

ILLUSTRATED EUROPE



VALAIS AND CHAMOUNIX.

Vol. I.

FROM THE

FURKA TO BRIG.

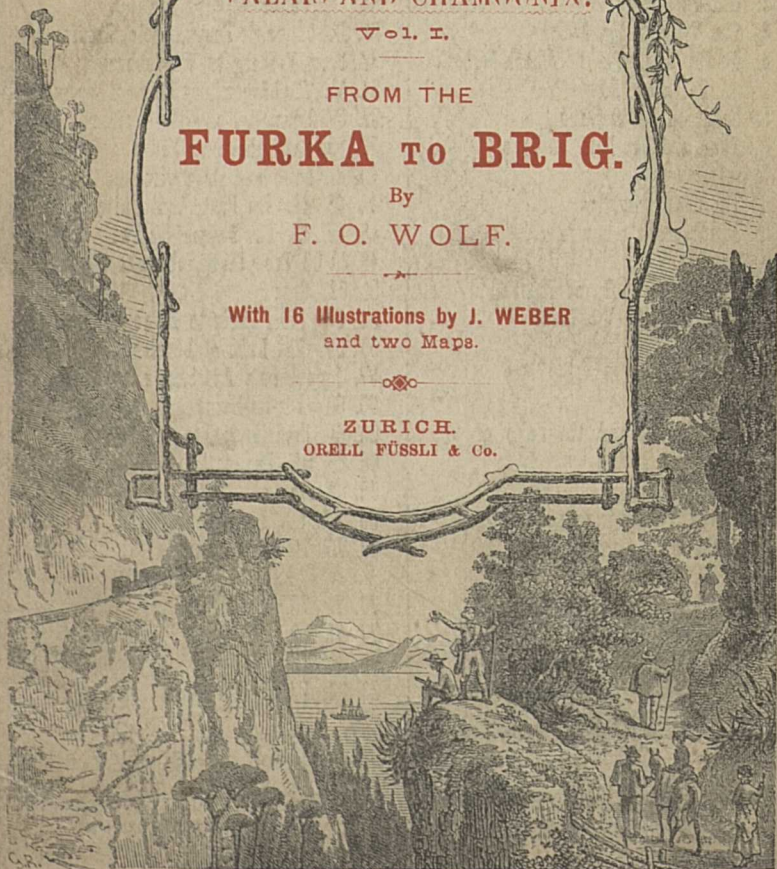
By

F. O. WOLF.

With 16 Illustrations by J. WEBER
and two Maps.



ZURICH.
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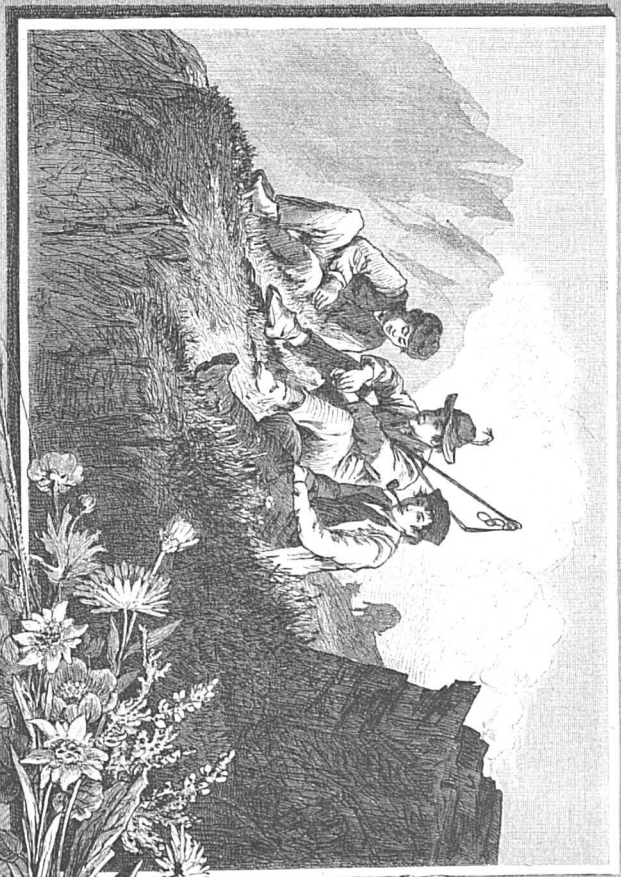
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C. A. S.

W. W. W. W.
1894



On the Mountain.



W. W. W. W.

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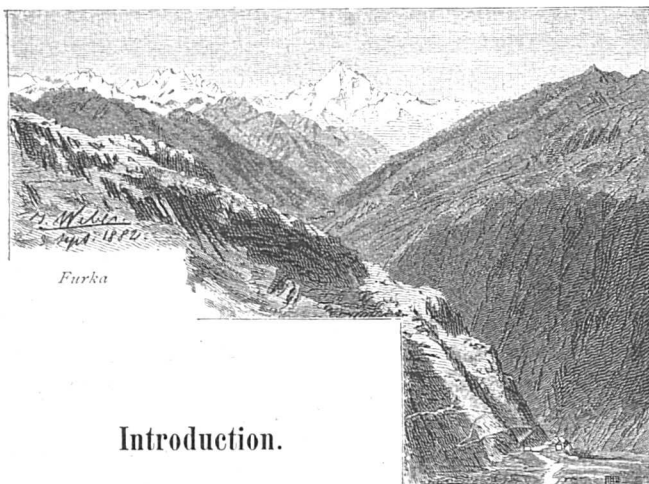
C.P. 161

CONTENTS.

	Page
Introduction	3
Furka and Rhone Glacier	8
Ulrichen and Ober Goms	16
Fiesch and its Environs	22
Eggishorn and Aletsch Glacier	40
Riederalp and Bellalp	51



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Introduction.

THE canton of Valais (*German Wallis*), which since 1815 has ranked twentieth among the states of the Swiss Confederation, comprises the upper basin of the River Rhone, extending from the Furka Pass to the Lake of Geneva, and is enclosed by two vast mountain-ranges.

Although the canton embraces an area of nearly 2000 square miles, its population scarcely numbers 100,000; for nine-tenths of the surface is either buried beneath snowfields and glaciers, or is uninhabitable owing to its rugged and inhospitable character, being in part exposed to the frequent ravages of mountain-torrents, in part occupied by wild and romantic ravines and glens, or by extensive forests, many of which have never felt the woodman's axe. A small portion only of the entire area is available for tillage, for the growth of fruit and wine, or for grazing purposes.

From the mild and fertile shores of Lake Lemman the canton of Valais extends up to the most elevated district of the European continent, where, at no great distance from the St. Gothard, the River Rhone, then merely a muddy brook,

issues from ice-filled ravines. To this diversity of surfaces appertain also corresponding differences in the climate, the natural products, and the character of the inhabitants of the various districts of Valais.

While on the high mountains perpetual winter prevails, the level valley between Leuk and Martigny enjoys extremely pleasant climatic advantages, which compare well with those of any other part of Switzerland. Every possible gradation between these two extremes may be passed through during the height of summer in a single day: at the bottom of the valleys a tropical heat reigns, in which grapes and almonds ripen; while on the mountain heights an arctic cold prevails, with icy winds sweeping over fields of never-melting snow.

The vegetation of canton Valais is extremely rich and varied; it includes nine-tenths of the entire number of species found in Switzerland, which is chiefly the result of very remarkable climatic conditions. For as a general rule this lovely land is blessed with a cloudless sky of deepest blue; the winter is mild, and the rainy season usually ends in May. Then, for months together, until far into autumn, an almost uninterrupted drought prevails, and is often so excessive as to prevent the formation of dew; there is scarcely a perceptible difference between the temperature of the day and that of the night; and sometimes during many weeks the thermometer remains stationary at 95^o Fahrenheit. This long-continued warm rainless period, during which the growth of vegetation is further promoted by the increased insolation due to the cloudless sky, is the cause of the peculiarities in the flora of this Alpine valley.

A fiery wine, resembling in flavour the sweet vintages of Hungary and Spain, is produced by the vineyards which extend throughout the valley of the Rhone up to a height which may well appear incredible to the wine-growers of other countries, viz. 3100 feet (not far from Visper-Terminen).

Wild almond-trees, pomegranates, figs, a cactus (*Opuntia vulgaris*), and about sixty other species of southern plants

which are absent from the flora of the remainder of Switzerland here reach their northern limit, while in Findelen, above Zermatt, the culture of rye is carried on at the prodigious height of 6300 feet, on the slopes where larches and alpen-roses flourish, and on the very verge of the Alpine pastures. Even the southern mountains of Italy, France, and Spain seldom attain similar maxima, and only the Sierra Nevada in the south of Spain can exhibit figures exceeding these. Especially rich in beautiful species is the Alpine flora of Valais; it includes many rarities which will be sought for in vain in other lands, and quite a number which here reach their extreme eastern or southern limit.

The interior strata of the mountains yield to the indefatigable researches of the miners various kinds of ore, such as gold, silver, nickel, copper, lead, and iron; also anthracite and coal; and to the architect the canton affords, besides numerous excellent varieties of building-stone, fine qualities of marble, fire-stones, limestone, and gypsum.

The mountains, fields, and forests are the haunts of chamois, marmots, eagles, and various other species of wild animals and birds that fall a prey to the bold hunter, while every summer the Alpine pastures afford grazing to numerous herds of cattle, from the milk of which large quantities of cheese are prepared.

Hunting and fishing, and to a greater extent cattle-breeding, agriculture, and wine-growing, form the principal occupations of the inhabitants of Valais; a considerable revenue is also derived from the numerous invalids from all countries who resort year by year to the celebrated watering-places of Leuk, Saxon, and Morgins.

The history of Valais is as remarkable as its scenery is magnificent. The canton has been the theatre of many important and effective political movements. Up to the middle of the fifth century of our era the territory was under the dominion of the Romans; from them it passed under Burgundian, next, in the eighth century, under Frankish, and in the elev-

enth century under German rule. During this period numerous struggles with the Lombards, the Saracens, and the Hungarians are recorded. At a later date the arbitrary exercise of authority by the nobles led to a series of sanguinary wars, which came to an end only when the liberty-loving people of Valais had shaken off every yoke. Between the years 1520 and 1610 the Reformation gave rise to bitter civil dissensions, and it was at this period that Valais entered the league of the Swiss Confederates. After a century and a half of tranquillity came the stupendous convulsions of the French Revolution, when Valais was incorporated, first, in 1798, in the Helvetic Republic, and afterwards, at its dissolution, in the French Empire under the name of "Département du Simplon." After the final overthrow of Napoleon, in 1815, Valais again joined the Swiss Confederation.

In 1846 Valais joined other Roman Catholic Cantons in the famous "Sonderbund," a league to support education by the Jesuits, but after involving its adherents in Civil War the movement was suppressed, and the Jesuits were expelled in the following year.

At the present day Valais has a representative constitution, and is divided into thirteen districts, called "Zehnden" in German, comprising 166 communes. The legislative authority is exercised by the Great Council, whose members are elected directly by the people, while the executive and administrative functions devolve upon the Council of State, consisting of five members nominated by the Great Council. In addition to its administrative authorities every commune has its judge, and every district its civil, correctional, and criminal court, and there is one court of appeal for the entire canton. Valais sends five deputies to the Swiss National Council and two to the Senate.

Let us then take staff in hand and set out on our wanderings through this lovely territory! Here we will stop to admire its beauties of scenery, yonder to contemplate with awe the devastations wrought by uncontrollable natural forces; in this

spot we will listen to the old peasant women as they relate the tales and legends of the olden times, and in that we will seek to share the enthusiasm of the historian as he recounts to us the glorious deeds of heroes long since mouldered into dust.

Up then and away! For enchantingly beautiful and majestic are our alps and mountain-peaks when in summer the alpen-rose bushes are full of blossoms and when the air is redolent of the sweet scent of the violets, when the bells of the cattle join their melody to the alphorn of the herdsman, and when the rosy-cheeked daughters of the mountains "yodel" merrily as they bind together the fragrant grass that clothes the sunny slopes. Then it is indeed delightful and exhilarating to climb from rock to rock and from ridge to ridge till at last, wearied with his exertions, the traveller seeks a refreshing draught of milk at the hand of some smiling maiden in one of the châteaux.


But come once more when the "Grey Man" yonder on the Gären lets loose the piercing wintry blasts, when "s'Chile-Dach" and "s'Herre Huus" assume their white caps, when all the roads are choked with snow, and when with thunderous crash the avalanche rushes down into the valley, spreading terror far and wide—at such a time the wild grandeur of the Rhone Valley is revealed to you, and you will pass a tolerant judgment upon the people and their ways.

The dwellers among these mountains and valleys must needs be a hardy race not to lose courage in the midst of these awful wildernesses; faith and confidence in God are needed, in order to persevere under such heavy toil and amid so manifold cares and anxieties.





Furka and Rhone Glacier.

NE road only leads throughout the year into the canton of Valais, namely that from the Lake of Geneva along the Rhone, through the defile near St. Maurice, across a boldly-placed bridge, which up to about fifty years ago was closed each night by a gate. On every other side the canton is encircled by stupendous mountains, which, although paths have in many places led over them from very ancient times, can only be crossed without danger during the summer season. The best-known mountain-passes, those leading southwards into Italy, are the Nufenen and Gries Passes in the Eginenthal, the Albrun, Geisspfad, and Ritter Passes in the Binnenthal; in the Saasthal the Antrona Pass and Monte Moro; near Zermatt the St. Théodule Pass, and in Lower Valais the oldest and most celebrated of all mountain-passes, the ancient road, improved already by Cæsar and Augustus, across the Great St. Bernard. Towards the north and west the interior of Switzerland is reached by the Grimsel, Lötschen Pass, and Gemmi, as well as by the Rawyl, Sanetsch, and Cheville Passes.

The great physiologist Haller, who lived in the eighteenth century, could say with truth in his day that no wheel had ever passed over the Alps; and it was reserved for our century to construct wonderful artificial roads over the crests of the mountains,—stupendous undertakings which are perhaps doomed to fall speedily into forgetfulness, since they are now

superseded by the tunnels which afford an easy passage for the iron horse through the very heart of the Alps. Its first mountain highway, that leading across the Simplon, Valais owed to the subduer of nations, Napoleon*. In the middle of the present century the cantonal authorities built the road



Grimsel.

from Monthey through the watering-place of Morgins to the Val d'Abondance, and afterwards that from Martigny to Chamounix, while ten or fifteen years later the federal and

* Napoleon constructed the road from Italy to Switzerland across the Simplon in 1801—7, employing from thirty to forty thousand men. It winds up passes, crosses cataracts, and passes by galleries through solid rock, and has eight principal bridges.

cantonal authorities together constructed the military road over the Furka at an expense of more than £24,000, thereby connecting Valais with Uri, and the interior of Switzerland with the west.

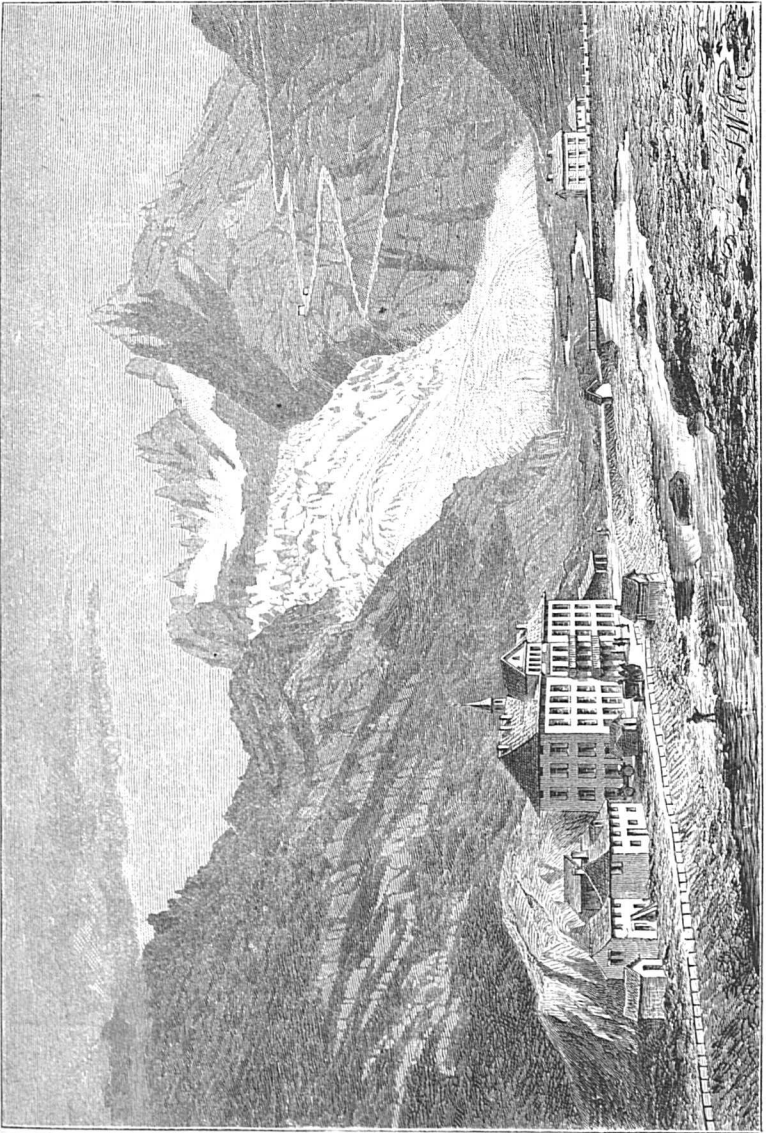
From Andermatt in the Valley of Urseren the diligence conveys passengers daily in four hours to the summit of the Furka Pass, and thence in one hour and a half down to the Hotel Gletsch at the foot of the Rhone Glacier. The Furka (8092') is the highest pass in Switzerland available for wheeled carriages, and next to the Stelvio (9232') the highest in all Europe. At the same time it forms one of the finest carriage routes in Switzerland.

Let us leave behind us the barren, treeless Urserenthal, and turn our faces towards the setting sun, to feast our eyes upon the incomparable prospect of the magnificent Alps of Berne and Valais, with their dazzling snowfields and towering summits, and upon the Valley of the Rhone, which lies before us shrouded in a thin veil of vapour. In the midst rises the imposing Finsteraarhorn, encircled by the Oberaarhorn, the Sidelhorn, the Grindelwald Fiescherhörner, and the Eiger; in the far distance, but still quite conspicuous, are the Weissmies, the Mischabel group, and the glittering Weisshorn, and in the depths, scarcely discernible—a thread of silver traversing the verdant valley—the wild and swift-flowing Rhone.

But not for long can we tarry on these bleak heights; the glaciers offer us attractions which it is impossible to resist. Passing the Galenhütten, we hurry down to the third bend of the road and soon find ourselves at the newly-erected, comfortable Hôtel Belvédère*. The Rhone Glacier with all its splendours, with all its marvels, lies at our feet.

“Ex æternæ noctis caligine”—from the darkness of eternal night—said ancient writers, Rhodanus issues forth. For us the mountains have lost their terrors, and each year sees thousands of tourists flock with eagerness to this once dreaded

* Particularly well situated for the ascent of lofty peaks.



Gletsch and the Rhone Glacier.

and avoided spot. Glaciers appear to exercise a remarkable attraction upon the mind and heart of the men of modern days; the enigmas which formerly enshrouded their origin, their structure, their motion, and their ancient extent have now been solved, thanks to the labours of savants like Hugi, Venetz, Charpentier, Agassiz, Forbes, and Dollfus.

Venetz, an engineer of Valais, was the first who ventured to propound (in 1821) the bold and much-combated theory of the former greater extent of the Rhone Glacier. He succeeded in demonstrating that not only the entire canton of Valais, but a much larger district comprising the basin of the Lake of Geneva, and extending to the Jura, was anciently one sea of ice, which even passed the crests of the latter mountains and descended far into the plains of France. Through his investigations the science of geology as it then existed was shaken to its foundations,—and it was Perraudin, a simple herdsman from the valley of Bagnes who accompanied him on his mountain tours in the capacity of guide, to whose keen faculty of observation Venetz was indebted for this discovery.

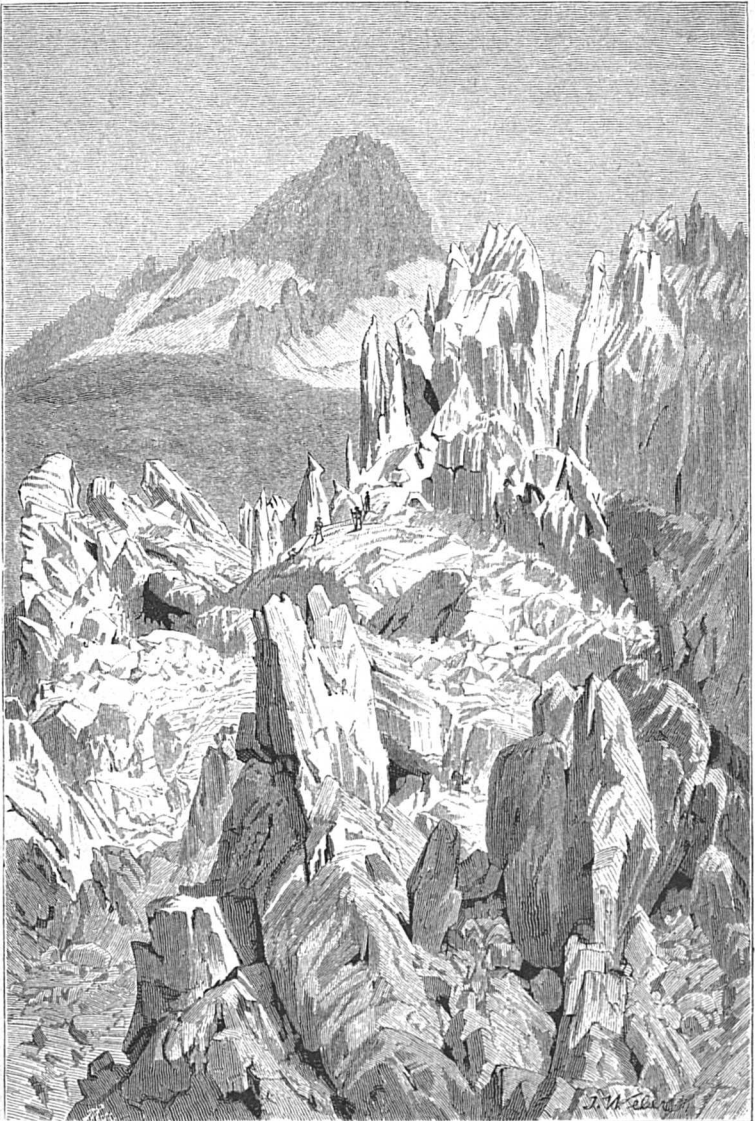
But let us extend our view across the Mayenwand, up to the Grimsel and as far as the Unteraar Glacier! Other recollections are now awakened in us, and we think with pride of those scientific investigators who, bidding defiance to the inclemencies of the weather, took up their quarters in the Hôtel Neuchâtelois in order to investigate the mysteries of the glaciers: here in the year 1827 we find the naturalist Hugi of Soleure, and from 1840 to 1844 Agassiz from Neuchâtel, and Forbes from Edinburgh. Their headquarters here have gained a lasting name in the annals of science, forming as they did a centre of attraction not only for the principal Swiss geologists, such as Desor, Vogt, B. Studer, Merian, Escher, Guyot, and others, but also for numerous savants from other countries who came hither either as fellow-workers or as spectators.

As at that time it was the Unteraar Glacier, so now it is the Rhone Glacier which is of absorbing interest for the student of science.

Under the auspices and at the expense of the Swiss Alpine Club, regular measurements and careful investigations are now being conducted here in order to fill one of the principal gaps in our present knowledge of glaciers, namely, to establish with every technical assistance, a *basis* which shall allow of ascertaining in the future with the greatest possible exactness, at least as regards one glacier, the variations which are constantly taking place in its dimensions, &c., and thus to facilitate as much as possible the work of future observers. The Rhone Glacier was selected for this purpose, first on account of its central position in Switzerland and the great simplicity of its form, lateral branches being absent; secondly in consequence of its easy accessibility, so important for the technical operations; and lastly, because it consists of three tolerably well distinguished parts, the Fan or Lower Glacier, the Ice Field, and the Upper Glacier, thus greatly facilitating the distribution of the work to be accomplished*.

We continue our way through a favourite haunt of the marmots, down to the turbid Muttbach, then along the Länggrat and so down to the lower end of the Rhone Glacier. Our botanical collecting-case and knife should be ready to hand; for the grassy slopes, and especially the last descent, are famous in botanical literature. We will content ourselves, however, with naming only the rarest of the Alpine plants found here, viz.,—*Achillea macrophylla*, *nana*, and *moschata*, also *A. asplenifolia* and *Valesiaca*, *Stellaria glacialis*, and *Tofieldia glacialis*. The flowery southern declivity of the Mayenwand also yields the botanist many interesting species, especially of the Hawkweed family (*Hieracium*); and near the Todten-See, up on the Grimsel, the extremely rare *Carex mirabilis*, *curvula*, and *Laggeri* are to be found.

* Further particulars will be found in the treatises by Prof. Rüttimeyer in the 16th, 17th, and 18th "Jahrbücher" of the Swiss Alpine Club.



On the Middle Rhone Glacier.

In the meantime we have arrived at Gletsch, and sit down to rest in the excellent Hôtel du Glacier du Rhône. It is midday. From the Furka and from the Valley of the Rhone diligences drive up, hungry and thirsty passengers rush into the house, and soon all the seats in the spacious dining-room are occupied. Horses are changed, drivers scold and vituperate, post-boys swear—in short, the uproar is almost deafening. For a few minutes we contemplate the busy scene, but are soon glad to hurry out into the pure, bracing Alpine air and turn our steps to the spot where the new-born Rhone issues from the gigantic icy womb of the glacier. Close by some speculator has excavated a long cavern in the ice,—beneath its blue and glittering roof we can meditate until quiet is restored in the hotel.

Gletsch is a favourite resort not only of scientists, but also of persons in need of repose, and of others bent on mountaineering exploits. Ascents of the surrounding summits, such as the *Galenstock*, *Nägelisgrätli*, *Furkahorn*, *Mutthorn*, *Längisgrat*, *Siedelhorn*, &c., long glacier tours, and the passage of difficult mountain-passes, are often undertaken from here*.

* For details see Tschudi's "Tourist in Switzerland".





Ulrichen and Ober Goms.

*"Lepontiorum qui Viberi vocantur,
Fontem Rhodani accolunt."*

Simler.

WE, however, must hasten down to the land of the ancient Viberi, to *Goms*, once the domain of the counts of Biel, and then known as *Gomesia*. The most easterly district of Canton Valais, it forms an Alpine valley 24 miles in length, rich in pastures and forests, but somewhat rugged. Potatoes, rye, and hemp, are cultivated, though on but a small scale, and fruit-trees thrive only in the lower part. Our road leads us through village after village of picturesque wooden houses, built of larch-wood in an antique style, and stained dark-brown by long exposure to all kinds of weather.

The winter up here is long and dreary, and however pleasant an abode the valley of Goms may be in the summer, during the cold season of the year it is quite the reverse; terrible is then the thunder of the avalanches as they sweep over the mountain-slopes and down the steep precipices.

Here dwell a free and unrestrained people of pure descent, whose character and language correspond in many respects to the rough and rugged but sublime scenery of the region they inhabit. Perhaps there is no other valley in Europe the potent influences of whose climate upon the physical and moral nature of its inhabitants can be so clearly demonstrated. Breathing a pure, bracing, and rarified mountain atmosphere, the people are of powerful build, and in their bearing as well

as in their German dialect,—which is akin to that of the primitive cantons of Switzerland and of the Tyrol,—a certain haughtiness and inflexibility are dominant.

Who would have supposed that these remote vales, so lonely, so secluded, and so uninviting, should once have echoed to the tread of martial hosts and formed the scene of desperate and deadly combats? And yet it was by these sturdy mountaineers that the foundation of the independence of Valais was laid.

The first village in the Goms is *Oberwald* (4½ miles from Gletsch) situate in the vicinity of a beautiful larch-forest. Opposite the village opens the first lateral branch of the Valley of the Rhone, the Gerenthal, formerly inhabited, and possessing up to the end of the last century its own jurisdiction, its magistrate, and—its gallows. Still earlier it was under the rule of the nobles of Arna; but at the present day it is completely deserted, though there is a rough road leading up to its mountain pastures, to the Geren Pass, and across to All' Acqua in the Val Bedretto.

Somewhat less than three miles further on, at the entrance to the Grimsel Road proper, lies *Obergesteln*, the oft-afflicted. At the time of the hostile invasions in 1211 and 1419 it was completely burned to the ground. At a later period, during the night of February 18th, 1720, an avalanche buried half the village together with its inhabitants, and the remaining houses were either swept away by the swollen waters of the Rhone, the bed of which was choked up by the masses of snow, or were destroyed by a fire that broke out amid the general confusion. The victims of this catastrophe were interred in one pit; an epitaph—terse and quaint enough—still indicating the mournful event, runs as follows:—

“Gott! welche grosse Klage: 88 in Einem Grabe!”

(“Lord! what a fearful doom: 88 in one tomb!”)

Lastly, on September 2, 1868, *Obergesteln* was again completely destroyed by fire within the space of four hours.

Thanks to charitable assistance from without, and to the indomitable courage of the villagers themselves, the houses have been again rebuilt, this time in stone, and in regular streets.

One mile below Obergesteln lies *Ulrichen*—"the cradle of the independence of Valais." Before reaching the village, at the entrance to the *Arzer Ravine*, we pass two plain wooden crosses standing by the road-side, and bearing inscriptions to the following effect:—

"Here the Duke of Zähringen lost a battle. 1211."

and

"Here the Bernese lost a battle. 1419."

Respecting the events thus in modest simplicity commemorated, history affords us the following information:—

At the commencement of the thirteenth century Count Thomas of Savoy and Duke Berchtold of Zähringen were waging war regarding the sovereignty over Valais. The Duke of Zähringen, the founder of the city of Berne, crossed the Grimsel with 13,000 men and set fire to the upper villages, but was so completely defeated at Ulrichen by the troops of Bishop Landerich of Valais, that he never after dared to set foot in the Goms. In the following year his forces were in a like manner overthrown at Mund, and thenceforth Valais enjoyed immunity from his attacks for ever.

Two centuries later William IV. of Raron, was Bishop and Count of Valais, and his uncle Widschard of Raron was invested with the highest temporal authority, that of Captain General of the province. This Widschard was an imperious, arrogant man, whose aim it was to deprive the people of Valais of their liberty. But when the enraged populace set up the "Mazza" (club or mace) in front of his castle, he fled in terror to Berne to solicit assistance. All at once, in the year 1419, the news arrived that Widschard was crossing the Grimsel at the head of a numerous body of troops raised in Berne, Fribourg, Soleure, and Schwytz. With loud cries the invaders rushed down the mountain path and burned Ober-

wald and Obergesteln. But Thomas Riedi-in-der-Bünden, a man of gigantic stature, attired in a bear's-skin and armed with a bar of metal composed of seven iron pikes welded together, collected the men of Ulrichen to the number of 200, and placed them in ambush in the Arzer Ravine together with a body of 400 troops from Münster led to his assistance by a young deacon named Minichove. From their place of concealment they rushed like an avalanche upon their enemies as they came marching on in disordered array, and gained a brilliant victory. The heroic Riedi was left dead on the field, but from his blood and that of his comrades rose the sun of liberty over Valais. The power of the nobles was shattered for ever, and the bell of St. Nicholas' Chapel in Ulrichen tolls to this very day its melancholy sounds over the battlefield:

“*Defunctos plango; tempestates fugabo.*”

Opposite to us opens the Eginenthal, at its entrance ravine-like but afterwards expanding and developing in rich forests and pastures. The botanist Dr. Lagger, a native of Ulrichen, made some of his most famous discoveries in this valley (*Hieracium Gombense*, *macilentum*, and *Laggeri*; *Achillea atrata* × *nana*, *A. atrata* × *moschata* and *A. macrophylla millefolium*; also *Adenostyles Eginensis*, *A. hybrida*, &c.). In former times, ere the great international roads over the Simplon and the St. Gothard were opened, a considerable traffic with Italy was carried on through this valley, for at its further extremity there are two much-frequented mountain-passes:—the *Nufenen Pass*, leading to the Val Bedretto, and the *Gries Pass*, conducting through the valleys of Formazza and Antigorio to Domo d'Ossola (16 hours).

Although the latter leads across the Gries Glacier it is yet the more frequented of the two; for, one hour and a half to the south of the summit of the pass, the road leads past the magnificent waterfall of the Tosa, which is second only in volume to the Falls of the Rhine at Schaffhausen. The impetuous torrent precipitates itself in headlong fury, in a series

of three connected cascades, over a smooth and slanting rocky wall; the rugged precipices on either side are covered with a dense growth of pine-trees, and a cloud of silvery spray rises high above the water. The traveller is glad to rest for a few hours in the small but excellently-conducted inn.

Before leaving Ulrichen we must mention that in the immediate neighbourhood there is a sulphur spring which has been employed medicinally by the natives from a very early period.

We now follow the cantonal road down the valley, and after passing the *Wylser-Kapelle*, where the *Trützhthal* opens to the north, and *Geschenen*, the birthplace of the excellent prelate Hildebrand Jost (1613-1638), we reach *Münster*, the chief place in the district of Goms, and the cradle of many an ancient family famous in the history of Valais, chief among them being that of Riedmatten, five of whose members attained to episcopal dignity.

The admirer of antique art should not omit to pay a visit to the church, with its carved altar; while the mountaineer will turn his steps to the romantic *Münsterthal*, situated to the north of the village, to scale the *Löffelhorn*, a celebrated point of view at the back of the valley. Especially charming is the prospect here afforded of the Oberaar Glacier, surrounded by the Rothhorn, Oberaarhorn, and Grünhorn, as well as of the entire mountain chain of the Lepontine and Pennine Alps.

About a mile and a half below Münster lies the beautiful village of *Reckingen*, with its handsome church. The Rhone is here reinforced by two tributaries, one coming from the *Blinnenthal* in the south, the other, which enters the main river near the little village of Biel, descending from the north, from the *Walli- or Bieliger-Thal*, at the back of which rise the *Galmihörner*. In the rear of the Blinnenthal is the *Blinnen Glacier*, overtopped by the *Mittaghorn*, *Strahlgrat*, and *Blinnenhorn*. The last-named peak is frequently ascended, and expert climbers then traverse the entire length of the Gries Glacier to the Gries-Pass road, descending from there to the Tosa

Fall. Another pass leads past the *Mittaghorn*, which commands a fine panorama, to Mühlebach in the Rappenthal, or by a somewhat circuitous route into the Binntal. These districts are much frequented by crystal-seekers (here called "*Strahler*").

Beyond *Reckingen* the country is more thickly populated: the villages of Gluringen, Ritzingen, Biel (where once stood the stronghold of the Counts of Goms), Selkingen, Blitzingen, Bodmen, and Niederwald follow in rapid succession. Traversing them all at a brisk pace we leave in the last of them the high-road leading down to Fiesch, and strike into a woodland path which brings us up to the pleasant village of *Bellwald*.

Bellwald enjoys the purest of air, and occupies a wonderful situation on the ridge separating the Valley of the Rhone from the Fiescherthal. Its inhabitants are famous for their strength, their tall stature, their intelligence, and their vivacity.

After having sufficiently admired the superb prospect presented by the Fiescherthal, the Aletsch Glacier, and the Valley of the Rhone as far as the Weisshorn, we resume our walk through the cool Twirgiwald down through Gibelegg to Fiesch.





Fiesch and its Environs.

LIKE Gletsch, *Fiesch* (or *Viesch*) is a rendezvous of tourists; for it is situated at the entrance to the glacier-valley of the same name, at the foot of the Eggishorn, and opposite the Binnthal, famed for its fabulous wealth in minerals. The Valley of the Rhone here widens considerably, and *Mühlebach*, *Aernen*, and *Lax* form a circle of villages standing in the midst of verdant meadows and partly hidden by fruit-trees. Immense forests clothe the base of the mountains, and their icy battlements cleaving the blue sky form a beautiful background to an enchanting picture.

The finest view in this magnificent district is obtainable from the bridge which leads, midway in the valley, over the Fiescherbach, or from a loftier standpoint near the newly-erected church.

A variety of longer or shorter excursions, as well as numerous extensive mountain-tours, can be undertaken from here, and for this reason, as well as on account of its pure air and delicious spring water, Fiesch has become a favourite summer resort. Visitors find excellent accommodation in the two hotels *Zum Fietschergletscher* and *Aux Alpes*. The former is connected by telephone with the new hotel at Binn.

Our first excursion, which scarcely occupies more than two hours, is the enjoyable walk through Fürgangen to *Mühlebach*, and thence to the trim village of *Aernen* or *Ernen*, beautifully situated in the midst of luxuriant grassy meadows. But it is not Aernen that we have come to see—though it be



View into the Fiescherthal.

the largest and best-built village in Goms—nor its old and venerable church, nor its shady larch-woods, nor even the commanding ridge of Binnegge*—no! We bend our steps to the tiniest cottage in the meanest of all the Alpine villages of

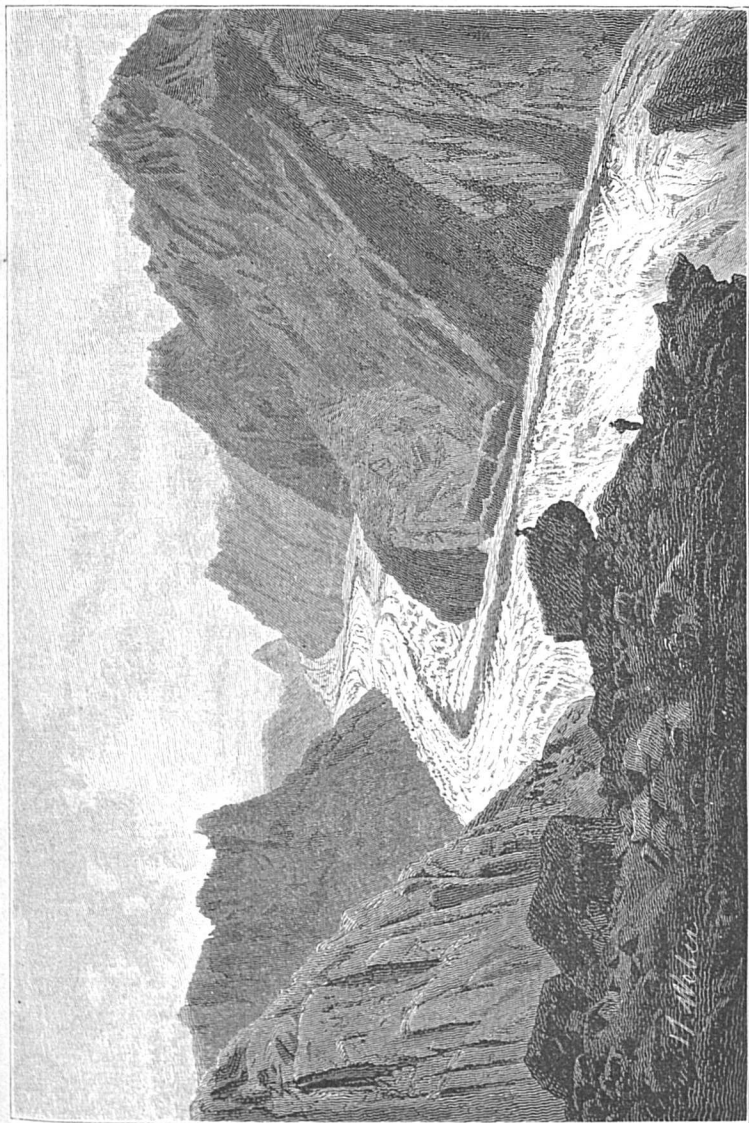
* Dividing the Valley of the Rhone from the Binntal. The summit may be reached from Aernen in two hours by a shady woodland path.

the Goms, to *Mühlebach*, the birthplace of the greatest and most renowned among the sons of Valais, one whose strong hand not only controlled the destinies of his native state, but whose powers of intellect were recognised and courted by pontiffs and monarchs.

It is with a feeling of reverence that we enter the weather-beaten, half-ruined cottage and the little dark room in which, in the year 1456, *Matthew Schinner* first saw the light. His parents were indigent to a degree, and young Matthew, whose thirst for knowledge was great, was forced, while pursuing his studies, to support himself by ballad-singing in the streets of Sion and Berne. But everywhere the intelligent boy found compassionate hearts and friends willing to aid him, and neither misfortune nor necessity, neither hunger nor misery, neither persecution nor contumely, could break his dauntless spirit. And thus it came to pass that the poor goat-herd rose to be one of the foremost men of his time. Having entered the church, he was appointed dean of Valeria in 1497, count and bishop of Sion, on December 20, 1499, and besides receiving a cardinal's hat he served both as papal nuncio and as imperial ambassador. He finally became the privy councillor of two emperors, and had he not made a determined enemy of France, he would doubtless have ascended the papal chair.

Our second excursion will be to the *Binnthal*.

While most of the lateral valleys of Valais diverge almost at right angles, north or south, from the Valley of the Rhone, the *Binnthal* (also called Binnenthal and Binnerthal) like its neighbour the *Rappenthal*, forms an exception to this rule. Commencing on the south-western declivity of the Ofenhorn, it runs almost due west for a distance of six miles, to beyond the village of Binn, where the Heilig-Kreuz Valley or *Längthal* opens; after this it contracts to a narrow, deeply-cut, rocky gorge, of a width sufficient only to give passage to the foaming waters, and then takes a north-westerly direction until it reaches the main valley.



The glacier of Fiesch.

Through this wild ravine lies our path, hewn boldly in the rocky walls at a dizzy height above the tumultuous Binnbach, whose furious and foaming waves thunder in our ears Gœthe's well-known song:

“Kennst du den Berg und seinen Wolkensteg?
Das Maulthier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg;
In Höhlen wohnt der Drachen wilde Brut,
Es stürzt der Fels und über ihn die Flut.”

Even when summer is far advanced, in this dark and shadowy gorge the remains of avalanche snow may still be seen, boldly arching the foaming mountain-torrent. What a scene must this gorge present in winter, when the winds are howling through the dreadful rocky chasm, and avalanches sweeping everything before them fall in thunder from the heights! For months together the inhabitants of Binn are then cut off from communication with the outer world, and one can understand why a certain priest whose lot it was to live in exile at that spot was accustomed to subjoin to his signature the words:—

“*Curatus Binnensis prope mundum.*”

Such are the characteristics of the Binntal; the way to reach it is as follows:—

After crossing the Rhone from *Fiesch* to Aernen we ascend through the forest to the Binnege (4511', with a chapel and a fine outlook). From here our path leads to the hamlet of *Ausserbinn*, with a view into the small lateral valley through which the *Riedbach* descends from the *Eggerhorn*, and then along the *Binna* or Binnbach, still ascending till we come to the Chapel of *St. Anna* with a view of the *Helsenhorn*, and in another hour and a half to the first village in the Binntal proper, called *Schmidigenhäuser* (Schmidhäusern).

The houses stand somewhat scattered on either side of the Binnbach; on the right bank is the newly-erected hotel “*Zum Ofenhorn*,” invitingly situated on an eminence at the upper end of the village, and commanding a view of the entire

valley. Opposite are the church and the parsonage-house. The former, as well as the two chapels near the bridge, are deserving a visit, for they contain some antiquities of exceptional beauty and considerable value: antependiums of Cordova leather, old German paintings and carvings (*Mater dolorosa*), and some fine specimens of the goldsmith's art (Early Gothic cross).

On this spot once stood the smelting furnaces in which the ores yielded by the mines in the *Feldbach* and on the *Helsen* were worked, and to this circumstance the village probably owes both its origin and its name. Since ancient times a pass has led from here across the *Albrun* (*Passo del l'Arbela*, 7877') for the conveyance of cattle and cheese* to Italy (in 8—9 hours to the Falls of the *Tosa* and to *Al Ponte*). This excursion is extremely interesting, especially so since from the summit of the pass the *Ofenhorn* (10,636' commanding a fine view) may be ascended easily and without danger in one hour. It is advisable, however, to take a guide.

Other interesting mountain-passes in this locality are also frequented by tourists, scientists, crystal-seekers, hunters, and smugglers. The *Geisspfad* (*Becca della Rossa*, 8120'), the *Kriegalp Pass* (*Passo della Cornera*, 8464'), and the *Ritter Pass* (*Bocca Reggio*, 8831'), also lead into Italy, and through the *Safnischthal* or over the *Remi* and *Steinen Glaciers* the *Simplon* may be reached. Several of the surrounding peaks, too, are frequently ascended, as for instance *Cherbadung* (10,557'), *Helsenhorn* (10,741'), *Bortelhorn* (10,482'), and others.

Among all these tours the *Safnischthal Pass* offers the greatest attractions. The way to it lies through the *Längthal*, till we come to the pilgrimage-church of *Heilig Kreuz*; then crossing the *Längthalbach* we ascend in a steep zigzag to the châteaux of *Rufbord* and *Stafelstatt*. The entire route, and especially the Upper *Safnischthal*, possesses a rich and varied

* The *Binnthal* possesses numerous fine Alpine pastures and large herds of cattle; the best and richest cheese of *Canton Valais* is made here.

flora, which annually attracts numerous botanists even from distant parts. It will suffice to mention a few of the principal rarities:—*Lychnis Flos-Jovis*; *Astragalus excapus*; *Herniaria alpina*; *Geranium aconitifolium*; *Aretia Vitalliana*; *Hieracium rheticum*, *speciosum*, *juratum*, *hispidum*, *Gaudini*, *Oxydon*, *lanatum* (*Laggeri*) &c., *Potentilla minima*, *P. frigida*; *Astragalus aristatus*, *Valeriana Saliunca*, *Carex membranacea*, &c.

The northern summit of the pass is overtopped by the *Bettlihorn* (9727'), which affords one of the finest and most celebrated views in all Valais. The Valley of the Rhone from the Furka to Martigny, with its villages and its various ramifications, lies at our feet, and around us spreads a vast ring of snow-capped mountain-peaks. Their names are legion; for not a single one of the more famous summits of the Alps of Berne and Valais, from the Galenstock to Mont Blanc, is wanting; and from distant regions, as for instance from Glarus, Grisons, Upper Italy, and the Dauphiné, still others nod to us a friendly greeting! With "Ekkehard" we may here exclaim:

"He who has caught the secret that dwells on breezy
"mountain-heights and opens and expands the heart of
"man and lifts it heavenward in the free flight of thought,
"him smiling compassion seizes as he thinks of those
"down yonder in the depths, laboriously assembling bricks
"and sand for new towers of Babel, and he joins in that
"shout of exultation which the herdsmen say is as accept-
"able to God as a paternoster."

From Binn to the summit of the mountain is a good five hours' walk, and the descent to *Berisal* (on the Simplon road) occupies another four hours.

Before we leave the Binnthal and return to Fiesch we must say something of the valley's mineral treasures, which have gained it celebrity throughout the scientific world. Probably no other valley in the Alps is so rich in rare minerals; certain varieties indeed occur nowhere else but here. They are chiefly found at *Ausserbinn*, *Bortelhorn*, *Cherbadung*, *Fleschen*,

Albrun, Feldbach, Geisspfad, Gibelthal, Kummen, &c., and especially in the dolomite beds in the *Längbach* near *Imfeld*.

The space allotted to us will not allow of our enumerating all the species; we refer the amateur to the publication of the Natural History Society of Valais "La Murithienne" (5. vol. 1875—1876), in which Mr. R. Ritz, a talented native artist, gives a complete catalogue of the minerals hitherto found in this valley and in the entire district of Goms, with the name of the locality in which they were found.

We can here append but a brief list of the best-known spots and of some of the most important minerals yielded by them.

Albrun. Rock crystal. Adularia. Cleavelandite. Muscovite. Chlorite. Talc. Hornblende. Garnet. Epidote. Pyrite. Bitter spar. Desmine in diorite. Chabasite on quartz crystals. Titanite. Azurite and malachite, as efflorescence on dolomite, with grey copper ore. Iron glance. Rutile in rock crystal. Anatase. Galenite. Cuprite.

Ausserbinn. Rock crystal. Talc in rauchwacke. Angite, with chlorite and feldspar on mica slate. Dolomite, gypsum, gypseous spath in alabaster. Limonite.

Bortelhorn. Angite, diopside in mica slate.

Cherbadung. Rock crystal, rauchquartz. Feldspar. Chlorite. Pennine. Talc. Serpentine. Antigorite (side towards Val Dev-
era). Muscovite. Radiolite. Hornblende. Diopside and angite. Diallage.

Feldbach. Rock crystal. Talc. Potstone. Epidote, titanite, and calc-spar in mica slate. Siderite. Magnetite. Iron glance. Limonite. Rutile.

Fleschen. Rock crystal. Muscovite. Chlorite. Pennine. Talc. Serpentine. Radiolite. Hornblende in large quantities in chlorite rock, and as hornblende rock. Amianthus in serpentine. Asbestos, diallage, garnet, almandine in amphibolite. Epidote. Anatase. Stilbite. Prehnite. Magnetite, &c.

Geisspfad. Rock crystal. Feldspar. Muscovite. Pennine between Geisspfad and Fleschen, in pennine rock, with radio-

lite, talc, &c. Steatite. Serpentine full of little crystals of magnetite. Picrolite. Radiolite. Byssolite, amianthus, and asbestos in serpentine. Rock-leather with magnetite. Rock-wood. Diallage. Yellow and green garnets in serpentine (between Geisspfad and Fleschen), &c.

Grenziols. In the gypsum deposits here the same minerals as in Ausserbinn.

Helsen. Muscovite. Radiolite. Feldspar. Epidote. Calc-spar. Magnetite. Brown iron-froth, iron glance, and limonite in the iron mine above the Kriegalpe. Azurite. Bornite.

Hängende Laub. (*Lercheltini*). Wiserin, titanite, magnetite, &c., in the mica slate and gneiss.

Kriegalpe. Rock crystal. Adularia and feldspar in gneiss. Hornblende, angite, and diopside in hornblende rock. Epidote and tourmaline in gneiss.

Kummen. (*Kummenthali in the Gichelthal*). Rock crystal. Amethyst. Feldspar. Muscovite. Talc. Anatase. Grey copper ore. Garnet. Brown iron-froth.

Mättithal (*in the Längthal, Heilig-Kreuz*). Rock crystal. Feldspar. Muscovite. Ripidolite. Talc. Tourmaline. Loadstone. Iron glance. — Adularia, cleavelandite, margarite on the Rämi Glacier, &c.

Turben. Rock crystal. Adularia. Phlogopite. Chlorite. Tourmaline. Rutile, &c. The richest deposits are in the celebrated dolomite bed in the Längbach, near Imfeld.

This "sugary dolomite" is snow-white and fine-grained, and appears principally on the lower boundary of the talc slate zone of Upper Valais, especially on its southern border. At the entrance to the Visperthal it accompanies the great masses of serpentine on both sides of the valley as dolomitic limestones; it is continued into the Nautzerthal, and after various interruptions appears again in the Nesselthal (Simplon). But in the background of the Gantherthal (Simplon), to the east of the Schallberg, true granular dolomite beds extend uninterruptedly across the pass, south of the Tunetschhorn and Bettlihorn, to the Jaffischthal and Binnenthal, and in

the latter up to the Hohsandhorn as well as in the other branches of the valley. But in this long stretch only the single spot above Imfeld, where the Längbach after its confluence with the Weissbach falls into the Binna, has as yet become famous for minerals; this celebrity it has enjoyed since the days of the learned monk of St. Bernard's, Mürith.

Some of these minerals are very rare, and several of them occur nowhere else.

Within a small space there accompany each other in druses or cavities, veins, and agglomerations of this dolomite: rock crystal, feldspar, *hyalophane* (here only), muscovite, talc, chlorite, grammatite, asbestos, common corundum, tourmaline, (red, yellow, green, and black), bitter-spar, baryta, barytocelestine (very rare), rutile, pyrite (crystalline and granular), sphalerite (magnificent yellow and brown crystals), orpiment, realgar. Lastly, found only here: *binnite* (*skleroclase*), *jordanite*, and *dufrenoyite*.

At present this dolomite bed is being carefully exploited by Messrs. Walpen Bros. of Imfeld.

While at *Fiesch* we must pay a visit to the glacier of the same name (see p. 24). The *Fiescherthal* opens towards the north; it is walled in and dominated by huge rocky pyramids which include some of the loftiest summits of the Alps. On the east side the mountain ramparts, beginning with the *Setzenhorn* (10,055'), rise constantly higher and higher in the *Wasenhorn* (11,948'), *Vorder- and Hinter-Galmihorn* (11,561' and 11,423'), *Oberaar-Rothhorn* (11,345'), *Oberaarhorn* (11,948') and the princely *Finsteraarhorn* (14,025'). Then follow in the north, the *Agassizhorn* (12,969'), the *Klein, Gross, and Hinter Fiescherhorn* (12,713', 13,280' and 13,189'), and towards the west, the *Kleine and Grosse Grünhorn* (12,883' and 13,277'), and the *Walliser Fiescher* and *Wannehörner*, all considerably over 10,000 feet. The altitudes now diminish rapidly, for the *Strahlhörner* attain an elevation of only 9954—10,105 feet, and the last mountain in the circle,

the much-frequented *Eggishorn*, measures no more than 9649 feet.

Within the last twenty or thirty years most of these mountains have been climbed, the passes between them crossed, and their glacier-labyrinths explored, but only by the expenditure of great exertion and fatigue, and after surmounting many dangers.

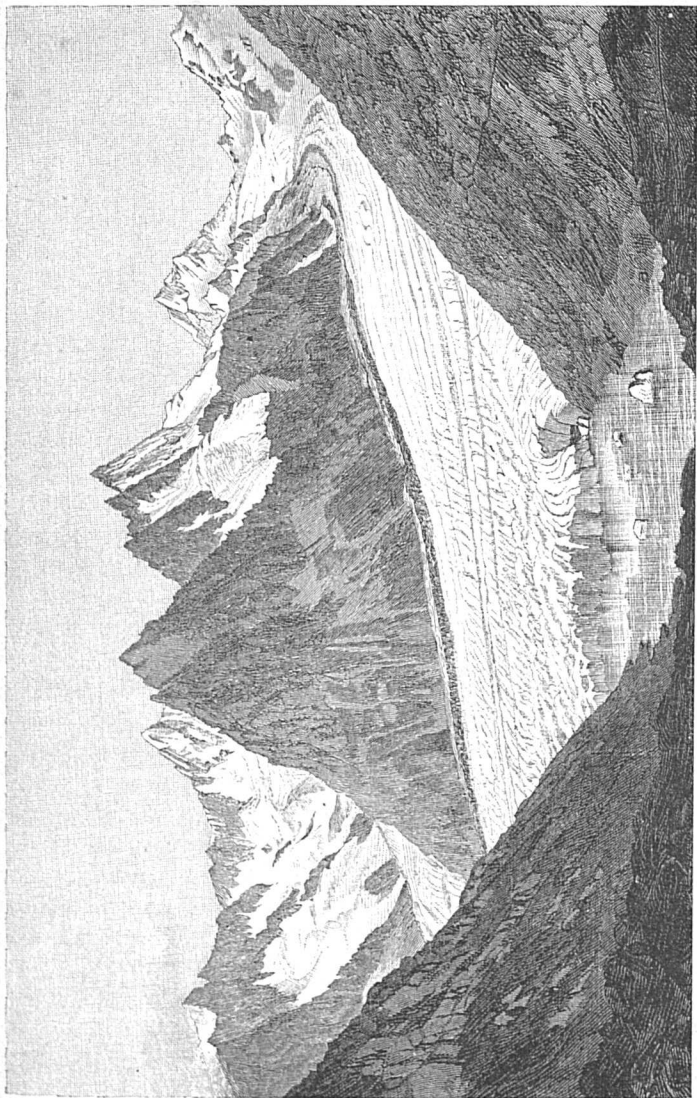
In Tschudi's guide-book, and more especially in the annual volumes published by the Swiss and other Alpine clubs, these various ascents and tours have been recorded and described. Lack of space forbids a detailed account of them here; but we have selected one glacier excursion, which traverses the entire district and affords a comprehensive view of its principal features,—the tour from Fiesch across the Oberaarjoch (10,623') to the Grimsel (about 14 hours).

But before we engage our guides and make our preparations for the journey let us cast back a glance to an age long past, and inquire into the state of these mountains and their glaciers more than three hundred years ago, when the storms of the Reformation were breaking in upon the inhabitants of quiet and secluded Goms, and giving rise to protracted dissensions among a people who remained for the most part faithful to their ancient creed. It is a matter of common observation that mountaineers are conservative, and not easily roused to enthusiasm for new ideas. Their heads are as hard as their native rocks, and they cling firmly to old beliefs and usages, especially when time has proved them to be good and useful. In Valais, the religious discord and persecutions lasted throughout the sixteenth century, until finally, on January 20, 1603, an assembly of the people in the Planta near *Sion* decided, by a majority of votes, to remain true to the old church. While hitherto the Protestants had been persecuted, they were now free to leave the canton with all their property and to seek a new home. Quite another course was pursued by the Protestant magnates of Berne with regard to the dwellers in their Alpine valleys; after 1528, the reformed doctrines were everywhere

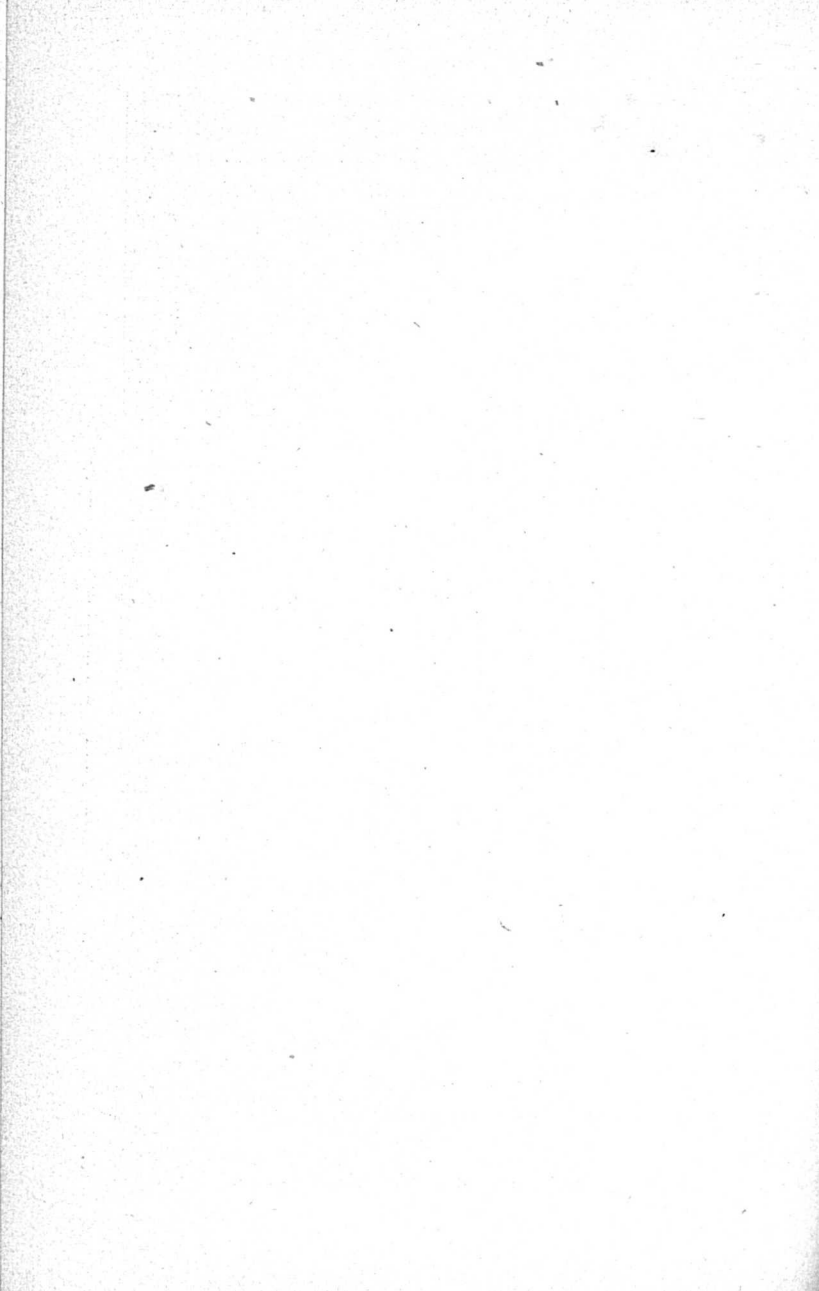
forcibly imposed upon the people. Thus it was in the valley of *Grindelwald*. To this day the well-authenticated tradition exists in both cantons that at that time a lively intercourse was carried on between the people of Valais and those of the Grindelwald. According to church records still extant, Protestants from Valais were in the habit of crossing the glacier to Grindelwald in order to attend public worship, to be married, or to have their children baptized, while on the other hand Catholics from Grindelwald were accustomed to make their way by the same route to Valais for similar purposes. Still earlier the people of Valais are said to have frequently crossed the mountains on pilgrimages to the Chapel of St. Petronilla on the Mettenberg, while from time to time invalid dwellers in the Grindelwald sought relief from their bodily ailments in the warm sulphur-baths of Fiesch. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century the site of the pilgrimage-chapel of St. Petronilla has been covered by the glacier, and at about the same period the baths of Fiesch were overwhelmed by a landslip.

But how was it possible to get from Goms to Grindelwald across the terrifically steep and lofty glacier, seeing that at the present day the easiest known passage—that across the *Mönchsloch*, is reckoned among the boldest exploits of the most enterprising mountaineers?

Old chronicles, tradition, and especially the yet existing remains of an ancient path, as well as the names still given to certain places, assist us to answer this question. From the first source we learn that in the year 1540 the Grindelwald Glaciers, owing to the prevalence of excessive heat and drought, had almost melted away, while in 1602 the same glaciers had reached the greatest extent recorded by history. At the former period it was easy for a person starting from *Fiesch* or *Naters* to reach the *Faulberg* by a route leading past the *Mörjelensee*, through the valley now occupied by the Aletsch Glacier, but which at that time was fertile pasture-land, and across the mountain pastures of *Rinderturren* and *Schön-*



The glacier of Aletsch and the lake of Mörjelen.



bühl. It was not until reaching the Faulberg at the spot that is now called the *Concordia-Platz*, that it was necessary to set foot on the glacier, and its ascent over the *Jungfraufern* or across the *Ewigschneefeld* was probably not more than 2000 feet. The descent on the further side must even at that time have been difficult, owing to its excessive steepness, but the rock-strewn slopes were then free from ice and presented far less difficulty than the present glacier wall. The upper valley of Fiesch, which is now occupied by a glacier, is also said to have afforded pasturage to numerous herds of cattle at the same period; up to within recent times a cheese bearing the date 1600 stamped upon it, and reported to have been made from the produce of the vanished pastures, was in the possession of the village authorities of Fiesch, and attracted considerable attention at an agricultural exhibition held at Sion.

As in the upper valley of Grindelwald, on the *Mettenberg*, so also here in the Fiescherthal, on the *Alp Ziteren*, there was a chapel in honour of St. Petronilla, the patron saint of Alpine pastures. The two chapels possessed bells of the same casting and the same tone, and their sound often guided safely home travellers who would otherwise have missed their way at night-time or in stormy weather. The bell of the Mettenberg chapel is still preserved in the Grindelwald; that of Ziteren was melted down long ago.

After this historical digression we will start on our excursion to the *Oberaarjoch*. The fourteen hours' walk is long and fatiguing, especially the ascent to the Ober Fiescher Glacier; it is therefore advisable to set out betimes in the morning. During the first three hours, as far as the lower terrace of the Mörjelenalp, it is pleasant walking, up a much-frequented mountain path. From here we follow the margin (usually free from snow) of the Unter Fiescher Glacier, skirting the base of the Walliser Fiescherhörner. The rugged walls of gneiss and granite are furrowed by ravines, and in their interior, especially where they are interspersed with veins of

white quartz, they abound in rare minerals*, and are therefore frequently visited by collectors. In the year 1757 a celebrated grotto of rock crystal was discovered here; it contained huge specimens, weighing from 500 to 1400 pounds. In 1799, the French carried off these together with many another of the canton's treasures, to Paris, and the two finest pyramidal crystals were paraded on the occasion of one of Napoleon's triumphal processions.

After an hour's hard walking we at length turn off on to the glacier, leap boldly over the numerous crevices, pass with due caution around the séracs (blocks of ice) that threaten to topple over, admire the numerous "glacier tables," and listen to the brooks, called "glacier mills," which are lost to sight in the azure depths—and linger wonderingly as though we were transported to another world! Onward again we go, constantly mounting, up to the base of the *Finsteraar-Rothhorn*, which we round on its north side at the point where an elongated wall of rock, the southern spur of the sky-cleaving *Finsteraarhorn*, rises before us. We leave on one side the *Rothloch Cabin*, formerly much resorted to, and scale the last ascent to the *Oberaarjoch*, a glittering wall of ice!

After our six hours' walk on the glacier we are well entitled to a good rest. We therefore take up our quarters in the newly-built, cosy little club-hut, and set to work to cook our dinner and to change our saturated stockings and under-clothing.

After having duly satisfied our bodily requirements, we wend our way to the summit of the pass, to revel in the enjoyment of a prospect of incomparable grandeur.

To describe it is impossible. Only the inspired pen of some gifted poet could fitly portray the wondrous scene. The eye never tires of feasting on this magnificent glacier scenery, which especially in the south is of surpassing splendour. At

* Cleavelandite, adularia, apatite, rock crystal, chlorite, epidote, fluorite, rutile, stilbite, scolezite, titanite, &c.

our feet, traversed by countless fissures, are spread the glittering blue and white ice-masses of the Fiescher Glacier, an immense stream of ice imbedded between precipitous cliffs, and working its way slowly but surely to the lower vale. In the background rise a host of ice-clad summits commanding the Binntal, the Simplon, and the Visp valleys. Their names are of wide renown:—we made acquaintance with the *Helsenhorn*, *Hüllehorn*, and *Bortelhorn* already in the Binntal; the *Furggebaumhorn*, *Monte Leone*, *Wasenhorn*, *Portiengrat*, *Weissmies*, and *Fletschenhörner* enclose at their base the pass and the valleys of the Simplon, and *Monte Rosa*, *Rympfischhorn*, *Allalinhorn*, and the group of the *Mischabelhörner*, are the monarchs of the valleys of Visp and the Eldorado of mountain climbers. Verdant pasture-lands and noble forests of coniferous trees encircle the lower portions of these snowy mountains, and at their feet stretch cultivated meadows and plantations which indicate the proximity of the fertile Valley of the Rhone, though our eye cannot penetrate its depths.

In solemn contrast to this pleasant picture is the huge mountain-ridge bounding the horizon in the west and north. Towering to a stupendous height, at no great distance from us, are the serrated rocky summits of the giants of the Bernese Oberland, challenging admiration at once by their enormous proportions and by the elegance of their outlines. For the moment our eye is content to rest upon the immense mountains by which we are immediately environed, adorned as they are with the spotless splendour of a perennial winter, while above them reigns the silence of the grave;—anon our glance strays further afield and seeks out the picture unfolded in the far horizon, while rejoicing in the changing hues in which the summits of Monte Rosa and the Mischabel are wont to array themselves,—or turns eastward to where the *Oberaar Glacier*, extending down towards the dark and sombre Grimsel, is unfolding yet another galaxy of variously-shaped peaks.

The tourist feels himself indebted in no small degree to the Swiss Alpine Club which, at a considerable pecuniary

sacrifice, has erected houses of shelter on so many an inhospitable mountain. The club-huts of Switzerland are at the service of travellers of all nations without exception, free of charge; it is only expected that they will leave the huts themselves as well as the furniture and utensils in good condition. The club-hut on the Oberaarjoch renders it possible for unpractised mountaineers to extend the tour from Fiesch to the Grimsel over two days, while others can seek shelter here in case of a sudden unfavourable change in the weather, and still others can make it their starting-point for mountain-ascents which could otherwise be undertaken only with great difficulty, if at all. From here the Oberaarhorn, Finsteraarhorn, Studerhorn, Grünenhorn, Scheuchzerhorn, Escherhorn, Thierberg, Grünberg, and Zinkenstock are most easily climbed, and the numerous snowfields and glacier passes lying between them safely explored.

Before we leave our comfortable resting-place we must mention another route, discovered in 1883 by the geologist Mr. E. von Fellenberg. He came from *Biel* in the *Goms* through the *Bieligerthal* (also called *Wallithal*) up to the *Bieligerlücke* (10,360'), lying between the *Wasenhorn* (11,341') and the *Vordergalmihorn* (11,561'). This way is shorter and free from danger, and the last ascent to the Lücke is said to be a delightful climb presenting no difficulties. From a projecting rock on the *Bieligerlücke* the new club-hut on the *Oberaarjoch* is visible, and may be reached across the *Galmifirn* and *Studerfirn* in about two hours.* The entire tour from *Biel* to the *Oberaarjoch* occupies from 8 to 9 hours.

We now bid farewell to the *Oberaarjoch*, and crossing the *Oberaarfirn* make an easy descent in five hours to the *Grimsel Hospice*, passing on our way the *châlets* in the *Oberaar*. The people of *Valais* make this the scene of one of their most affecting legends, which is thus related by Pastor *Tscheinen*:—

* See *Jahrbuch XIX.* of the S. A. C., p. 69 ff.

The Milanese Lady.

On the Aare, a barren alp purchased by the distant commune of Törbel in the Visperthal, a herdsman was on a wet and murky day seeking a stray cow in one of the wildest districts, where only glaciers and bare rocks are to be seen, and was astonished at meeting a lady walking towards the glacier. He quickened his pace with the object of offering her his services in case she might have lost her way. As she drew nearer he noticed that she was young, beautiful, and of noble birth, but what surprised him most was that both her head and her feet were bare. From her magnificent hair, which fell in large ringlets over her shoulders, the rain-drops trickled, a gold chain adorned her fair neck, her slender waist was encircled by a valuable girdle, and her arms were embellished with gold bracelets. Rings set with diamonds glittered on the fingers of her small, snow-white hands; her bare feet, red with cold, seemed so tender that every pebble must have bruised them. With one hand she modestly lifted her silk apron, which else would have impeded her steps in this rough region, and in the other hand she carried a long staff. She trod so carefully with her delicate feet on the hard, cold, and wet stone, that it was easy to observe how arduous and painful every step she made must be to her. Her lovely countenance bore traces of much weeping, and fresh tear-drops still glistened in her large, mild looking eyes, whilst her finely-formed lips murmured gentle sighs and prayers.

Filled with astonishment at this remarkable apparition, and moved with deep compassion, the herdsman thus addressed her: "For heaven's sake, fair lady, how came you into this wild region in such rough weather? You must have lost your way. Mercy on us! You are walking barefoot, without hat or cloak, surely you must have met with an accident. Where are your attendants? Did you not take a guide with you? You cannot have come here on foot. No doubt you alighted from your

horse not far from here and have wandered away from your attendants alone, and lost your way." "No, good youth," answered the lady in a gentle voice, "I have not lost my way; I have indeed come here without attendants, without horse, without companion, without hat, shoes, or cloak. I have just come from a splendid palace in a great city. My body still lies in Milan on my death-bed, and my poor parents are weeping bitterly for their only daughter, bathing her corpse with their tears. God has condemned me to do penance in this glacier, because during my life-time I scarcely ever trod upon the ground, since I always drove out in my carriage, never walked in the gutter, never left home without numerous attendants, never exposed myself to a breath of cold air, never denied myself an innocent pleasure, and shunned every exertion and fatigue; as a punishment for my daintiness I am condemned to go barefoot in this rugged wilderness, to walk in rain, cold, and stormy weather, and to do penance in this glacier,—this is my purgatory—and beyond this daintiness I have done no wrong." As she finished speaking a cold shower of rain began to fall, and a dense, dark mist hid the lovely maiden from the herdsman's sight. When after a few moments the rain had ceased, and the dense fog had cleared away, and the weather brightened up a little, no trace of the beautiful lady was visible to the bewildered herdsman. Instantly, but alas, too late, it occurred to him that God had not permitted her to appear to him in so beautiful a form without an object. Certainly but little was wanting to effect her complete deliverance; O, if only instead of his useless questions he had offered her his assistance for accomplishing her redemption! He now called aloud repeatedly at the top of his voice on the spot where she disappeared: "Beautiful lady, O pray, tell me how I can release you!" But the answer that came back was only the echo of his own words; the brook continued its melancholy flow, the glacier thundered ominously in its depths, pale vaporous forms rose from the fissures or sank into them,—but of her he neither saw nor heard a sign any more. And often

when impelled by an inexplicable longing he betook himself through mist and rain into this desolate region, taking his seat on the ground which the delicate feet of the beautiful lady had touched, with his face turned towards the place whence she had vanished, and while recalling once more her lovely form, he would cry again and again with a loud voice: "Oh, beautiful lady, can I do nothing to deliver you?"—the rock however only returned the same faint echo as before. Often the same dense, dark mist, and cold drizzling rain would envelop him, the brook, still continuing to flow on with the same melancholy murmur, and the hollow thunder of the glacier resounding as before; all the surroundings remained just as wild, and from the fissures of the glacier pale misty forms rose as of old,—but to his great sorrow he never again beheld the faintest vestige of the beautiful and gracious lady.*

* See "*Wallisersagen*," collected by Tscheinen and Ruppen.





The Eggishorn and the Aletsch Glacier.

THE principal glacier of the Alps is the great Aletsch Glacier which surpasses all the rest not only in extent but also in beauty. In order to see it in its full extent we ascend the Eggishorn. From Fiesch a good bridle-path leads in $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours to the summit, which, though rising nearly 10,000 feet above the sea, is one of the most frequented spots in Switzerland. About $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours from the top a hotel has been erected which is annually visited by crowds of travellers from all parts of the world, and which is in itself no less attractive to tourists than the celebrated view from the incomparable Eggishorn. A member of the Swiss Alpine Club, Mr. E. Pictet, of Geneva, thus speaks of the hotel in the "*Echo des Alpes*:" "In our days, even in Switzerland, there are plenty of hotels in which there are no hosts—establishments conducted by joint-stock companies where the traveller has a number, and a bill to pay, nothing more. Happily it is not so everywhere. The *Hôtel de l'Eggishorn* or *de la Jungfrau*, as it is also called, has a host, and a very attentive host, one of those hosts who receive you, who remember you, who make themselves acquainted with your wishes, and direct you on your way,—in a word, one of those who think that even a hotel-keeper may be hospitable."

Immediately behind Fiesch we cross the bridge over the Fiescherbach and commence a tolerably steep ascent through the forest. The stately trees here find plentiful nourishment;

it is easy for them to strike their roots deep into the moraines of long-vanished glaciers. Mountain-torrents, too, whose channels are usually dry, but which sometimes become suddenly swollen by continued rains, or by a rapid thaw, plough deep furrows in the loose earth and often carve it into fantastic forms, resembling castles and towers, and peopled by the poetic imaginations of the mountaineers with fairies and "Godwergi." Close by the wayside stands one such strangely-shaped earthen tower, called the *Godwergithüre*, about which tradition has much to say. In its sides numerous fragments of various kinds of stone are imbedded; at its summit it bears —like the pyramid of earth at Useigne in the Val d'Hérens —a crown of granite, and it was believed to have been the chief seat and gathering-place of the Godwergi. (See illustration page 52.)

These *Godwergi* or *Godwerjini* were pigmies or elves of a kind peculiar to the German portion of Canton Valais. They were brown in colour, of small stature, and meanly and raggedly attired; but of their obligingness, craftiness, and dexterity, as well as of their skill in fortune-telling and in assuming various disguises, much could be said. They were compassionate to the poor and sick, were acquainted with the magical properties of herbs, and knew the spots in which treasures were concealed. But woe to him who rewarded their services with ingratitude, or ridiculed them on account of their dress or figure. His house and homestead were no longer blessed, his cattle sickened, hailstorms and floods destroyed the produce of his fields and meadows, and even in his own dwelling he found rest neither by day nor by night from the persecutions of these spiteful little folk.

Upon issuing from the forest we see the hotel standing at a considerable height above us. We turn to the left towards the châteaux of the Fiescherstaffel, and then ascend again to the right, across Alpine pastures, till we reach the hotel.

Before we enter let us sit down and rest a moment on one of the seats of the spacious terrace. Even from here the

view is attractive and the horizon wide. On our left we see the entire chain of the *Lepontine Alps*, from the *Furka* to *Monte Leone*; opposite us lies the *Simplon*—a broad military road ascending the pass in wide loops—and on the right our eye rests with pleasure upon the finest section of the *Pennine Alps*, including the *Fletschhörner*, *Mischabel*, *Monte Rosa*, *Lysskamm*, *Matterhorn*, *Weisshorn*, and the numerous lesser eminences surrounding them.

The spacious hotel, a much-frequented climatic health-resort, occupies a sheltered and sunny situation close to the rocky mountain-side. The site for the erection of the house and its outbuildings, as well as the space for the terrace and the little kitchen-garden in front of it, and even for the walks leading east and west, was obtained by excavating and blasting away the solid rock.*

Pleasant enough are these breezy mountain-heights, and we therefore propose to remain a few days with our hospitable landlord, Mr. Cathrein, and to make some excursions in the neighbourhood. True it is that we find ourselves in an *embarras de richesse*, especially with regard to the loftier peaks; we shall therefore confine ourselves to the most interesting ascents, and to such as can be undertaken by everybody.

I. *The Eggishorn.*

Our first excursion will be to the *summit* of the *Eggishorn* itself. (See illustration page 52.) A well-kept path leads up to it, and poor walkers may ascend almost to the top on horseback.

Formerly, before the hotel was built, another path, somewhat longer, but less steep, was commonly chosen; it led further to the west, up to the depression known as the *Elsenlücke*, between the *Bettenhorn* and the *Eggishorn*, and then

* Near the hotel an English Chapel has been lately erected.

along the ridge to the summit. It is a pity that this path has been forsaken, for in the depression or "saddle" there is a most interesting and remarkable echo, producing an effect which I shall never forget. One of my companions blew a short and lively air on a bugle which he carried with him. At well marked intervals, at first faint, then much louder and clearer, the third time fainter, and finally dying away quite mournfully, like the lamentations of the maiden imprisoned in the glacier, the notes were reverberated by the rocky walls of the Aletschhorn.

Arrived at the top, we take our seat at the foot of the weather-beaten cross, on one of the enormous blocks of granite forming the summit, and contemplate at leisure the magnificent prospect presented to us. Far in the depths beneath the vast Aletsch Glacier is seen in its full extent with its numerous tributaries. The immense masses of ice are broken against the precipitous northern side of the Eggishorn, and between its rocky walls and those of the Strahlhorn opposite, the most remarkable of all Alpine lakes, the blue *Mörjelensee*, is formed by the damming up of the waters flowing from the glacier. (See illustration facing page 32.)

Beyond the glacier, in the distance, rises the peerless form of the *Jungfrau*, glistening like silver in the sunlight; and keeping watch close by her is her faithful companion, the dark, broad-necked *Mönch*. Countless other peaks are arrayed on every side and form a brilliant circle on the wide horizon. Their splendour must be seen to be appreciated; their names are too many to be here catalogued, and we can do no more than refer the reader to Mr. X. Imfeld's finely-executed panorama.

II. To the *Mörjelensee*.

A good footpath leads down from the hotel in two hours to the *Mörjelensee*. It lies at an altitude of 7710 feet above

the sea, in a hollow 1000 yards in length and about one-third as much in breadth, surrounded by lofty rocks and by the ice-masses of the Aletsch Glacier. Blocks of white ice float like swans over the dark-blue waters, whose waves break in foam with the least breath of wind against the emerald-green walls of the glacier.

In spite of the plastic nature of its ice the glacier fails to fill the hollow, but presses so closely against the sides and the bottom that from time immemorial a lake has been formed here which is called after the pastures of Mörjelen. It has long been known that this lake empties itself periodically. According to popular belief this takes place every seven years, and it last happened in 1878 and 1884. Within two or three days the enormous volume of water, amounting to about 350,000,000 cubic feet, finds its way through the Aletsch Glacier, and, as reported by the herdsmen, causes a terrific cracking, crashing, and snapping among the fissures and narrow icy vaults. The angry and tumultuous waters pour violently through the chasms of the glacier, overflow the lower parts of the Valley of the Rhone, and occasion extensive floods, terrifying and distressing the people of Valais. A few pools of water in the hollows of the sandy bottom alone remain as evidence of the vanished lake, and blocks of ice, robbed of their former splendour, lie high and dry like stranded sea-monsters on a sandy beach.

This natural occurrence is also invested by the peasants with a mythical garb and connected with a fanciful legend. A terrible and powerful magician, Rollibock, they say, bursts at times with fearful uproar from the Aletsch to destroy the rash wights who venture to provoke or mock him. The swiftest cannot escape him, and those he seizes he grinds to powder. He is said to assume the shape of a he-goat with long horns and fiery eyes, while instead of hair his entire body is covered with icicles, which make a terrific clatter as he rushes at full speed upon his foes.

The situation of the Mörjelensee in its rocky basin is in so far remarkable, that near its eastern bank there is a watershed which is several feet lower than the deepest point of that part of the glacier which bars the mouth of the gorge in which the lake is situated. The lake when swollen to its greatest height would therefore naturally find an outlet on the east into the Fiescherthal. It is now proposed to enlarge this natural but inadequate outlet by artificial means, as a safeguard against further inundations. Should the river Rhone happen to be flooded—as is frequently the case in the summer months—at the time when the discharge from the lake takes place, fearful devastations must ensue; not only would a large area of cultivated land be covered with silt and rubbish, but the roads, railways, and river embankments would be destroyed and swept away. The Mörjelensee has hitherto hung like a sword of Damocles over the land, threatening to annihilate a work which has taxed all the energies of the people of Valais to accomplish, in addition to the fraternal assistance rendered them by their compatriots of other cantons—namely, the valuable Rhone Improvement. The question has often been asked, whether it would be worth while to spend millions of money in order to preserve a relatively small district from destruction. We can only reply to such querists in the words of the high-minded president of the Senate, Mr. Birmann, and exclaim with him:

“Happy the people who husband their strength in order to employ it in case of need against an external foe—they deserve to remain an independent nation. But doubly happy the man who loves his homestead, who is deeply affected when he sees the soil of even a small part of his country destroyed before his eyes—he thereby proves his love for his fatherland, of the common home. We have not to deal with figures, but with the mightier forces of the emotions. It is a question of preserving the land of our fathers: the soil of Switzerland shall be diminished neither by an external foe

nor by the terrors of nature. The inner worth of a nation is recognised in history not only by the heroism displayed on the battlefield, but also in the works of peace it has created."

III. *The Aletsch Glacier and the Concordia-Hütte.*

The hotel on the Eggishorn is not only a climatic health-resort,—it forms at the same time the pleasantest of headquarters for delightful and interesting mountaineering excursions. We are here on the threshold of the numerous high passes leading across the Bernese Alps, at the feet of the loftiest peaks of the range, and in the immediate vicinity of the glaciers and snowfields which extend without a break from the Grimsel to the Gemmi in numerous windings and ramifications, and descend to the valleys by innumerable ravines and gorges.

In the guide-book already referred to Tschudi mentions the routes over the *Jungfrau*-, *Eiger*-, *Mönch*-, *Fiescher*-, and *Agassiz-Joch* to *Grindelwald*; over the *Ebenfluhjoch* and *Lawinenthor* to *Lauterbrunnen*; over the *Oberaar*-, *Kasten*-, and *Studer-Joch* and the *Unteraar Glacier* to the *Grimsel*; and over the *Beichgrat* and the *Lötschenlücke* to *Kippel* in the *Lötschenthal*,—also the ascent of the following mountains: *Aletschhorn* (13,772'), *Klein- and Gross-Wannehorn* (12,194' and 12,811'), *Gross-Nesthorn* (12,532'), *Ebene-Fluh* (12,005'), *Dreieckhorn* (12,539'), *Jungfrau* (13,671'), and *Finsteraarhorn* (14,025').

Most of these tours cannot be made in one day by persons endowed with merely ordinary powers of endurance, and they are therefore not attempted directly from the hotel, but from the club-hut on the *Concordia-Platz*. The layer of snow a foot and more thick which usually covers the glaciers and fields of *névé** is almost daily rendered so soft by the heat

* *Névé* or *Firn* is snow consolidated by pressure into a substance of a consistency of something between firm snow and ice.

of the noonday sun that walking on it is extremely fatiguing and dangerous. It is therefore customary to advance as far as possible on the preceding evening, so as to leave the snow-fields behind before midday. Moreover, in the early morning, the atmosphere is much clearer, the sky more free from clouds, and the prospect therefore is brighter and far more extensive. Since the erection of the club-huts the longest and most toilsome ascents can be accomplished with comparative ease, even by persons little accustomed to mountain-climbing.



Concordia-Platz.

Among all the structures of the kind the *Concordia Hütte* claims the foremost place. It is situated about an hour's distance above the old place of shelter on the Faulberg, in a magnificent and imposing situation at the junction of the five great névé-streams of the Aletsch Glacier.

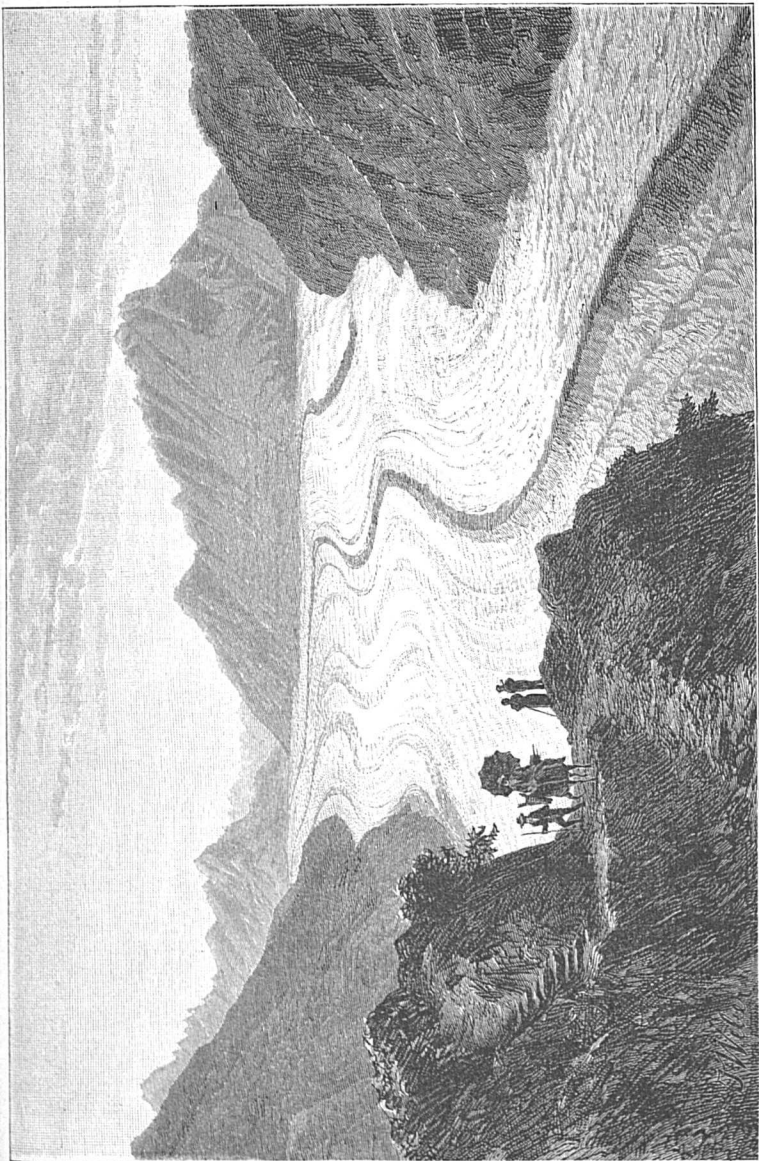
To this we will direct our steps, not with the intention of scaling one of the above-mentioned peaks, but solely for the sake of enjoying the beauties of the peerless Aletsch Glacier (see illustration facing p. 48). For a walk over this glacier which, including its snowfields, measures 15 miles in length, while its average breadth is nearly a mile and a half,

is a source of the greatest enjoyment even for travellers who stop short of the more difficult ascents already mentioned. The solemn and suggestive silence which reigns in this icy valley, and which is broken only by the sound of occasional falling stones or fragments of ice, and by the rushing of the glacier-stream,—as well as the stupendous magnitude of this mass of ice with its moraines and its countless fissures and crevices, filling the entire valley to a depth of who shall say how many hundred feet, and descending down to the very habitations of men,—these ice-encrusted mountains enclosing the valley and cleaving the blue vault of heaven with their dazzling white peaks,—these wild, jagged ridges of rock, bearing witness to fearful convulsions of nature in bygone ages,—these sunny, grassy patches on the very verge of the glacier, which alone remind us that we are still in proximity to a fertile region decked with exuberant vegetation, forming as they do the chosen habitat of many a richly-dyed little mountain flower,—all these remarkable, wonderful, and grand attributes combine to form a picture which impresses itself upon the mind and imagination of the traveller in ineffaceable outlines.

No wonder then that the inhabitants of the valleys and the dwellers on the mountain-heights are filled with enthusiastic love of the Aletsch Glacier, celebrating it in their songs and consecrating it in their traditions.

“O wie bin ich in Aletsch gern,
O wie ist mir in Aletsch wohl;
Thuot mer schi d's Herz im Lib erfreuwu
Wenn i gegn'n Aletsch sollu!”

runs an old song with which the mountaineers salute the glacier from the Aletschbord; and numerous indeed are the legends and traditions still piously handed down by the peasants to their children. Gladly do we listen to their words when in their expressive language and in their own manner they endeavour to explain to us the inner wonders of the glacier



The glacier of Aletsch from Bellalp.

world. It is true that the origin of the glacier, its structure, and its movements are now no longer an enigma to us; but it is the more easy for us to understand how the untaught herdsmen should be baffled by the mysteries pertaining to it, since it is not so very many years ago that even men of science entertained erroneous views in regard to these phenomena.

A symbol of perfect purity, the glacier tolerates no foreign matter within its vast body, but ejects it again. It breaks its way with irresistible force, and pushes aside whatever opposes its advance. Is it therefore to be wondered at that in the old poetic days, when spirits played so great a rôle, these fairy-like palaces and subterranean habitations of crystal were peopled with "ice queens" who, surrounded by their "glacier maidens," reigned over the immense glacier realm? Is it a matter for surprise that of old the simple-minded and pious peasant-folk of Valais regarded these wondrous rivers of ice as a fitting abode for souls in need of purification? And above all, how beautifully and delicately conceived are the myths connected with the great glacier of the Aletsch valley! It was here that so many souls were reported to have been hidden in suffering that it was impossible to set foot on the glacier without treading on their heads. Here it was that two beautiful women were seen, one sitting naked on the glacier, combing her golden hair in the sun, and weeping bitterly because she must still be frozen in up to the neck nine times before her release could be effected, while the other, although frozen in, sang in a voice of wonderful melody at the prospect of her speedy deliverance. Here was the abode of the lovely and light-hearted Emma, who went every year on the four quarter days to the dance of the dead with her companions. From this glacier the unhappy souls came to the cottage of the pious Schmidja to warm themselves; here dwelt the Lachergeist and the water-nymph of the Massachin, and here appeared the sturdy herd-boy who vanquished the tyrant

Urnafas of Naters. Here was the site of the villages from which fifteen elders in mantles, and twenty-five bridesmaids dressed in white garments, came to Naters on Corpus Christi Day, and here too is the enchanted valley where grapes once ripened and cornfields waved.



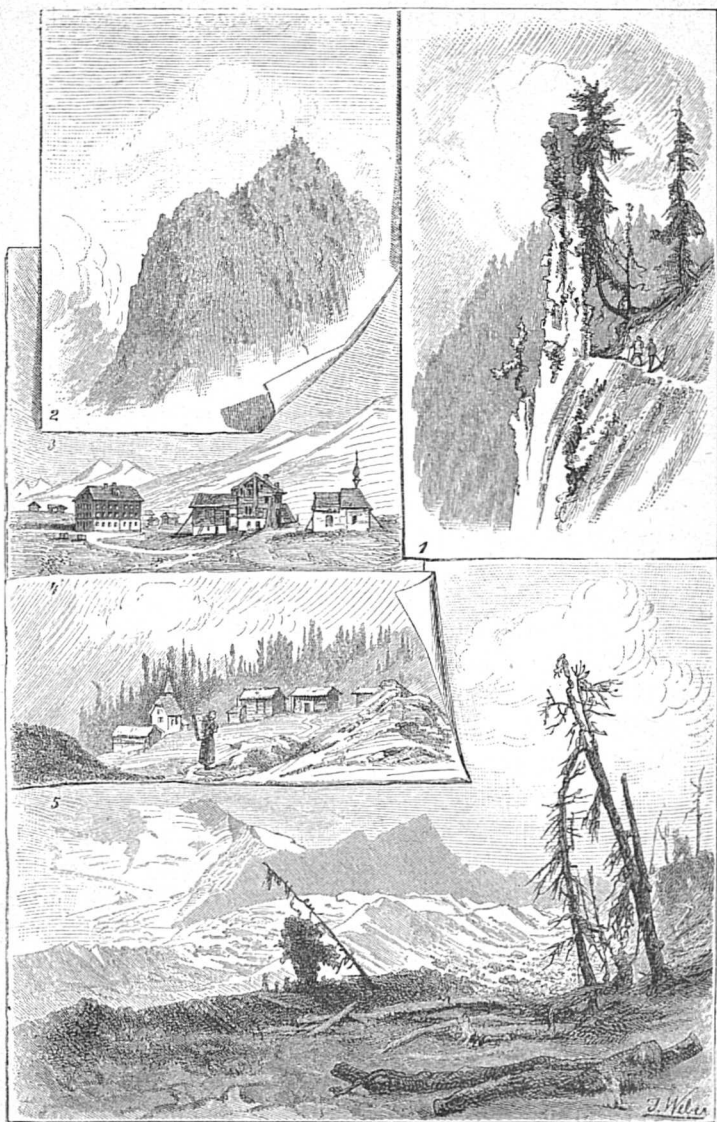


Riederalp and Bellalp.

AS intimated in our title, *Brig*, at the foot of the Simplon, is to be the goal of our present tour. From the Eggishorn it can be reached by various routes. A broad path leads down to *Fiesch*, *Lax*, *Mörel*, and *Naters*; another route crosses the *Elsenlücke* and the Aletsch Glacier, and winds down over *Bellalp* and the *Naterserberg* into the Valley of the Rhone, while instead of descending at once we can make our way over the Alpine pastures belonging to the communes of *Lax*, *Betten*, and *Goppisberg* to the hotel on the *Riederalp*, and then descend directly to *Mörel*.

I.

Scarcely half an hour's walk below *Fiesch* lies *Lax*, the last village in the district of Goms. From here the road descends abruptly in long windings to the valleys, across the *Deisch* or *Gottesberg* down into the district of *Oestlich Raron* or *Mörel*. The *Deischberg*, which forms a barrier extending straight across the Valley of the Rhone, is the boundary between the two districts; in ancient chronicles Goms is spoken of as "*a monte Dei Superius*." Here it was that according to the legend the apostle St. Barnabas preached the gospel to the people of Goms, and from this circumstance the mountain is said to derive its name; but from which direction he came,



1. Godwergithüre. 2. Eggishorn. 3. Riederalp. 4. Bettenalp. 5. On the Aletsch Glacier.

and whither this saintly predecessor of the modern Alpine tourist afterwards directed his steps, tradition unfortunately omits to inform us. But in any case the people of Goms are modest in their claims in comparison with their Italian compatriots in the valley of the Great St. Bernard, to whom no less famous an evangelist than the prince of the apostles, St. Peter himself, is said to have preached.

The valley now becomes narrow and rugged; the youthful Rhone ploughs its way with fury through the hard rock, and it is not until we reach Mörel, charmingly situated amidst fertile orchards, that the valley expands again. The village of *Mörel* was anciently the seat of powerful families, and in its vicinity the ruined castle of the Mangepans is still shown. Both their stronghold and that of the lords of Dirrenberg was destroyed in the year 1262, by Count Peter of Savoy during his feud with Henry of Raron, bishop of Sion.

Beyond Mörel the valley again contracts, especially near the pilgrimage chapel of *Hochfluh*, and here the road scarcely finds room between the chapel and the river. But immediately afterwards the valley becomes wider and more level, though only as far as the wild ravine through which the *Massa* has cut itself a channel which conveys it to the Rhone. A boldly-placed bridge of stone, on which, in the year 1368, the beautiful countess Blandra of Visp, together with her only son and heir—was murdered, leads across the boisterous and muddy mountain-torrent.

Lovers of wildly romantic, awful ravines, or of situations calculated to excite the nerves and the imagination, may pay a visit to the "*Massachin*,"* and risk a walk by the side of

* The language of the German-speaking inhabitants of Valais is rich in peculiar expressions to denote the various forms of mountains, valleys, acclivities, &c. For a ravine in general the people of Upper Valais, instead of the High German term *Schlucht*, use the word *Tobel*. But ravines differ very considerably in form. A narrow, rocky ravine of considerable length, formed by erosion, is called a "*Chin*,"—e. g. *Massachin*;

the perilously-placed aqueduct which is carried at a dizzy height along beetling precipices. A few trees have found a precarious foothold on the naked rock; at our feet, in the dark depths of the abyss, the tumultuous glacier-stream rushes with tempestuous fury between the granite walls. In many places the rocks on either bank approach so close together that an athletic man could easily cross the chasm by a bold leap. We scarcely know which to admire most, the rugged grandeur of this wilderness, or the intrepidity of the bold peasants of Valais, who have constructed an aqueduct, which can only be kept in repair at considerable risk, through the entire length of the ravine merely for the sake of watering a few small patches of cultivated ground which would otherwise be parched by the sun. But the entire canton of Valais is traversed by similar aqueducts, bearing witness to the industry and energy of its inhabitants, and the never-ending struggle with the elements which they are compelled to maintain from year's end to year's end in order to gain even a scanty subsistence.

Beyond the bridge over the Massa we enter the district of Brig, and after passing the sunny village of Naters we cross the Rhone near the railway station of Brig.

II.

Far more interesting is the path over the Alpine pastures, since, as already stated, it keeps to the heights as far as the

if it be narrower and smaller it is a "*Chiller*,"—the favourite haunt of all evil spirits and monsters. If large rocky fragments have detached themselves from the walls, the term "*Krachen*" is employed. Woe to him who ventures into such a place on inauspicious days or at the midnight hour; frightful fiery forms, raging bulls, or horrid phantoms will be sure to bring destruction upon so foolhardy a man! Large masses of débris are called "*Guffer*." If the heaps of débris consist of small stones they are termed "*Rüschinen*" and "*Gand*" or "*Gandecke*."

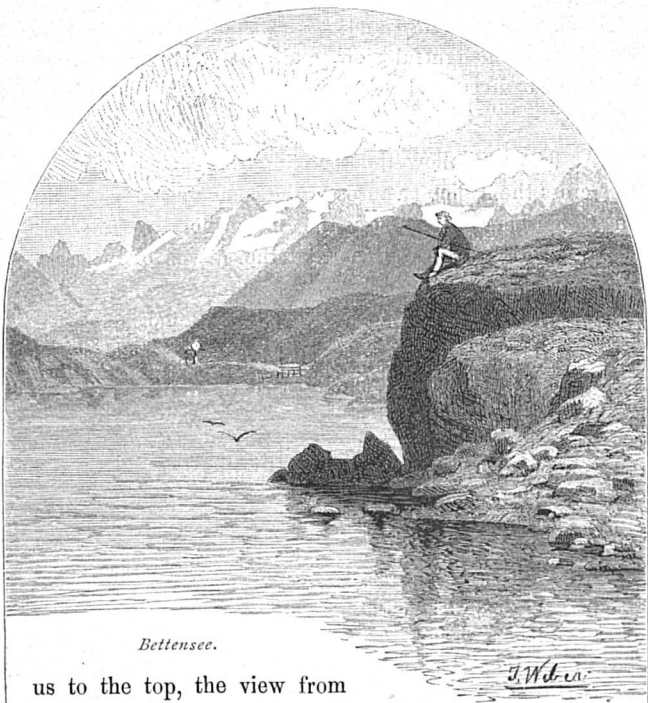
Landslips are known as "*Ruffenen*;" steep wooded declivities are called "*Lahmen*," sheer rocky precipices "*Gfäll*," projecting cliffs "*Tossen*," and small hummocks of rock "*Tschuggen*."

hotels on the *Riederalp* and *Bellalp*, while all the time we are afforded a delightful view, and pass through scenery of a character so diversified as to constantly excite new feelings of pleasure.

At first we follow the footpath constructed by Mr. Cathrein, cross the Alpine pastures of the communes of Lax, Betten, and Goppisberg, and pass the melancholy *Bettensee*. The "yodelling" of the herdsmen and the strains of their musical instruments, mingled with the harmonious tinkling of the cow-bells, accompany us on our way, and we cannot help admiring the well-shaped animals—noted for their excellent milk-yielding qualities—which are the joy and the pride of the people of Goms. Both the cattle and the rich cheese produced from their milk are largely exported to Italy, and bring much money into the canton. Cattle-breeding is almost the only branch of industry pursued by the inhabitants of the villages above Brig.

Below these pastures is the *Riederalpe* (see illustration p. 52), in a beautiful situation. A walk of 3 hours from the Hôtel Eggishorn brings us to it. It was Mr. de Sepibus, of Mörel, who conceived the happy idea of building a hotel on this site; thanks to the salubrious situation, the bracing mountain air, the excellent spring water, the rich milk, and the numerous agreeable walks, the place is admirably adapted for a climatic resort and whey-cure establishment; besides, the snow disappears at the beginning of June, and visitors can therefore be received at an unusually early date. From here the ascent of the Aletschhorn is said to present the fewest difficulties, and can be accomplished in a day; the tour, however, is one which should be undertaken only by experienced mountaineers.

A very interesting excursion, and one that can be performed by everybody, is the ascent of the *Hohenfluh* (7693'), an elevation of the ridge which extends along the great Aletsch Glacier from the Eggishorn. An hour's walk brings



Bettensee.

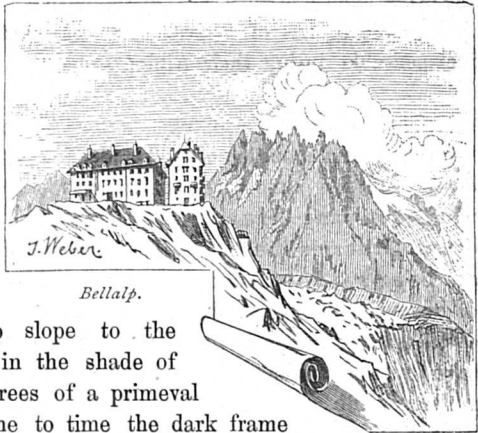
us to the top, the view from which is nearly the same as from the Eggishorn. Before reaching the summit we pass the *Blaue See*, on the banks of which are several deserted, tumble-down châteaux. Beyond them we see the dark rocky Riederhorn, and in the distance the glittering ice-clad summits of the Visperthal. In striking contrast to this unspeakably beautiful prospect are the bare rocky walls and reddish-brown, débris-strewn slopes of the *Bettlihorn*, *Tunetschhorn*, and *Klenenhorn* opposite. They are composed for the most part of talc slate, and it is singular that they are so extremely barren and devoid of vegetation, since this rock, owing to its friability and its mineral components, forms, in the middle valley of the Rhone, especially near Sion, so luxuriant a soil for the culture of the grape-vine.

The visitor to the Riederalp should not omit to pay a visit to the wooded *Riederhorn*. This rocky cone (7342') projects a considerable distance into the Valley of the Rhone, and affords a fine view not only of the valley but also of the fearful chasm of the *Massachin*.

On the heights of the *Rieder-Furka* the proprietor of the Riederalp has built a pretty cottage where the tired traveller can refresh him-

self with the delicious wine of the canton. We pass here on our way to the Bellalp, which is included in our itinerary. From the Furka we

descend a steep slope to the Aletsch Glacier, in the shade of the magnificent trees of a primeval forest. From time to time the dark frame opens and affords a charming view,—now through the gorge of the Massa, beyond which rises the dark rocky pyramid of the *Matterhorn*, with its fair neighbour the *Weiss-horn* attired in purest white like some royal bride and attended by a faithful squire, the *Brunegghorn*,—now down to the mysterious river of ice, and across it to the vast mountains forming its banks.



Bellalp.

After an hour's walk we reach our old friend the Aletsch Glacier, effect its passage, if we please on horseback or on the humbler mule, comfortably in about half an hour, and now find ourselves at the foot of a wall of rock called the *Aletschbord*, to climb which by the zigzag path demands another hour.

While we are still at a distance from them the hotel buildings on the Bellalp send us a friendly greeting. Dripping with perspiration we reach the airy heights and are right glad to enter the doors of the hospitable mansion.

While the health-resort on the Riederalp is suited to the more modest requirements of families who desire to pass the summer months in quiet and repose on the mountains, we on the other hand find ourselves again on the Bellalp in one of the fashionable resorts of tourists to whom comfort and luxury are indispensable during their Alpine travels.

The Bellalp as a summer resort is new, like its name. By the honest mountaineers the alp was christened "*Aletschbord*," and we almost regret that the old appellation, round which so many legends have crystallised, should fall into disuse. It shares the fate of those dear old times whose charms are being rudely stripped away by the growing enlightenment of advancing centuries. Here, where once spectres and cobolds dwelt, stately hotels have arisen; regions formerly untrodden save by the hunter and the herdsman now swarm with travellers of all nations, and the highest peaks, erst the abode only of the ibex and the vulture, must now yield to the prowess of the undaunted members of the Alpine Club.

However, the Bellalp well deserves its name, though it be a foreign one. The broad expanse of grass-land is a perfect flower garden, and even invalids and persons of feeble frame will here find a rare variety of easy and delightful walks,—to the *Schönenbühl*, to the *Nessel-* and *Lusgen-Alp*, along the *Lusgengrat*, everywhere over ground carpeted with blossoms, and all the time favoured with an uninterrupted view of the Valley of the Rhone and the Alps of southern Valais.

The Binnenthal has its Ofenhorn, the hotel on the Eggishorn its summit of the same name, the Riederalp its Hohen-

fluh,—and the particular peak appropriated to the Bellalp is the *Sparrenhorn* (9888 '), also called *Bellalphen*.

The proprietor of the Bellalp hotel, Mr. Klingele, has been to the trouble of constructing a bridle-path almost to the summit of the mountain; the time required to reach the top is two hours and a half.

The prospect it commands is magnificent, and different in many respects from that enjoyed from the Eggishorn. Of the great Aletsch Glacier the lower half only is visible, and the Bernese Alps are also partly hidden; on the other hand we are here introduced to a new district of glaciers, the *Ober-Aletsch Glacier*, *Beichfirn*, and *Jägifirn*, as well as to all the peaks which extend from the Aletschhorn in a south-westerly direction along the Lötschenthal. The chain of the Pennine Alps, from the Simplon to Mont Blanc, presents quite a different aspect as seen from here, and the ascent of the Sparrenhorn is therefore interesting even for those who have already been on the Eggishorn or on the Hohenfluh.

As a matter of course the longer tours into the Bernese Alps can, with a few modifications, be undertaken from here; for in this hotel, as in those on the Riederalp and Eggishorn, good and trustworthy guides can always be obtained.*

The passage of the *Beichgrat Pass* to Lötschen, and of the *Birgisgrat Pass* into the Gredetschthal, are best made from here, as are also the ascents of the *Gross-Nesthorn* (12,473 '), the *Fusshörner* (11,968 '), the *Grisighorn* (10,383 '), the *Geisshorn* (12,288 '), and others.

It is intended to build a club-hut on the *Ober-Aletsch Glacier*; we trust that this intention will soon be carried out, for the above-mentioned tours would then be rendered much easier.

* A list of guides licensed by the Cantonal authorities for high mountain ascents is exhibited in all the mountain hotels.

We must now turn our steps towards Bri
Simplon; it is with reluctance that we leave the G
is a district we have learned to love,—but yond
Simplon the bountiful hand of the Creator has no
scatter blessings, and there is much in store there
afford us high enjoyment and plentiful material for
observations.

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- 1 Jungfrau
- 2 Breithorn
- 3 Mönch
- 4 Aletschhorn
- 5 Finsteraarhorn
- 6 Oberaarhorn
- 7 Oberaarjoch
- 8 Concordiaplatz
- 9 Eggishorn
- 10 Bellalp

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