the Col du Tour. This was the only occasion on which we slept out, and by doing so we were enabled to affirm what is possibly unknown, that cold does not seem in any way to diminish the appetite or affect the spirits of the *Pulex irritans*. The Col du Tour, with the exception of the Mur de la Côte on Mont Blanc, was the only place where we suffered from cold. Although it was considerably below other elevations we had been at, before sunrise we felt a severe pain in our foreheads, which did not pass away till the sun was up. We ascended the Aiguille du Tour, arriving at the

summit at 9 A.M., whence we enjoyed a most wonderfully beautiful view.

But one more course remains to be chronicled—the Aiguille du Tacul, a point unfortunately but little known and not often ascended. One has only to look at the panorama which was taken from it by Mr. Donkin last season to recognise what a magnificent point of view it is. We ascended it from the col, and found the little piece of rockwork at the top in excellent condition. Long did we look at the great peaks by which it is surrounded, as one always does in the last excursion in the Alps, for we knew we should not see them again for many a long day to come.

And now for the moral. Go and see the Alps in winter. You will find gliding along in a sleigh with a good bearskin over your knees a far pleasanter way of seeing the country than from the top of a crowded diligence, crowded with the aristocracy of the Linden and of Bond Street. You will see far grander sunsets than in summer, and you may have the pleasing and novel experience of getting up to see the sunrise effects on Mont Blanc at 8.30 A.M., at the same time as you take in your shaving-water. The great tourists' hotels are all closed, and you will have to put up at one of those old-fashioned inns with a swinging signboard in front, which Mr. Cook or Mr. Gaze would consider far beneath the notice of any of his personally-conducted ones, but where you will find the hospitable and kindly French landlady a vast contrast to our old acquaintance the managing director. For not only do you see the country under a fresh aspect, but you will perhaps come away with new ideas as to the people. It falls to the lot of many of us to travel on the Continent among a crowd of our compatriots who are ignorant alike of good feeling and courtesy, and of any language but their own. Can we wonder that the hearts of foreign officials and travellers should be hardened by the ways of such a throng, or that they should meet rudeness with its like? In winter it is different, and one finds that kindly, simple courtesy so much remarked by those of our number who first travelled these paths still extended to us who come after them.

---

THE AIGUILLE DU CHARDONNET. By PERCY W. THOMAS.

I HAD been trying the Dent du Géant. The mountain had been in capital order. The weather had left nothing to be desired. My guides were Joseph Imboden and Joseph Marie Lochmatter, and yet—we had failed hopelessly. Do what we