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**Author:** W. H. Le Mesurier

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AN IMPROMPTU ASCENT OF MONT BLANC  
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VILLAGE OF CHAMONIX.

- 1 Summit of Mont Blanc.
- 2 Bosses du Dromadaire.
- 3 Dôme du Goûté.
- 4 Aiguille du Goûté.
- 5 Grands Mulets.
- 6 Glacier des Bossons.
- 7 Montagne de la Côte.
- 8 Glacier de Taconnaz.



AN IMPROMPTU ASCENT

OF

MONT BLANC:

BY



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## PREFACE



The interest which still follows individual ascents of Mont Blanc, notwithstanding the attraction of other mountain peaks, must be my apology for once again repeating an oft-told tale; but with this endeavour, to make the narrative a true and unvarnished account of what we did and how we did it, and to present the accompanying illustrations (which, for the most part, are taken from photographs) free from exaggeration.



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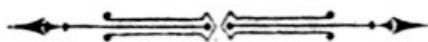
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## CHAPTER I.

"And thou, fresh breaking Day, and you, ye Mountains,  
Why are ye beautiful?"



In a delightful evening in the month of July, 1881, table d'hôte being over, my friend S— and myself were seated under the verandah of the hotel d'Angleterre at Chamonix; there were many others besides ourselves, chiefly English and Americans, grouped in parties, some taking their coffee, others smoking, and all devoting their attention to the summit of Mont Blanc whose diadem of snow was being warmed in colour if not in reality by the last rays of the setting sun. Though seven miles off as the crow flies it seemed much nearer, and it was hard to realize that some twelve or fourteen hours of incessant toil must be undergone before the foot could be planted on that rounded crest of eternal snow, that guide and porter must be employed, and that ropes and ice-axes must be brought into requisition before those apparently gently-sloping hills of pure white down could be traversed. They looked so smooth, so inviting, and so incapable of doing any one harm. [Pg 10]

The summit changed from gold to grey, the dome and Aiguille du Goûté faded from view, the Grands Mulets were no longer to be seen, and the form of the Glacier des Bossons could scarcely be distinguished from the Montagne de la Côte. Gradually and imperceptibly they vanished into night, the stars came out, the guests retired, and following their example I climbed up to my room on the sixth floor. We had left Martigny at four in the morning, and had walked most of the way to Forclaz, and the whole of it from thence over the Col de Balme, so I was not sorry to get to bed. Not having the remotest intention of making the ascent my slumbers were undisturbed by the excitement which they say invariably precedes the undertaking, from which even professionals are said not to be exempt. On getting up next morning I was very agreeably surprised to find that the sun was shining brightly on the summit which was entirely free from clouds—a somewhat unusual circumstance, as lofty mountain peaks more often than otherwise are enveloped in them, especially in the morning.

Feeling lazy and somewhat stiff after our long walk of the previous day, we loitered about till nearly twelve o'clock, and then decided upon taking advantage of the splendid weather by making an excursion to the Brévent, a mountain on the north side of the valley, from which the view of the Mont Blanc chain is one of the finest in the neighbourhood. A mule was hired with a boy to attend it, and a stout muscular young guide named François Ravanel was employed—not that there was any need of his good services, but the rules and regulations of the "Bureau des Guides" must be complied with, and one of these stipulates that a guide must in all cases accompany a mule. [Pg 11]

After crawling upwards for a couple of hours, we arrived at a newly erected hut, where refreshment was provided, and here the remainder of the afternoon was devoted to the inspection of the magnificent scenery which surrounded us on every side. The Valley of Chamonix lies nearly east and west, and is so narrow that it might almost be termed a ravine. It is rather more than ten miles long and less than half a mile in width. The mountains of the Mont Blanc range on the south, and those of the Brévent, on the north, rise abruptly on either side, their bases being covered with thick forests of pine for some two thousand feet above the valley. On the south side countless "aiguilles" pierce the sky, from le Tour on the east to the Aiguille du Goûté on the west.

These graceful spires are of warm tinted rock, and here and there streaks of snow are to be seen in the crevices and gullies which are shaded from the sun. Several large glaciers descend from the northern slopes of the Mont Blanc chain, the first at the east or upper end being the Glacier du Tour; the next is the Glacier d'Argentière, which is the largest of them all, being no less than seven miles long between its upper and lower extremities and about a mile wide for two-thirds of its length, at which point it tapers off—as all glaciers do on approaching the valley. Three miles further to the west is the Glacier des Bois, the termination of the famous Mer de Glace. Between it and the village of Chamonix there are two or three unimportant glaciers which do not quite reach the forest. The Glaciers des Bossons and Tacconnaz complete the list, the latter being ten miles from the Glacier du Tour. [Pg 12]

These gigantic streams of ice, hundreds of feet thick, are formed in the upper regions of the mountains, and slowly and with irresistible force slide down towards the valley, moving at a rate which varies according to the season and other circumstances, but which seldom exceeds three feet per day. They do not, however, quite reach the foot of the mountain, for, as the temperature is excessively hot during the summer months, the ice thaws rapidly, and the water thus formed rushes out in a roaring torrent through a tunnel-like hole at the extremity or "Snout."



**VIEW OF MONT BLANC FROM THE BRÉVENT.**

- 1 Forest des Pèlerins.**
- 2 Pierre Pontue.**
- 3 Glacier des Bossons.**
- 4 Grands Mulets.**
- 5 Petit Plateau.**
- 6 Grand Plateau.**
- 7 Bosses du Dromadaire.**
- 8 Summit of Mont Blanc.**
- A Aiguille du Midi.**
- B Mont Blanc du Tacul.**
- C Mont Maudit.**
- D Dôme du Goûté.**
- E Aiguille du Goûté.**
- F Montagne de la Côte.**
- G Glacier de Taconnaz.**
- H Montagne de la Côte.**

**Note.—The route to the Summit is indicated by the dotted line.**

These torrents flow into the Arve, which in summer time roars along the valley, leaping wildly over a bed of rocks and boulders in its headlong course to mingle with the waters of the Rhone at Geneva.

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The view of Mont Blanc from this spot was magnificent. His snow-capped head, glistening against a cloudless sky, formed the centre of the picture. Slightly on his left, and a little lower, was the Mont Maudit, separated by a thin line from the Mont Blanc du Tacul, and below the rocky base of the former several dark-looking pointed specks could be seen on the snow, the lower being the Grands-Mulets rocks, the upper the Aiguilles à Pichner. Lower yet are the Glaciers des Bossons and Taconnaz, on either side of the Montagne de la Côte, their delicately green tinted surfaces becoming more rugged and sparkling as they neared the valley. Apparently within rifle range the Aiguille du Midi raised its mitred summit 12,600 feet above the sea, the precipitous naked rock contrasting with the snow which here and there found lodgment, or lay in detached fields some 5,000 feet above the valley. On the right of the "Monarch of the Mountains" the Dôme and Aiguille du Goûté with their silver robes completed the scene.

On our way down the following arrangements were made for the next day's excursion:—We were to visit the Grands Mulets, and in order to be back for dinner were to start at six in the morning. A porter was to be engaged, not to carry us or our belongings, but to act as the rear-guard when the rope was used in dangerous places, and François undertook to find a suitable man for that purpose. A mule was to be hired, François remarking "you shall have the same mule and the same boy you had to-day; you know them both."

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## CHAPTER II.

"Around his waist are forests braced,  
The Avalanche in his hand."

"Friend! have a care,  
Your next step may be fatal!—for the love  
Of Him who made you, stand not on that brink!"



The day broke bright and clear, and at six we were introduced by François to his friend, Jules Tairraz, who looked very business-like with a knapsack on his back and carrying an ice-axe and a coil of rope. The mule having overslept himself, we went on without him, and awaited his arrival under the trees at the foot of the mountain. At last the lazy brute hove in sight, walking in his usual style; then our coats, the knapsack, rope, etc., were strapped on, and by way of adding to his comfort I got into the saddle, and thus the ascent was begun.

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The route lay through the forest des Pélerins, and for some distance ran parallel with the Arve, crossing the torrents which flow into that river, over picturesque wooden bridges. Then, on approaching the lower extremity of the Glacier des Bossons, it wound to the left and zig-zagged up the base of the mountain.

As we ascended the steep and narrow track an occasional gap in the trees afforded a sight of the glacier and enabled us to perceive that substantial progress was being made.

The first stage of mountain climbing in these parts is decidedly tiresome; the forest is so thick one can see little else besides, and there is a monotony in the operation that would be unendurable were it not for the end in view. The trees at length became more scarce and stunted, and after two hours of this unexciting work they disappeared altogether; Pierre Pointue was reached, and the first stage of our journey was thus accomplished. Here we breakfasted. I spent some time in sketching this spot with its unassuming little buildings, and the Aiguille du Goûté in the back ground. We then moved on without the mule and boy, and worked our way round the face of the mountain, the rock being perpendicular to the left, and on our right a precipice, but the track was sufficiently wide to enable us to walk in comfort and without experiencing any of those feelings of nervousness which Albert Smith felt when passing over the same ground thirty years ago.

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Three quarters of an hour after leaving Pierre Pointue, we reached Pierre à l'Echelle, against whose side was reared a strong ladder which is kept for use when the crevasses are too wide to be crossed without its assistance. Its services were not, however, required on this occasion.

Before introducing my readers to the Glacier des Bossons, which we were about to traverse, I may remark that opinions differ widely as to the difficulties and dangers of the undertaking. Some make very light of them, while others lead one to suppose that nothing short of cat-like agility, combined with heroic courage, could surmount the obstacles. The fact is, that leaving out of consideration experience, nerve, and surefootedness, the crossing of the Glacier may be comparatively easy one day, and beset with dangers another, the difficulties varying with the state of the ice, which is constantly changing. New crevasses are being formed, and those already in existence alter from day to day, so that great skill is required on the part of the guides to select a feasible route. Then, again, a snow bridge, consisting of a mere lump of snow jammed into the upper part of a wide crevasse, may bear one's weight or not according to a variety of circumstances, so after making due allowance for the disparagement of difficulties on the one hand, and the exaggeration of them on the other, it may fairly be said that walking over the Bossons is not exactly child's play.

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At about eleven o'clock we stepped on the ice and were agreeably surprised to find that there was no tendency to slip, our boots having been well studded with nails before starting, and as yet the points had not become rounded through wear. For the first half hour walking was fairly easy, the surface, though irregular, being in no way difficult. After this we reached a queer-looking place, where the ice was split up with yawning crevasses whose edges twisted and turned in the most extraordinary way. Here there was a bit of climbing in which both hands and feet had to take their part. François helped S—, Jules helped me, and we each helped the other until all were safely across; and then turning to look at the gulf we had just passed we noticed that the *face* of the ice (not the surface) was exquisitely tinted with the most delicate green and blue, deepening into azure until it was lost in the abyss.

Between this spot and the junction of the Glaciers des Bossons and Taconnaz, the ice was tolerably regular, and being free from snow there were no unseen crevasses to be guarded against; until we reached the "junction," where these mighty Glaciers part company. They seem

to part in anger, for here the ice is in a frightful state of confusion, with the "seracs" (ice-bergs) heaped about in all directions, and with fathomless crevasses on every side.



**GLACIER DES BOSSONS.**

A halt was called, and François uncoiled the rope which he measured out, forming a loop at every twelve feet or thereabouts; we were tied round the chest, and having been cautioned to keep our distances, and on no account to let the cord be slack, we proceeded on our way very slowly, and with the greatest care. This was by far the most trying part of the Glacier, and just before quitting this chaos our nerves were put to a severe test, for the only method of advance was over a ridge of ice about a foot wide, twisting about, and having a very irregular surface. François went first and cut some rude steps with his ice-axe, then we walked after him at a snail's pace, at one moment seeking for a good foot-hold, and the next looking into the crevasses on either side, the azure blue of which was more beautiful than ever. We crossed without a slip, and François remarked, "the most difficult part of the ascent to the summit has now been accomplished."

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This observation, however, was not borne out by the facts which shall be narrated in due course; but small blame to him, poor fellow! He was a young guide, having only just passed his examination and obtained his certificate, consequently he was naturally anxious to lead a party to the top; besides this there was another motive, his fee would be increased five-fold, twenty francs being the regulation charge to the Grands Mulets, a hundred to the summit. For the next half hour or so numerous crevasses barred the way; when they did not exceed four feet or a little more we jumped across, and although we soon became accustomed to the work it was not always an easy operation, for putting aside the ugly look of the chasm, the foot-hold not being secure, it was a somewhat difficult matter to spring from the slippery brink of ice on which we stood. Sometimes we crossed over a snow-bridge but a few feet wide, François first prodding it with the handle of his axe; then, being satisfied that it would bear, he stepped forward, while we stood on the alert to save him from an untimely death should the snow give way. The difficulties lessened as we advanced, and, our attention not being constantly directed to our footsteps, we were enabled to look about us a little more. The dark-coloured Grands Mulets, no longer insignificant but rising some hundreds of feet above the snow, their wedge-like forms leaning well forward, seemed to defy the mighty downward pressure of avalanche and ice.

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The colour of the sky was of the deepest blue, almost indigo, the intensity of which far exceeded anything we had ever seen, or could have imagined possible, and it was not until we had been in the "Cabane" on the Grands Mulets for some time that we discovered that the sky is the same here as in any ordinary atmosphere at a lower level. The cause of the deception is easily explained; our eyes had been rivetted on ice and shining snow for several hours, consequently the colour appeared deeper by contrast. At length we quitted the Glacier, and the remainder of the journey was on slopes of snow. In some respects it was pleasanter than before; there was a nice soft feeling about it, there was no fear of slipping, and no particular care had to be exercised. On the other hand the work was more fatiguing, and worst of all our boots were getting wet through. The base of the Grands Mulets was nearly reached when our arrival was announced by Jules, who gave a genuine Alpine shout which was answered from the "Cabane," and, having clambered up the rocks, at 1.30 we entered the little hut.

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Prior to Albert Smith's ascent there was no refuge of any kind in this wild and exposed situation. But as the number of excursionists spending a night on the rocks to see the glories of sunset and sunrise was on the increase, a rude hut fourteen feet long by seven wide was erected by the guides in 1854. The walls were formed of flat blocks and splinters of the rock, and the roof was of boards.

The existing "Cabane" is somewhat larger. It is divided into three compartments, two of which are furnished with a couple of beds covered with coarse rugs, a deal table and two stools. The other room is fitted with a small cooking-stove, and is used by the man and woman in charge, and by passing guides and porters. On the north side there is a narrow walk about a yard in width

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protected by a hand-rail, and on the west a short sloping path leading to the snow. Hence it is plain that the life of those who dwell on this barren rock during the season is not unlike that of lighthouse keepers. True it is that they may stretch their legs on the snow, but the only out of door exercise they can take in comfort is the narrow walk, some forty or fifty feet in length, referred to. Supplies are as a matter of course brought to this isolated place with difficulty and at considerable expense, consequently the prices charged, though high, are not exorbitant, more especially as the proprietor pays a large sum to the Commune for his license. Luncheon was just over when a foreigner, accompanied by two guides and a porter, joined us in the hut. He was on his way back to Chamonix, having successfully made the ascent. There was an air of joy in his countenance, and satisfaction in his every movement, and we fondly hoped to be in the same happy frame of mind at the expiration of twenty-four hours or so. Having rested for a while, he with his party quitted the "Cabane," and, roped together, crept down the rocks. Just as they reached the snow I shouted to the guide, "Will you have the kindness to tell them at the hotel d'Angleterre that we mean to go to the top?" "Very well, sir, I shall not forget." Then leaning over the post and rail-fence, we watched them going down the slopes till they disappeared from view among the "seracs."

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### *CHAPTER III.*

"The world is all before me; I but ask  
Of Nature that with which she will comply—  
It is but with her summer's sun to bask,  
To mingle in the quiet of her sky,  
To see her gentle face without a mask,  
And never gaze on it with apathy."



hen we were left alone. "All heaven and earth are still, though not in sleep." The sun shone brightly on the pure white snow by which we were surrounded; the air was motionless, and not a sound disturbed the stillness of that memorable afternoon.

At our feet lay the Glacier des Bossons. "Heaven-descended in its origin, it yet takes its mould and conformation from the hidden womb of the mountain which brought it forth. At first soft and ductile, it acquires a character and firmness of its own, as an inevitable destiny urges it on its onward career. Jostled and constrained by the crosses and irregularities of its prescribed path, hedged in by impassable barriers which fix limits to its movements, it yields groaning to its fate, and still travels forward seamed with the scars of many a conflict of opposing obstacles. All this while, though wasting, it is renewed by an unseen power,—it evaporates, but is not consumed.

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"On its surface it bears the spoils which, during the progress of its existence, it has made its own; often weighty burdens devoid of beauty or value, at times precious masses, sparkling with gems or ore. Having at length attained its greatest width and extension, commanding admiration by its beauty and power, waste predominates over supply, the vital springs begin to fail; it stoops into an attitude of decrepitude—it drops the burdens one by one it had borne so proudly aloft—its dissolution is inevitable. But as it is resolved into its elements, it takes all at once a new, and livelier, and disembarassed form; from the wreck of its members it arises 'another, yet the same'—a noble, full-bodied, arrowy stream, which leaps rejoicing over the obstacles which had stayed its progress, and hastens through fertile valleys towards a freer existence, and a final union in the ocean with the boundless and the infinite."

Northward on the opposite side of the valley rose the Brévent. The buttress up which we had ridden the day before seemed quite vertical and inaccessible from this point of view. The pine forest clothing its base resembled turf, while the zig-zag paths above appeared as fine yellow threads. Turning towards the west, vast fields of sloping snow formed the foreground, and towering above them rose the imposing Dôme du Goûté, relieved here and there by dark-

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coloured patches of rock; further to the left the base of the Aiguille à Pichner, the upper of the two little specks we had noticed at Chamonix and from the Brévent. Time passed rapidly; what with sketching, discussing the prospects of a successful ascent (concerning which our fellows had not the slightest misgiving, although we had two guides less than the regulation number), perusing the traveller's book, looking at the scenery, and basking in the sun, we had a most delightful time of it. At five we sat down to a plain dinner, although it consisted of several courses; and having indulged in our usual smoke, we lay down to rest during the few hours which remained before our re-commencing the ascent. Although it was rather early for sleep we might have done something in that direction had not our attempts been rudely interfered with. When we lay down all was still as death, and remained so for a time; then there was a terrific noise of stones rattling against the wooden walls of the hut. The cause of all this was that an addition to the building is about to be made, and the levelling of the rock for its reception is done by the men who bring up the materials from Pierre Pointue, and the only time they give to it is before retiring at night. What muscles these fellows must have! They had crossed the Glacier *twice* that day with heavy loads of wood on their backs, and not contented they must needs set to work at sunset to the discomfort of those who, like good children, had gone to bed at an early hour. At length this diabolical noise ceased, and we again courted sleep, and were on the verge of attaining it when voices were heard outside followed by a thundering kick at the door, which was opened by the inconsiderate fellow who had bestowed it, and who, on perceiving that the beds were occupied, uttered a "Pardon, Messieurs," and slamming it disappeared. But this was not the last of him and his friend, who, occupying the next room to ours, made as much noise as if they were doing it by contract. The partition being thin I heard nearly every word they said, and was somewhat amused and very disgusted at the following dialogue which was carried on in French between one of the tourists and a guide.



**Aiguille à Pichner. Dôme du Goûté.  
"CABANE" ON THE GRANDS MULETS.**

"What are the regulations as to the payment of your expenses here?"

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"There are no regulations, sir; you are not obliged to pay for us; but as a fact we have never paid; our employers have invariably done so."

"Oh, very well, we don't object, only we think that if you let it be understood that you would have to pay, they would probably charge somewhat less!" Exit guide.

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To this interesting conversation succeeded the clattering of knives and forks; later on subdued talking, which ended finally in regular and prolonged snores. These interruptions effectually drove sleep away, coax it as we would. With closed eyes and in a half dreamy state I saw the "seracs" and crevasses, and passed over the ground we had traversed in the morning. Then regaining the full possession of my faculties, I asked myself if I was not bent on taking part in an idiotic action by starting in the middle of the night to clamber up some thousands of feet of snow and ice. Should I be repaid for the trouble and discomfort? Most likely there would be clouds or mist to hide the scenery, and even if there were not, would the game be worth the candle? Would not my friends say, "Very wrong, and very foolish, too; you ought to have known better?" Inclination tried hard to make me change my resolve, but was beaten in the attempt; and I am glad of it, for I was repaid, and amply, too. Later on, in the perfect stillness of that calm night, I heard a loud rattling report caused by the falling of a mighty avalanche. It was now ten o'clock; rolling restlessly about, I waited for the knock which was to summon us at a quarter to twelve. At last it came; a shuffling of feet was heard which approached nearer and nearer, then the signal was given, and in a few minutes we were ready for François to put on our half dried and dreadfully stiff boots (despite the grease) and to tie on the gaiters. I ate some bread and cheese, and drank a glass of water, but S— took nothing. My flask was filled with brandy; some provisions, two bottles of Bordeaux, and one of Champagne, were stowed away in Jules' knapsack, and we each took a packet of raisins, prunes, and chocolate, which we were assured

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would be very acceptable later on. As to our clothing, S— had on an alpaca coat and knickerbockers, whilst I wore an ordinary light summer suit. We were unprovided with top coats, wrappers, and had *no* gloves. S— had bought a pair of coloured spectacles some day previously, but, having nothing of the kind, I was fortunate in being able to procure a pair of goggles at the Grands Mulets, without which I could not have made the ascent, as the glare of the snow would in all probability have produced snow blindness. We were now at an elevation of 10,000 feet, the goal we hoped to reach at six or seven in the morning was 15,780 feet above the sea, consequently the portion *yet* to be ascended was no less than 5,780 feet, or nearly twice the height of Snowdon. Midway between the Grands Mulets and the summit is the Grand Plateau, and to reach it three gigantic snow-slopes or steps, each some 900 feet high, have to be surmounted, then the remaining portion of the journey is over the Bosses du Dromadaire, the Mauvaise Arête, and the final slope.

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## CHAPTER IV.

"The stars are forth, the moon above the tops  
Of the snow-shining mountains.—Beautiful!"



ur modest preparations being now completed, the rope was stretched along the narrow path, loops were made, and we were tied in the following order—François, S—, myself, then Jules. All being ready, François moved forward with a lantern, and in a couple of minutes we were fairly on the snow. All thoughts of difficulties, dangers, and what our friends would say, were left in the "Cabane," and our sole attention was devoted to the breasting of the gigantic slopes which are called Les Montées.

The night was fine but dark, the moon not having risen yet. Onwards and upwards we went in silence, and with slow and measured tread, keeping at distances of about twelve feet apart. We had not proceeded very far before we came to a dead stop, and on enquiring of S— what it meant, he replied that François' nose was bleeding. This is one of the many inconveniences to which one is liable at these altitudes. On looking back we saw a light advancing, and as it came nearer and nearer we made out the figures of a party of six men crawling slowly in our direction. They were the noisy foreigners who had not added to our comfort in the "Cabane." On drawing near a great deal of talk went on between their guides and ours in patois. Then they went ahead, and, François having recovered, we followed them closely, as soon as the route—concerning which there appeared to be some doubt—had been agreed upon. The work was tiresome, with nothing to look at besides the snow under our feet, and no excitement of any description, not even the jumping of a crevasse. To add to the monotony, talking was prohibited, for, having made some remarks to Jules as we went along, I was advised by him not to speak; and no doubt he was right, as a certain amount of exertion was necessary to carry on a conversation, separated as we were by an interval of several yards. This portion of the journey was decidedly uphill work, figuratively as well as literally. At about two o'clock the moon appeared above the tops of the mountains, and although it had just entered the last quarter, it afforded sufficient light to enable François to dispense with the lantern, which he left on the snow; on several occasions we stopped a considerable time while mounting the steep slopes, without any apparent reason.

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At last, becoming quite impatient, I asked S— to pass the word to François to get ahead of the "foreigners." He preferred, however, to follow in their path, thinking that the track must be rather more easy by being beaten down. Although so thinly clad I did not suffer in the least from

cold, except in my feet, which was not to be wondered at, considering that my socks were cotton, and that my boots, damp at starting, were now wet through. On nearing the Petit Plateau we went up a slope which was nearly perpendicular. It was not snow, for that substance could not have stood at so steep an angle; and it was not hard ice, but *névé*—its consistence was much the same as that of an ice pudding; by giving a smart kick the foot entered sufficiently to afford a good hold. It was really very steep, and at the same time a particularly easy bit of climbing; but, had we been photographed, the uninitiated would have marvelled at our daring. After this we walked on the level for a short distance, and arrived in full sight of the Petit Plateau before reaching which we went along some very narrow ridges of ice with deep crevasses on either side, then up some snow slopes, at the top of which we stood on the Plateau. This we crossed at as rapid a pace as circumstances permitted on account of the danger of falling avalanches that beset this spot. The guides will have it that the slightest disturbance of the atmosphere, such as can be created by the human voice, is sufficient to cause a disaster; and as it is always as well to practice obedience, we proceeded on our way without uttering a word.

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So far I had not experienced any difficulty of breathing, nor had I suffered from thirst; but soon after quitting the Grands Mulets I felt a dryness in the mouth and throat, and then I tried the effects of a raisin; but not being satisfied with the result, took a prune, and, discarding the fruit, rolled the stone in my mouth, from which process I derived great benefit. Plodding steadily upwards, we asked from time to time whether we were not yet half way? "No, sir; not till we arrive at the Grand Plateau, and it is some distance off yet."

How we longed for day-light, that the monotony of this night excursion might be broken by the sight of the grand scenery which, though surrounding, was almost invisible to us!

Before the Grand Plateau was reached we stopped for refreshment. We had been tramping for nearly four hours, and it was needed. The knapsack was opened, and a bottle of wine produced, but what about the corkscrew?

Left behind of course! So François volunteered to operate with his ice-axe, but as he was far less expert in decapitating a bottle than in hewing steps, a considerable portion of the contents was lost. It was not long before we resumed our march, and having nearly traversed the Grand Plateau another halt was made, and this time we meant to eat as well as drink. Not feeling hungry I was told by our fellows that no one had much appetite up here. Then the remaining bottle of claret was uncorked with care, and after we had partaken of its contents sparingly, it was deposited in the snow for our return. Much as we should have liked to sit down and rest we could not do so, for reposing on a bed of snow was not to be thought of. Resuming our journey we soon came up with and passed the other party who were grouped together apparently engaged in our late occupation. Dawn now began to break, and stopping for a few minutes at the foot of a long and regular incline I said to S— "Well, have you had enough of it?" To my inexpressible surprise, he answered "Yes, I feel so ill that I do not think I shall be able to go on, and the summit seems as far off as ever." It was now broad day-light, and we were little more than half-way.

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"Oh! come on, women have done it, and why should not we?"

"I am ill, and your talking in that way only makes me worse."

Then I called François, who made light of it, remarking that feelings of sickness are often experienced in this locality; the flask was produced, and we took a little nip all round, and went on.

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After going a short distance, S— said, "I feel dreadfully ill, I never felt so bad in my life, it is impossible for me to go on. I could not reach the Plateau for £10,000. Go on, and I will find my way back to the Grands Mulets, somehow."

"That's out of the question; you can't get there alone, and as there is no help for it, we must all go back." Then I told François, and the poor fellow's countenance at once fell below zero.

This was his first ascent as guide, although he had accompanied other parties as porter on eleven previous occasions. Matters certainly looked gloomy at this moment. S— not only appeared the picture of misery, but was undoubtedly very ill—suffering, in fact, from mountain sickness; he complained of internal cold and shivered all over, besides experiencing other sensations which are best described in his own words,—"It seemed as though all power had departed from my limbs, my eyes were dim and incapable of vision, and I more than once put my hand to them and my ears and mouth to make sure that blood was not spurting forth."

Feeling averse to beat a hasty retreat after all the toil that had been undergone, and when the end was so comparatively near, and hoping against hope that S— might yet be able to reach the summit, we tried to make him as comfortable as possible. A seat was made on the snow with alpenstocks and ice-axe handles, and Jules goodnaturedly took off his jacket, in which he wrapped the invalid. It was near this very spot that Sir Thomas Talfourd's expedition was forced to return through the same cause in 1843. At this time the other party came in sight, crawling slowly up the slope of snow, walking in single file, and roped together. On moving past us and noticing that there was something amiss, one of the guides observed to me:

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"You are all right, or you would not be able to smoke." They then discovered that we were going back, and the same fellow who had just spoken to me said, "Do you wish to make the ascent, sir?"

"Of course I do; that is why I am here."

"Then untie yourself and fasten on to our line, and come on."

"Yes, with pleasure, if your employers are willing."

Whispering was carried on, and, after some conversation in patois, François announced that they were *not* willing.

Then S—— rose up, quietly remarking:

"We had better get on."

"You can't do it, man; you are far too ill."

"I will, if I die for it!"

Without further talk we made a fresh start up this interminable slope. The indignation S—— felt at the churlish behaviour of the "foreigners" completely restored him, the effect produced being the same as intense excitement on those who are suffering from *mal-de-mer*. I pictured to myself the fun we should have on our way back, and the railway speed with which we should come down, but I quite left out of the calculation what the condition of the snow might be a few hours hence. It was broad day-light when we reached the top of the incline, and the sun's welcome rays were beginning to brighten up the aiguilles and peaks on our left. Looking back the spectacle was not only grand and beautiful but weird-like, and the perfect stillness that reigned made it all the more impressive. The valley of Chamonix was filled with clouds, not mere fog or mist, but real clouds rolling beneath us, and slowly rising up the mountains whose rugged peaks and sharp-pointed aiguilles reared their graceful heads against a back ground of unclouded sky. The scene was one to be remembered, and we felt that we were beginning to reap the fruits of our five hours toil. Travelling was fairly easy, the snow being in splendid condition, and as there was no danger to be guarded against we were able to devote the whole of our attention to the scenery. The summit shining white certainly appeared nearer than it did from the Hotel d'Angleterre, but not so close as we should have expected after the hours we had spent in journeying towards it. Arriving at the Rochers des Bosses, some low, flat rocks, scarcely rising above the surrounding snow, their surfaces rent by the severity of the climate into thousands of sharp jagged pieces of stone, we sat down to rest for the first time since quitting the Grands Mulets. Lying down on this hard but welcome couch, and warmed by the sun now shining brightly upon us, we surveyed the remaining portion of the task before us—the 1,500 feet and more—yet to be mounted, immense fields of snow to be traversed, les Bosses du Dromadaire to be climbed—and then the final slope. Having "lighted up" I felt in a very contented mood, then an involuntary nod reminded me that we had not slept since the night before last,—puff—nod—puff—then a longer doze.

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"François, I should like to have a snooze."

"You must not, sir!"

"It can't do any harm."

"You must not!"

"Then the sooner we are off the better, for there is a lot of work to be done yet."

Getting up lazily, we buckled to once more, and surmounting first the Grande and then the Petite Bosse, we approached a pure white ridge, sharp as a knife, and apparently vertical. Wondering how François would steer, whether to the right or left, so as to scale one of the sides, I was surprised to see him direct his steps to the centre. "Surely he does not intend to go up that frightful ridge! He does, though!" and on reaching it he informed us that it was the Mauvaise Arête; and a more wicked *back-bone* could scarcely be conceived.

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This was the spot which was visited by Pierre Balmat, Marie Couttet, François Paccard, and several others, when exploring the mountain on the 8th of June, 1786. They described it as a "huge ridge which connected the top of Mont Blanc with the Dôme du Gouté, but it was so steep and narrow that its passage was impossible;" and having concluded that the summit was inaccessible by this route, they returned to Chamonix. The Corridor and Mur de la Côte is the route generally followed, but this one is somewhat shorter and less fatiguing, though more difficult. It cannot, however, be made use of unless the weather is calm. Speaking for myself, I did not relish the prospect of climbing that knife edge, which was frightfully steep, scarcely a foot in width, apparently several hundred feet high, and its sides not very far removed from the perpendicular. Acting on the principle that when a disagreeable thing has to be done the sooner the better, we did not linger at the base, but went straight at it, slowly and with the greatest care, for we were now on ice. Before taking a step our alpenstocks were firmly driven in, which was a most laborious operation, although the surface was sufficiently soft to enable us to do so by stabbing it several times on each occasion. François had by far the heaviest task to perform, for he had constantly to use his axe in cutting steps. How long this went on I am unable to say, perhaps half an hour, most likely more; all I know is that ultimately we found ourselves standing in a happy frame of mind on the snow, which was almost level, and here we rested, panting, after our exertions, and then walking forward almost on a level the foot of the last slope was soon reached, and now the final assault was begun.

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The work was very stiff, though by no means difficult or dangerous, and we stopped more than

once. Feeling very tired I remarked to François:

"Well, I confess that I am fatigued."

"And so are we, sir," was his laconic reply.

During the whole of the ascent I had not experienced so much difficulty in walking as now. I felt as though I had a greater weight to support, and compare the work to carrying a heavy load up a long flight of stairs. And this was not to be wondered at, considering that the density of the air at this elevation is as nearly as possible half that at the level of the sea. Going up the Arête the pause between each step, whilst the alpenstock was being driven in, was sufficiently long to afford a rest. Then again, the mind was so occupied that fatigue, though doubtless present, passed unnoticed. But neither at this nor at any other time did I experience any difficulty of breathing or feelings of suffocation.

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At last the goal was reached!—we stood on the summit of Mont Blanc!

The customary salute of three guns was fired from Chamonix; the bottle of champagne was drunk with the usual toasts; and, having shaken hands all round, we turned our attention to the world below—on which we did not seem to stand, but rather on some huge white cloud. Above the sky was a clear, unbroken atmosphere of blue; far beneath the spot on which we stood detached fields of clouds covered the landscape, and, uniting with the horizon, had the appearance of a vast sea; some of them, rising above the rest, resembled island rocks, while others towered up like gigantic cliffs.

Monte Rosa, the rival of Mont Blanc, though rearing its proud head far above the ocean of clouds, seemed but a mere rock. The Jura was scarcely visible; the Brévent was indistinct; the Mont Maudit, Tacul, and the other peaks of the Mont Blanc range, though near and unclouded, were dwarfed into insignificance as we looked down upon them. There was no inclination to identify mountain, lake, or city, but rather to gaze in silence on that vast and weird-like scene.



**MONT BLANC FROM THE COL DE BALME.**

"There is a calm upon me—  
Inexplicable stillness! which till now  
Did not belong to what I knew of life.

... It will not last,

But it is as well to have known it, though but once;  
It hath enlarged my thoughts with a new sense,  
And I within my tablets would note down

... That there is such a feeling."

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## CHAPTER V.

"The mists boil up around the glaciers; clouds  
Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphury."



Would that our stay could have been prolonged! but frail human nature cannot perform impossibilities. We had been on foot nine hours, and had a long day's work before us; furthermore we were thinly clad, and were exposed to a chilly breeze, from which no shelter could be found; so, casting a look on this indescribable scene, and with feelings of grim satisfaction that its awful stillness would never be profaned by crowds of noisy tourists and vendors of cheap articles, we commenced to retrace our steps.

The Mauvaise Arête, bad as we had found it going up, was infinitely worse coming down; the ridge seemed narrower, and the slopes on either side much steeper. Several times our fellows called out "you must not look down, gentlemen;" but fortunately neither S— nor myself were troubled with nervousness, and we did look down the steep inclines, whose end to all appearance was eternity. Slowly and cautiously the descent was made, each one minding his neighbour as well as himself, and taking special care that the rope should not be slack. We did not walk in step like soldiers on the march, but advanced in a succession of jerks as it were. François having made a step, stood still; S— having followed his example, I did the same, and when Jules had completed his part of the performance, the opera was repeated. Some idea of the steepness of the ridge may be formed, when I say that at one exceptionally steep place I leaned back, and rested my shoulders against it. Jules at once called out, "Don't do that, sir, you are more likely to slip; trust to your heels." So following his advice I dug them well in and by dint of care the foot was safely reached, and we all looked forward to an easy and enjoyable return. But the end had not come yet! At the Rochers des Bosses we felt very much inclined to lie down, and to take it easy, but François urged us on, not liking the appearance of a cloud which was drifting in our direction. Clouds are one of the sources of danger on the mountain, through which cause eleven lives were lost a few years since. The poor fellows being unable to find their way perished of cold and exposure.

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We were marching down the rocks in a leisurely manner, and I, forgetful that we were roped, was paying no attention whatever to those who preceded me, the foot-hold being secure, when suddenly I felt a terrific jerk, and before there was time to plant myself firmly on my feet I had lost my balance, and was on the point of falling headlong, when to my great satisfaction a violent backward pull arrested a very ugly fall, which would probably have resulted in a broken limb if not something worse.

The cause of this was an unseen piece of ice upon which S— had placed his foot—slipped—and, falling suddenly, had communicated his misfortune to me through the agency of the rope. The alpenstock was jerked violently out of his hand, and went glissading down the snow for a distance of a hundred yards at least. It stopped, however, in a place that fortunately was accessible.

The snow was now no longer in the same condition as in the early morning, the heat, though temperate, being sufficient to soften the crust, and render walking very laborious; and as we reached the top of the incline, where the expedition nearly came to an abrupt termination, and down which we had expected to glissade, we found the snow so soft that we sank in it to the knee and occasionally to the waist. Floundering along, and with an occasional grumble at a style of work for which we had not bargained, we slowly and gradually descended this unlucky slope, till its foot was reached. Parched and weary we went on, keeping a sharp look out for the wine we had left in the snow. "There it is!" "No! that belongs to the foreigners." "Then ours can't be far off;" and sure enough it was found in the same place where we had left it. Our stock of drinkables was now exhausted.

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Nearing the Petit Plateau we were enabled to examine the much-feared avalanches, which were almost invisible during the ascent. In appearance they were not unlike chalk cliffs, cracked here and there as though the foundation had yielded. On the whole, these huge blocks looked safe enough, with the exception of one some thirty feet in height which was hanging over, ripe for a fall at any moment. Under the very shadow of this threatening mass of consolidated snow we were bound to pass, and, eyeing it with suspicion, we increased our pace to the utmost possible speed, when, as luck would have it, S— sank into a mixture of ice and snow just as we were immediately underneath. François turned back, and tugged away; Jules went forward to assist, but their united efforts proving of no avail they resorted to their ice-axes, and finally succeeded in quarrying out the imprisoned limb. This was probably the most hair-breadth escape during the whole expedition. With feelings of relief we walked on in silence, and crossed the same uninviting ridges, high walls of ice, with crevasses on the right hand and on the left; as it was softer than on our way up, there was a feeling of suspicion that the material might give way at any moment. However, it held good, and once again we exclaimed, "All right."

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Moving cautiously along, we reached the brink of the nearly vertical slope referred to in the ascent, and now that it was visible we wondered how we had climbed it. Looking down it appeared quite perpendicular, and its condition was so changed by the influence of the sun that going down in the same free and easy way that we had climbed up was quite out of the question. "François, cannot we get round that way?" "It is impossible, sir." "Well, what is to be done?" "Oh! we shall manage very well!" We were now untied, then each one in turn was fastened round the chest with an end of the rope, the other being held by those above. S—— went first and disappeared over the brink; my turn came next, and holding the rope firmly, and kicking my feet into the soft névé, I joined him below; then François followed, and lastly Jules, and a very trying time it must have been for him, for he was obliged to descend by his own unaided exertions. The rope being fastened round his waist, we held the other end, carefully taking in the slack as he came down, so that in the event of a fall we might prevent him from slipping into eternity down the slope on which we stood. As he worked his way down by kicking his feet into the partially-melted névé, and retaining his vertical position by means of the ice-axe, he seemed like a fly on a wall, and was more to be admired than envied; but to his credit he descended the forty-five feet without a slip.

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Pausing for a few minutes, we commenced the descent of les Montées in a very matter-of-fact way, glissading being quite out of the question on account of the soft condition of the snow, for the weather was now excessively hot. Although we were going downhill, the work was trying enough, and to make matters worse the flask was empty! However, the Grands Mulets were in sight, and the thought of the "Cabane," and the refreshment contained therein, encouraged us as we alternately buried and extricated our legs in and out of the yielding snow. The much-desired haven seemed so very near, that I remarked in a diffident way, "Another quarter of an hour, Jules?" "Three quarters, sir." Deceived again! How provokingly distinct it appeared through the pure atmosphere, unpolluted with smoke, gas, and the many other impurities to which we are subject in England. The remaining thousand feet or thereabouts having been descended without any incident worth recording, we entered the "Cabane" at two o'clock, tired, parched, and our lower extremities wet through. S—— forthwith threw himself on a bed, and was sound asleep in a moment. Our trusty fellows disappeared, and having taken off my boots I had some luncheon, with a bottle of beer, which was perfect nectar. I lay down on one of the beds, and smoked the pipe of peace. We had allowed ourselves a rest of an hour and a half; at 3-30 p.m., time being up, we once more and for the last time got into harness, and ten minutes afterwards quitted the "Cabane." We worked our way down the rugged rocks at a quick pace, for the weather had changed and a thunderstorm was rapidly approaching. Heavy clouds were rolling up the valley, and ever and anon a clap of thunder pealed forth, reverberating amongst the mountains. "I am very anxious to cross the glacier before the rain comes down." "Very well, François, go ahead as fast as you like, and we won't stop you." So down the slopes of snow we went at a rapid pace, soon arriving on the ice. Our route was not the same as on going up, in consequence of a change in the crevasses; they are always changing, for the glacier, as I have before explained, never remains still, moving forward at the rate of some three feet or even more per day.

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**COMING DOWN THE GLACIER DES BOSSONS.**

On the whole we found the work less trying than on the previous day. Whether it was really so, or only by comparison, I cannot tell; however, there were one or two awkward bits to dispose of, one, especially, which was a perpendicular face of ice forming the side of a deep crevasse, along which we worked our way by stepping into holes cut into it at every two or three feet, and by gripping the ice in notches which were hewn out for this purpose. Then the ropes were untied, and we felt like colts unloosed. The remaining portion of the glacier was speedily crossed; the rocky base of the Aiguille du Midi was traversed at a run; the little torrents were bounded over; the rude zig-zag paths, covered with rolling stones, were scampered down, and Pierre Pointue was safely reached. Here we paid our bill for board and lodging at the Grands Mulets, and whilst refreshing ourselves, we were rather amused at hearing an altercation between the "foreigners"—who, by the way, had made the ascent—and the landlord respecting the price of a bottle of wine! This was the last we saw of them.

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We now commenced the final stages of our journey, and a wet one it proved, for the storm was overhead, the lightning flashed, and the rain began to fall; and by the time we entered the Forest des Pèlerins, it came down in torrents. Being without top-coats or umbrellas, it was not long in penetrating our thin clothing. But what did it signify? The journey was nearly over, and the thought that our impromptu expedition had been so successful cheered us as we strode down the zig-zags, which seemed never ending. The bottom, however, was reached at last, and, gaining the level, we soon found ourselves on the outskirts of the village. The populace did not turn out, neither did we attempt to form a procession, *à la* Albert Smith, but quietly, and in the same unostentatious manner that we had left on the previous day, we directed our way to the Hotel; on approaching which we were rather astonished at being again saluted by cannon, and much more so at finding the entrance hall of the Hotel filled with guests, who had hurriedly left the table d'hôte to welcome our safe arrival. It was very good of them to give, and very pleasant for us to receive, their kind and unexpected congratulations. Our wet clothes having been changed, we spent a pleasant evening sitting under the verandah, and talking over our adventures.

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## CHAPTER VI.

"Here are the Alpine landscapes which create  
A fund for contemplation; to admire  
Is a brief feeling of a trivial date;  
But something worthier do such scenes inspire."



On getting up next morning I felt rather stiff, and there was a burning sensation all over my face and ears, as though they had undergone a mild scorching. The effect of the sun's rays and radiation from the snow is very remarkable, and in a few hours the complexion is dyed the colour of mahogany. Much to our surprise, François and Jules, weather-beaten and sun-burnt as they were before going up, were several shades darker on their return. As for S—— his condition was simply deplorable, and he suffered great inconvenience for more than a week afterwards. For several days he presented an indescribably unwholesome appearance, and it was not until the whole of his skin had fallen off—which it did piecemeal and in huge flakes—that his good looks were restored. After breakfast our trusty fellows were paid for their services, François receiving one hundred and Jules fifty francs, which with one hundred and fifty-two francs for board and lodging at the Grands Mulets, brought up our expenses to three hundred and two francs, or about £6 each, exclusive of a few extras that are not worth noting; I may say, however, that the ascent is rarely made for so moderate a sum. The regulation number of guides is as follows, viz., two guides and one porter for a traveller, and one extra guide for each additional person, by which we ought to have had three guides and one porter, but not having intended to go further than the Grands Mulets we went with half the usual number, and although we were perfect novices at the work, we got on admirably, and do not quite see what advantage would have been gained by having a larger number of attendants. [Pg 54]

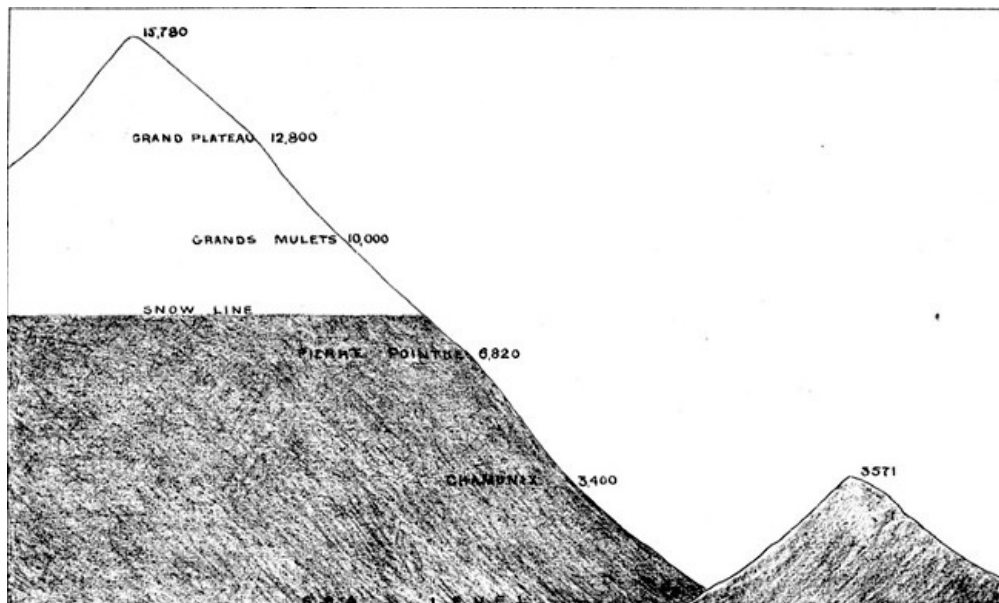
The next thing to be done was to pay a visit to the guides' office, and on our way there François said, "Sir, will you explain to the chief that when we started we had not intended going further than the Grands Mulets, otherwise we shall be fined, because we were not on turn for the ascent?" The chief listened attentively to my explanation, and then remarked, "In that case they shall not be punished." We then signed our names in the record book, and afterwards obtained certificates surmounted by comical-looking sketches, supposed to represent the summit with a party of tourists and guides in a variety of absurd attitudes. These documents were numbered 768, which means that this was the seven hundred and sixty-eighth ascent from Chamonix since Balmat successfully reached the top on the 8th August, 1786. They were dated 20th July, 1881, and were signed by François, Jules, and Frederic Payot, the chief guide. [Pg 55]

Whilst lolling about during the remainder of the day, we were "interviewed" pretty frequently, and the interest taken in our adventures appeared to be as deep as though the ascent was a matter of very rare occurrence. The first question invariably asked was, "Did you suffer from the rarified air?" The answer to which was, "Not at all as regards breathing, but we none of us had any appetite at a higher elevation than the Grands Mulets." They did not, however, put the second question, which one is always asked in England, "Did it repay you?"

How many are there, of the thousands who visit Chamonix every year, who would not go to the top of Mont Blanc if the journey could be as easily performed as on the Rigi? But risk to life and limb, mountain sickness, wet feet, and rather more walking than they have a fancy for, keeps them in the lower regions, from which they content themselves with viewing the mountain. [Pg 56]

Amongst those who took a special interest in our late achievement were two ladies, who, accompanied by a gentleman, were to make an attempt the following morning. The route had been carefully studied, experienced guides and porters had been engaged, wrappers, veils, and better fare than can be procured at the Grands Mulets, had been provided. The weather, too, was magnificent, the thunderstorm having completely passed away at sunset, so as far as one could foresee they were likely to be favoured by the weather, which is half the battle.

At six next morning, having hurried down to wish them success, I found the party all ready for a start. Two mules, which had been hired to carry their fair burdens to Pierre Pointue, were flapping their long ears and looking as if they thought getting up early a horrid bore. The guides and porters were fully equipped, and amongst other things they were provided with coils of brand new rope, which was indicative of precaution. On coming up to them, one of the ladies, with something very like tears in her eyes, said, "Couttet won't go; the weather has changed; there are clouds on the mountain; so our excursion must be put off." Turning to the guide who was responsible for this decision, he remarked in a most disconsolate tone, "Ah, monsieur, c'est impossible;" and no doubt he was right, for the summit down to the Glacier des Bossons was completely obscured; and what made it all the more vexatious was that in other respects the weather was everything that could be desired. Having expressed my warmest sympathy, I hastened to my room to prepare for our departure by the diligence, which was to leave at seven o'clock.



**DIAGRAM SHEWING THE RELATIVE HEIGHTS OF MONT BLANC AND SNOWDON**

In bringing my narrative to a conclusion, I may say that although the ascent of Mont Blanc is no longer considered difficult or dangerous, I submit that in all probability the route is practically the same as when Balmat made the first ascent. The zig-zags to Pierre Pointue may have been slightly improved, and possibly the path which Albert Smith describes as so trying to the nerves on the way to Pierre à l'Echelle may be a few inches wider, but I doubt whether the Glacier des Bossons, the Montées, the Plateaux, and the Bosses du Dromadaire, have undergone any appreciable change; and I would point out that, although nearly eight hundred ascents have been made in a hundred years, the failures are not recorded. These, I am informed, far exceed the successes; therefore let those whose ambition it is to stand upon the highest point in Europe be prepared to meet with disappointments; for not only may they be unequal to the physical exertion that is necessary, but their expedition may be brought to an untimely end by various causes, and above all by the weather; but, on the other hand, should they be favoured as we were, and succeed in reaching the "diadem of snow," I promise them ample repayment. The fatigue undergone, the discomforts endured, and the dangers encountered, will soon be forgotten. But the deep impressions made when viewing the sublimest works of nature from those regions of eternal snow will last as long as life.

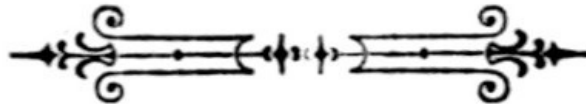
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## APPENDIX.



In 1760, De Saussure paid his first visit to Chamonix, and, feeling convinced that the summit was accessible, he promised a handsome reward to anyone who discovered a practicable route, and even offered to pay the wages of all those who attempted the ascent. His guide, Pierre Simon, tried twice—once by the Tacul and once by the Bossons—but returned without success.

1775.—Four peasants managed to reach a valley of snow which appeared to lead directly to the summit, but they suffered so acutely from the rarified air that they were compelled to return.

1783.—Three guides, Jean Marie Couttet, Lambard Meunier, and Joseph Carrier, attained a great elevation, when one of the party was seized with drowsiness and could proceed no further, so the attempt was abandoned. Having returned to Chamonix, Lambard Meunier stated "that the sun almost scorched him; that they had no appetite to eat even a crumb; and that if he tried the excursion again, he should only take with him a parasol and a bottle of scent!"

During the same season, M. Bourrit, of Geneva, accompanied by two chamois hunters, reached the foot of a steep rock—probably the Aiguille du Bionassay—but being exhausted he could go no further. One of the guides remained with him, whilst the other went on until he reached the foot of the dome of Mont Blanc, from which he was only separated by a ridge of ice, and he was of opinion that had he only had time and some assistance he could have gained the summit.

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1785.—De Saussure, accompanied by M. Bourrit and his son, started from the village of Bionassay on the 13th of September, and having climbed to the foot of the Aiguille du Goûté, they passed the night in a rude hut, eight feet by seven, which had been specially prepared for them. M. Bourrit, as well as his son, was afflicted by the rarified air and could not eat anything. At six next morning they started again. The route was dangerous, being over some snow drifts and blocks of ice. After five hours one of the guides, Pierre Balmat, proposed a halt, whilst he went on to reconnoitre the condition of the snow. In an hour he returned, and said that it was in such a treacherous state it would not be advisable to proceed. So the attempt was abandoned. They regained their cabin in safety, De Saussure remaining there another night to make scientific observations, but M. Bourrit, with his son, started off for Bionassay, not having a fancy for another night at this elevation.

1786.—Pierre Balmat, Marie Couttet, and another guide reached the top of the Dôme du Goûté, by the Aiguille of the same name, on the 8th June, suffering acutely from the rarification of the air. Here they fell in with François Paccard and three other guides, who had ascended by La Côte. Uniting their forces they went onwards and upwards, until they were brought to a stand by a ridge of ice—the Mauvaise Arête—which they considered to be inaccessible, and on their return they were nearly lost in a fearful storm of snow and hail.

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"It so happened that one of Paccard's party, named Jacques Balmat, who appears just at this time not to have been very popular in the valley, had presented himself without invitation, and

followed them against their will. When they turned to descend, they did not tell this poor man of their intention. Being on unfriendly terms with them, he had kept aloof; and whilst stopping to look for some crystals he lost sight of them, just as the snow began to fall, which rapidly obliterated their traces. The storm increasing, he resolved to spend the night alone in the centre of this desert of ice, and at an elevation of 14,000 feet above the level of the sea! He had no food; he got under the lee of a rock and formed a kind of niche in the snow; and there, half dead from cold he passed the long hours of that terrible night. At last morning broke—the storm had cleared away; and as Balmat endeavoured to move his limbs he found that his feet had lost all sensation—they were frost-bitten! Keeping up his courage he spent the day in surveying the mountain, and he was rewarded: he found that if the crevasses that border the Grand Plateau were once crossed, the path to the top of Mont Blanc was clear, and he then traced out the route which has, with little variation, been followed ever since. Balmat returned that evening to Chamonix. He took to his bed, and did not leave it for weeks. He kept his secret close, until moved with gratitude to Dr. Paccard, the village physician, the line of road was hinted at, and an attempt agreed upon as soon as Balmat recovered." On the 7th of August these two started alone. They ascended La Côte, and slept there. Before daybreak next morning they were on their march again. At three o'clock in the afternoon they were still uncertain as to the results of the enterprise. At last they arrived at the Summit, at sunset. Here they waited half an hour, and then returning got back to their night bivouac, where they again slept, by midnight. On the following morning they reached Chamonix by eight o'clock. Their faces were swollen and excoriated—their eyes nearly closed; and for the next week Balmat was scarcely recognisable.

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**1787.**—De Saussure, accompanied by eighteen guides, started from Chamonix on the 1st August. The summit of the Montagne de la Côte was reached in about six hours, and then the party encamped for the night. At four o'clock in the afternoon of the following day they prepared to pass the night on the snow, at an elevation of 12,300 feet above the level of the sea. De Saussure suffered considerably, and a raging thirst added to his discomfort. Next morning they crossed the Grand Plateau, and, after suffering much discomfort, succeeded in reaching the Summit; there they remained several hours, and then commenced to retrace their steps at half-past three in the afternoon. Towards evening they arrived at the Grands Mulets, where they bivouaced for the night. At six the next morning—that of the fourth day of the journey—they left the rocks, crossed the Glacier de Taconnaz, descended the Montagne de la Côte, and finally reached Chamonix in safety.

**1788.**—The indefatigable M. Bourrit made his fifth—unsuccessful—and last attempt in the autumn of this year. Regardless of expense, he engaged seventeen guides, and took provisions enough to last six days. Just before starting he was joined by Mr. Woodley, an Englishman, and Mr. Camper, a Dutchman, who were attended by five guides. This large party passed the first night on the Côte, and attempted to reach the Summit the next day. Mr. Woodley, with four guides, distanced the others, some of whom gave in on the Grand Plateau and returned to the Grands Mulets. MM. Bourrit and Camper commenced to beat a retreat after having nearly reached the foot of the last slope; then a mist came on, which added to their difficulties, but they managed to find their way to the tent, where, towards night, they were rejoined by Mr. Woodley and his guides, the former with his feet frost-bitten. The following morning they returned to Chamonix. Mr. Woodley was obliged to keep his feet in snow and salt for a fortnight; one of the Balmats was blind for three weeks; Cachat had his hands frozen, and poor M. Bourrit made up his mind never to try it again!

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**1791.**—Two of the guides accompanying four Englishmen were seriously injured by a fall of rocks on La Côte—one of them sustaining a broken leg, the other a fractured skull.

**1802.**—On the 10th of August, M. Forneret and Baron Doorthensen reached the Summit after suffering acutely from the rarified air. M. Forneret compared the agony he endured to that of a man whose lungs were being violently torn from his chest!

**1820.**—The first recorded fatal accident occurred in this year. Dr. Hamel, accompanied by M. Selligie and two Oxford men—Messrs. Durnford and Henderson—and twelve guides, reached the Grands Mulets the first day. Here they were detained all the next by bad weather. At two the following morning the storm passed off, and day broke most beautifully. All were anxious to proceed, with the exception of M. Selligie, who considered that a married man had no right to risk his life in such a perilous adventure. Remonstrances proving of no avail, he was left behind with two guides, who were much disgusted with the arrangement. At twenty minutes past eight in the morning the party reached the Grand Plateau, where they made an attempt at breakfast, but there was no great appetite amongst them. At half-past ten they had arrived nearly below the Rochers Rouges, and shortly afterwards a frightful disaster happened, which is thus described by Mr. Durnford:—

"I was obliged to stop half a minute to arrange my veil; and the sun being at that moment concealed behind a cloud, I tucked it up under the large straw hat which I wore. In the interval, my companion, H—, and three of the guides, passed me, so that I was now the sixth on the line, and, of course, the centre man. H— was next before me; and as it was the first time we had been so circumstanced during the whole morning, he remarked it, and said we ought to have one guide at least between us in case of accident. This I over-ruled by referring him to the absence of all appearance of danger at that part of our march; to which he assented. I did not then attempt to recover my place in front—though the wish more than once crossed my mind—finding, perhaps, that my present one was much less laborious. To this apparently trivial circumstance I was indebted for my life. A few minutes after the above conversation, my veil being still up, and

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my eyes turned at intervals towards the summit of the mountain—which was on the right, as we were crossing obliquely the long slope above described, which was to conduct us to Mont Maudit—the snow suddenly gave way beneath our feet, beginning at the head of the line, and carried us all down the slope on our left. I was thrown instantly off my feet, but was still on my knees and endeavouring to regain my footing, when, in a few seconds, the snow on our right—which, of course, was above us—rushed into the gap thus suddenly made, and completed the catastrophe by burying us all at once in its mass, and hurrying us downwards towards two crevasses about a furlong below us and nearly parallel to the line of our march. The accumulation of snow instantly threw me backwards, and I was carried down, in spite of all my struggles. In less than a minute I emerged, partly from my own exertions and partly because the velocity of the falling mass had subsided. I was obliged to resign my pole in the struggle, feeling it forced out of my hand. A short time afterwards I found it on the very brink of the crevass. This had hitherto escaped our notice from its being so far below us, and it was not until some time after the snow had settled that I perceived it. At the moment of my emerging I was so far from being alive to the danger of our situation, that, on seeing my two companions at some distance below, up to the arms in snow and sitting motionless and silent, a jest was rising to my lips, till a second glance shewed me that, with the exception of Mathieu Balmat, they were the only remnants of the party visible. Two more, however, being those in the interval between myself and the rear of the party, having quickly re-appeared, I was still inclined to treat the affair as a perplexing though ludicrous delay, in having sent us down so many hundred feet lower, than in the light of a serious accident, when Mathieu Balmat cried out that some of the party were lost, and pointed to the crevass, which had hitherto escaped our notice, into which he said they had fallen. A nearer view convinced us of the sad truth. The three front guides, Pierre Carrier, Pierre Balmat, and Auguste Tairraz, being where the slope was somewhat steeper, had been carried down with greater rapidity, and to a greater distance, and had thus been hurried into the crevass, with an immense mass of snow upon them, which rose nearly to the brink. Mathieu Balmat, who was fourth in the line, being a man of great muscular strength, as well as presence of mind, had suddenly thrust his pole in the firm snow beneath, when he felt himself going, which certainly checked, in some measure, the force of his fall. Our two hindermost guides were also missing, but we were soon gladdened by seeing them make their appearance, and cheered them with loud and repeated hurrahs. One of these, Julien Devoussaud, had been carried into the crevass where it was very narrow, and had been thrown with some violence against the opposite brink. He contrived to scramble out without assistance. The other, Joseph Marie Couttet, had been dragged out by his companions quite senseless, and nearly black from the weight of snow which had been upon him. It was a long time before we could convince ourselves that the others were past hope, and we exhausted ourselves fruitlessly for some time in fathoming the snow with our poles." After relating how every effort had been made to recover the poor fellows, the abandonment of the ascent, and the melancholy return to Chamonix, he goes on to explain the cause of the accident. "During two or three days a pretty strong southerly wind had prevailed, which, drifting gradually a mass of snow from the summit, had caused it to form a sort of wreath on the northerly side, where the angle of its inclination to the horizon was small enough to allow it to settle. In the course of the preceding night that had been frozen, but not so hard as to bear our weight. Accordingly, in crossing the slope obliquely, as above described, with the summit on our right, we broke through the outer crust and sank in nearly up to the knees. At the moment of the accident a crack had been formed quite across the wreath; this caused the lower part to slide down under our weight on the smooth slope of snow beneath it, and the upper part of the wreath, thus bereft of its support, followed it in a few seconds and was the grand contributor to the calamity."

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The route (l'Ancien Passage) followed on this occasion is no longer used—indeed, the guides are forbidden to go that way. On the 12th August, 1861, or thirty-nine years later, the remains of the three unfortunate men who had lost their lives in this ill-fated expedition were discovered at the orifice or "Snout" of the Glacier des Bossons. Besides the fragments of human bodies were found portions of clothing, boots, a lantern, and a boiled leg of mutton. These relics were identified by Couttet, who had formed one of the party when the accident occurred.

**1843.**—In the early part of September Sir Thomas Talfourd, with his son Francis, and Messrs. Bosworth and Cross, formed a party, and, attended by guides and porters, reached the Grands Mulets rocks, where they rested for some hours before starting for the summit. Sir Thomas, however, was compelled to return after having reached the spot where S—— was taken ill (*vide* page 35). The start at midnight, and the cause of his return, is thus described by his own pen:

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"I slept till the guides roused me at ten minutes before twelve from deep and sweet slumber. There was no moonlight—the only elemental felicity wanting to our enterprise—but the stars and snow relieved the darkness, which was also broken by numerous lanterns, which were already lighted, and shone among the bristling cornices of the rock below me like huge dull glow-worms. After the first sensation of cold and stiffness had subsided, and the mistiness that hangs over the perception of a suddenly-awakened sleeper in a strange place had dispersed, I took my pole, and picked my way down the rock, my steps being lighted by Julien's lantern, and soon found myself in the midst of the long procession of travellers and guides, slowly pacing the plain of snow which lies between the rock and the first upward slope. When we began to ascend, the snow was found so hard and so steep, that we were obliged to pause every ten paces, while the guides with hatchets cut steps. Every one, I believe, performs some part well; at least, few are without grace or power, which they are found to possess in a peculiar degree, if the proper occasion occurs to rouse it into action; and I performed the stopping part admirably. While we stood still I felt as if able to go on; and it is possible that if the progress had always been as difficult, and consequently as slow and as replete with stoppages, I might eventually have reached the summit—unless first

frozen. But unluckily for me, these occasions of halting soon ceased; for the snow became so loose, as to present no obstacle excepting the necessity of sinking to the knees at every step. The line of march lay up long slopes of snow; nothing could ever be discovered but a waste of snow ascending in a steep inclination before us; no crevice gave us pause; there was nothing to vary the toil or the pain except that as fatigue crept on, and nature began to discriminate between the stronger and the weaker, our line was no longer continuous, but broken into parties, which, of course, rendered the position of the hindermost more dispiriting. The rarity of the atmosphere now began to affect us; and as the disorder resulting from this cause was more impartial than the distribution of muscular activity, our condition was, for a short time, almost equalized; even Mr. Bosworth felt violent nausea and headache; while I only felt, in addition to the distress of increasing weakness, the taste or scent of blood in the mouth, as if it were about to burst from the nostrils. We thus reached the Grand Plateau—a long field of snow in the bosom of the highest pinnacles of the mountain—which, being nearly level, was much less distressing to traverse than the previous slopes; but just before the commencement of the next ascent, which rose in a vast dim curve, the immediate occasion of my failure occurred. Mr. Bosworth, who was in advance, turned back to inform me that my son was so much affected by the elevation, that his guides thought it necessary that he should return. We halted till we were joined by him and his guides, on two of whom he was leaning, and who explained that he was sick and faint, and wished to lie down for a few minutes, to which they would not consent, as, if he should fall asleep on the snow, he might never awake. The youth himself was anxious to proceed—quite satisfied, if he might only rest for a very little time, he could go on—but they shook their heads; and as their interests and wishes were strongly engaged for our success, I felt it was impossible to trifle with such a decision. I could not allow him to return without me; and therefore determined at once to abandon the further prosecution of the adventure; a determination which I should not else have formed *at that moment*, but which I believe I must have adopted soon from mere prostration of strength; and which, therefore, I do not lay in the least to the charge of his indisposition. He was still light of limb, and courageous in heart; only afflicted by the treachery of the stomach, and dizziness produced by the rarity of the air; whereas, if I had been supported and dragged (as perhaps I might have been) to the foot of the steep La Côte, which is the last difficulty of the ascent, I do not believe I should have had muscular pliancy left to raise a foot up a step of the long staircase, which the guides are obliged to cut in the frozen snow. While the guides were re-arranging matters for the descent, I took one longing, lingering glance at the upward scenery, and perceived sublime indications of those heights I was never to climb."

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**1851.**—In the month of August, Albert Smith made an ascent, which was rendered famous by the graphic account he gave of his adventures, during a period of several years, at the Egyptian Hall, in London. He was accompanied by three English gentlemen, and attended by no less than fifteen guides, as well as a small army of porters, who were employed to carry the provisions, wrappers, rugs, &c., as far as the Glacier des Bossons.

The party started from Chamonix at half-past seven in the morning, and reached the Grands Mulets at four in the afternoon. Shortly after midnight they resumed their journey, and having traversed the Grand Plateau they took the Corridor route, and arrived at their destination at nine in the morning. During the latter part of the ascent, Albert Smith seems to have been in a state bordering on delirium:

"With the perfect knowledge of where I was, and what I was about—even with such caution as was required to place my feet on particular places in the snow—I conjured up such a set of absurd and improbable phantoms about me, that the most spirit-ridden intruder upon a Mayday festival on the Hartz Mountains was never more beleaguered. I am not sufficiently versed in the finer theories of the psychology of sleep, to know if such a state might be; but I believe for the greater part of this bewildering period I was fast asleep with my eyes open, and through them the wandering brain received external impressions; in the same manner, as upon awaking, the phantasms of our dreams are sometimes carried on, and connected with objects about the chamber. It is very difficult to explain the odd state in which I was, so to speak, entangled. A great many people I knew in London were accompanying me, and calling after me, as the stones did after Prince Pervis, in the Arabian Nights. Then there was some terribly elaborate affair that I could not settle, about two bedsteads, the whole blame of which transaction, whatever it was, lay on my shoulders; and then a literary friend came up, and told me he was sorry we could not pass over his ground on our way to the summit, but that the King of Prussia had forbidden it. Everything was as foolish and unconnected as this, but it worried me painfully; and my senses were under such little control, and I reeled and staggered about so, that when we had crossed the snow prairie, and arrived at the foot of an almost perpendicular wall of ice, four or five hundred feet high—the terrible Mur de la Côte—up which we had to climb, I sat down again on the snow, and told Tairraz that I would not go any further, but they might leave me there if they pleased."

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Having stayed on the summit for half an hour, they retraced their steps, reaching the Grands Mulets at one o'clock, and Chamonix in the evening.

One of the most remarkable things in connection with this memorable ascent was the vast quantity of liquids and solids consumed, viz:—

93 Bottles of wine,  
3 Cognac,  
7 Lemonade and syrup,  
20 Loaves,

10 Cheeses,  
8 Joints of mutton,  
6 " veal,  
46 Fowls;

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besides packages of raisins, prunes, sugar, salt, and wax candles! The cost of this amounted to 456 francs, which, added to 1881 francs for the guides' fees, &c., brought up the sum total to 2337 francs, or £93 10s., which sum, divided by four—the number of tourists—gives £23. 7s. 6d. each. Thanks to the enterprising individual who manages the "Cabanes" at Pierre Pointue and the Grands Mulets, it is no longer necessary to take provisions; therefore, reader, should you ever visit those stations, do not grumble at the bill, but remember Albert Smith!<sup>[A]</sup>

[A] This and the foregoing ascents are condensed from Albert Smith's "Mont Blanc."

**1866.**—Sir George Young, with his brothers James and Albert, succeeded in reaching the Summit without guides or porters. Shortly after commencing the descent one of the brothers fell a depth of twenty feet and broke his neck. The survivors managed to reach the Grands Mulets at two in the morning. An hour later six guides arrived from Chamonix, and although Sir George had been on foot twenty-four hours he placed himself at the head of these men to recover his brother's body. In the meanwhile another party had come up, but they did not proceed further than the Grands Mulets. Early in the afternoon six of these guides went forward to render what assistance they could; and at five three more followed, carrying refreshments with them. At half-past seven the whole party returned, bringing the corpse with them. Sir George at once went down to Chamonix, which he reached about three in the morning, having been on foot for two days and two nights!

**1870.**—One of the most disastrous events, and which resulted in the loss of no less than eleven lives, occurred during this year. On the 5th September, Messrs. Randall, Bean, and Corkindale, accompanied by three guides and five porters, spent the night in the "Cabane" on the Grands Mulets, and next morning resumed their journey. All seems to have gone on well till they began to descend from the Summit, which they had reached at half-past two in the afternoon. About that time a cloud enveloped the highest parts of the mountain and obscured their movements. At ten o'clock the man in charge of the "Cabane," feeling uneasy at their not having arrived, sent to Chamonix for assistance. In the meanwhile a violent storm had set in, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the relief party managed to get to the Grands Mulets; and there they were forced to remain a whole week, during which time the storm raged with unabated fury. At last the weather cleared, and they went forward. On nearing the Summit they came upon five bodies, and a little further on upon five more; the eleventh could not be discovered. The poor fellows, being unable to find their way, had died of starvation and exposure. This, I believe, is the last fatal accident that has taken place on Mont Blanc.

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Although the misfortunes related in the foregoing are somewhat numerous, they are not large when compared with the number of individuals who have successfully gained the Summit, and which must have amounted to about 8,000; and do not, probably, exceed the proportion of sporting accidents, if all those who have visited the Grands Mulets, and even higher elevations, are taken into consideration.



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## ROUTES TO CHAMONIX.

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The valley, as before stated, lies in an easterly and westerly direction; and as there are no cross country roads, it follows that there are only two ways of reaching it.

### ROUTE A.

From Lausanne you may take the train direct to Martigny; or go by steamer from Ouchy to Villeneuve, then by rail to Martigny, and thence by private conveyance viâ Forclaz and the Tête

Noire.

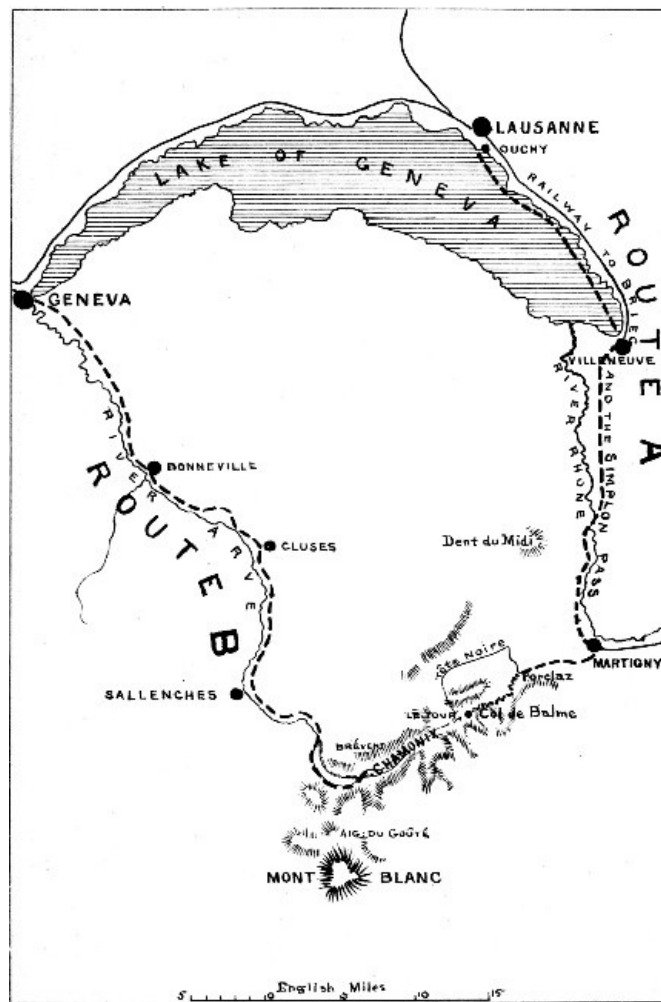
At Forclaz you may proceed on foot and walk over the Col de Balme, giving directions to your driver to meet you at Le Tour on the other side.

We started from Ouchy—a small village near Lausanne—at mid-day, and steamed along the northern shore of the lake, touching at several stations, and passing close to the celebrated Castle of Chillon. At half-past one we landed at Villeneuve, where we had to wait for about an hour for the train, and then proceeded on our journey up the Valley of the Rhone. The scenery is very fine, gigantic mountains rising up on either side, so close and so lofty that their summits can only be seen under difficulties from the railway carriage. There are waterfalls in abundance, and the grey-coloured Rhone roars and bounds along the line of railway on its course to the Lake of Geneva. We arrived at Martigny at half-past four, and ordered a carriage from the hotel (Clerc) for the following morning. This we were obliged to do, as there are no diligences or public conveyances of any description to Chamonix. Having decided upon walking over the Col de Balme, we made arrangements to leave at four in the morning. The weather being excessively hot, we deemed it advisable to start at this early hour in order to reach Forclaz before the great mid-day heat. This arrangement, however, did not meet with the approval of the hotel authorities, who did their best to persuade us to delay our departure till six or seven o'clock, so that breakfast might be included in the bill! This little secret was let out by our driver on the way, and he wound up by saying, "I received a good blowing up for not having got you to do as they wished!" Punctually at four we were all ready for a start; and the luggage having been secured at the back of a liliputian carriage, drawn by a pair of horses, we set off.

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After clearing the village the gradient becomes very steep, and there is no proper road for a considerable portion of the way, but simply a track which winds up the pass, amongst walnut and other trees, the fragrance from which, at that early hour of the day, was very agreeable. We made comparatively little use of the conveyance, but preferred to take short cuts; and, whilst waiting for it to come up, to sketch or merely admire the view as the fancy took us. At half-past eight we reached the little wayside inn on the Col de Forclaz (5,000 feet above the sea). Here we breakfasted, and exchanged our carriage for one that had just conveyed a party from Chamonix. This is an arrangement that is commonly made for the convenience of the coachmen. At about half-past nine we set off on foot for the Col de Balme, having first given directions to our new man to meet us at Le Tour at two o'clock. Having descended the western slope of the hill, we reached a valley and crossed the torrent issuing from the extremity of the Glacier du Trient, and immediately began to ascend the eastern side of the mountain. The zig-zag paths were well shaded by pine trees for a considerable distance, but in spite of this we found it very hot work. The fact is we were utterly ignorant of the first principles of mountain climbing, and walked too quickly. The consequence was that we were fagged at the expiration of the second hour. There is no greater mistake than to move rapidly on such expeditions, for by so doing one's heart, lungs, and muscles, are unduly taxed, and when lofty ascents are being made, such action would be fatal to the undertaking; for, *if once the legs fail*—as a guide remarked to me when conversing with him on the subject—it is useless attempting to go on. You may rest for a while, and feel recruited, but the effect will not last, and a few minutes after resuming the journey a painful sensation will be experienced in the muscles of the legs, which will necessitate another and perhaps a longer halt; and finally you will have to give in, and return home. Fortunately for us, there were only a few hundreds of feet to be mounted when the pace began to tell, or we might have been put to serious inconvenience.





At about eleven o'clock we had left the last tree behind, and continuing our upward journey, the only vegetation to be seen consisted of small plants—the pretty Alpine rose, a species of rhododendron, and turf. Further on we came to large patches of snow, on reaching which there was a marked diminution in the temperature, although the sun was shining brightly and the air was calm. Nearing the summit, we passed a rude hut, inhabited by two or three men, whose occupation is to look after a herd of cows, the tinkling of whose bells was the only sound to be heard in that wild place. As the snow gradually disappears from the mountain side, the cows are driven higher and higher, until the last available blade of grass has been reached; and the milk, which could not be otherwise used, by reason of the distance from the towns and villages, is converted into cheese. Having interchanged a few words with the occupiers of this lonely, though beautifully-situated dwelling, we passed on. Threading our way between patches of snow, we reached the summit of the Col (7,212 feet) at noon. The sight which now presented itself was inexpressibly grand, and no adequate idea of it can be conveyed by pen or pencil.

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Mont Blanc, the "Monarch of Mountains," with his girdle of ice and his diadem of snow, rising thousands of feet above the valley of Chamonix, was *the* feature of the scene, and he looked every inch a king, surrounded by his subjects, in the form of graceful aiguilles and lofty peaks! Before quitting this spot (where, by the way, we were able to procure luncheon), I may remark that Mont Blanc, to be appreciated, must be seen from this or some equally advantageous point of view—if such there be—at a high elevation.

The descent on the west side was easy, and was soon accomplished. We found the carriage waiting for us at Le Tour, and at four o'clock were set down at the Hotel d'Angleterre.

### ROUTE B.

From Geneva viâ Bonneville, Cluses, and Sallenches. There is no necessity for hiring a private carriage, as there is a regular service of diligences the whole way. If possible, secure a top front seat, and if that cannot be done, take the conductor's place; he will readily give it up for a few francs. You must, however, be prepared to work the brake going down hill. Between Geneva and Bonneville the immediate scenery is not very interesting, and in dry weather this portion of the road is exceptionally dusty. Hence, to Chamonix, the mountains grow in size, and tremendous precipices of perpendicular rock, with cascades pouring down, are to be seen within a short distance of the road. The view of Mont Blanc from Sallenches is said to be very fine, but unfortunately the upper portion of the mountain was enveloped in clouds when we were there, so I cannot speak from experience. The time occupied in performing the whole journey of forty-nine miles is about nine hours.



\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AN IMPROMPTU ASCENT OF MONT BLANC  
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