

on the Chola route, under Patheng Cho Lake. Flocks of wild sheep, Burrell (*Ovis nahura*), come over from Chumbi in October and feed in the Chomnago Chu and Tambiacho valleys; we saw numerous marks of them in both these places.

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LEAVES FROM THE DIARY OF THE LATE MR. A. T. MALKIN.

1843.

*The Straleck.*

*August 1. Grindelwald.*—‘Eagle’ comfortable and civil as ever, and the valley more beautiful than ever. The three great buttresses of the chain coming down into the valley are unsurpassable by anything in Switzerland; and the glaciers, dirty as they are, add a great charm to the scenery. Took a starlight walk; the night most superb, and the valley by that light singular and ghostly. I have seldom seen the stars shine more brightly.

*August 2.*—Another glorious morning. Not a soul but myself in the house now. One English party last night. Visited the lower glacier. Vault of ice large and beautiful. Started for glacier about 3, and arrived at chalet on Zäsenberg in rather more than 3 hrs., easy walking. Bed rather better than usual, being, in fact, two long feather beds of hay. Only goat’s milk (only goats and sheep and a few calves pasture here), which does not make coffee as good as cow’s. Gave 2 francs, with which the shepherd seemed content. Clouds from the N., and thunder and heavy rain before 10 o’clock at night. Plenty of avalanches all the way. The glacier is dirty, though not so bad as the Aar Glacier. One of the *moulins* of great size and beauty. Crevasses large, not very clear. The path to the glacier, which struck us as being so precipitous the first visit, seemed nothing out of the way this time.

*August 3.*—Morning doubtful, but the rain ceased, and though the clouds hung about the mountain-tops we made a start at 5. Took the shepherd to help us. Crossed the glacier again with little interruption from crevasses by 5.50, and began a desperately steep ascent up rocks intermixed with grass. No real danger as long as the head is steady, for the foothold is always sufficient. Continued in this way along the side of the Mettenberg, steep climbing varied by steep beds of snow till 7.15, when we again took in earnest

to the ice, or snow rather—for, though crevassed in places, I never made it out to be ice—taking advantage whenever we could of steep crests of rocks, which pierce through the coating of glacier. These crests were all regular hand and foot climbing, where I gave my pole to a guide and worked up hand over hand, quick and easy and not dangerous, the hold being good and the ascent not being so steep as to make it easy to fall. Still it is not a pass for weak heads. Weather uncertain; clouds constantly floating about the mountain-tops, and occasional falls of finely crystallised snow. Schreckhorn generally clear, Eiger nearly so, Finsteraarhorn always covered by deep mist. I never had a glimpse of him all day, which is a sore disappointment. Viescherhörner very white and beautiful; they appear to join on to the Finsteraarhorn—in short, to be a prolongation of its ridge towards Grindelwald—while the Straleck, or Mittelgrat,\* is a cross chain connecting the nearly parallel ridges of the Schreckhorn and the Finsteraarhorn. The character of the scenery on the ascent very similar to that of the Eismeer below; but the greater purity and brilliancy of the glacier gives a greater charm, and the higher you advance there is an indescribable something more of wildness. This is especially the case on the ridge of the Straleck, where the excessive steepness of the descent to the S., the pinnacles of black rock towards the Finsteraarhorn, and the white waste of snow beneath make a view most singular and striking as I saw it, and one which under a clear sky, and with all the vast mountains around visible, would be far more imposing. Still I do not think the passage can equal, as to the beauty and grandeur of the view, that of the Matterjoch [St. Théodule]; in itself it is more interesting from its greater steepness and variety. About  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr. from the top—perhaps more—we finally quitted the rocks and crossed a slightly concave surface of snow, not steep, to the crest of the Straleck, which we reached at 11.15,  $6\frac{1}{4}$  hrs. from the chalet. We had stopped pretty often, for the guides seemed to make a great point of corporally refreshing both themselves and me. The long ridge of the Schreckhorn, which extends in fact from the peak of the Mettenberg to Im Abschwung, is very grand, also the Viescherhörner, which hide, I conceive, the Mönch, and most of the Eiger. The grandest feature, the Finsteraarhorn,

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\* [On this old name of the pass see Herr Gottlieb Studer's *Das Panorama von Bern* (1850), p. 74.]

was always enveloped in mist, the worse for me; but the crest of the pass towards it was very grand—snow where we stood, with low rocks close by, and farther on high black pinnacles cutting against the white snow and mist which covered the side of the Finsteraarhorn. Towards the Schreckhorn runs a similar range, but less marked in character, or at least less seen, for to the N. there was a rising slope of snow; to the S. the character of the ridge was the same, as we saw afterwards. Between the black pinnacles above mentioned and the Finsteraarhorn lies the main body of the great glacier which descends to Grindelwald; it is lower, I was told, than the Straleck, but dangerous, perhaps impossible to pass, on account of its highly crevassed state. To the S. a vast body of glacier below; but whether the mountains were too much hidden by clouds, or my attention during the time we remained was otherwise engaged, or the view itself less striking, I remember, unfortunately, little on this side. The descent itself, indeed, was sufficient to engage one's attention—a slope of brilliantly white snow, filling up a gully in the perpendicular black rocks, steeper than almost any house-roof, and cutting against the rock some fifty yards off, so as to hide what was below. Usually this is filled with hard snow, in which steps have to be cut; and the descent may occupy from 2 to 3 hrs.; we did it in little more than 1, in consequence of the abundance of snow, which luckily held us up, being indeed nearly up to our hips.

Kaufmann here took the rope and went down first to reconnoitre—very cautiously. Bohren and the shepherd followed, keeping nearly the length of the rope distant. Having gone some way, and been absent perhaps ten minutes, they returned, and we made preparations to descend, Kaufmann first, I next, the rope running through a leather strap buckled round me, and the other three behind. So we went, I treading in Kaufmann's steps as far as I could, and striking my heels well in (this being the point he chiefly insisted on), to his perfect satisfaction—'Très bon, très bon.' As soon as we had gone the length of our tether we made standing-place, and the rest came down to us, and then off again, keeping close under the wall of rock on our right. So without danger or mischance, Bohren and Kaufmann singing the 'Ranz des Vaches' all the time, till within two or three hundred yards of the bottom, when Bohren gave a yell and set off upon a slide *a posteriori*, the snow being too soft to slide on our feet. I prepared to follow him, so Kaufmann, not alto-

gether trusting me, took my legs round his waist, and away we went together at a slapping pace, the others behind us.

Reached the bottom at 12.35, stopped to eat and drink, and sent back the shepherd with a flask of spirits, some bread and meat, and a couple of francs: no large pay. Heard him yell half an hour later from the top of the Straleck, so knew that he got safe so far on his way.

After getting a little way from the Straleck it is difficult to conceive where or how you or anybody else ever passed it. The scenery of the Aar [Unteraar] Glacier disappointed me; but this might be partly owing to the clouds. Four feet of fresh snow on the ice, which bridged over the crevasses and made the passage easier in one sense, more fatiguing in another, but less interesting decidedly. So far as I could see the chain of rocks which divide it from the Ober[aar] Gletscher is not very high or grand, nor that which ends in Im Abschwung; but we might be too much under this latter to see the higher peaks. Besides, the clouds came lower and lower, and we grew more intent on reaching our journey's end—Zinkenstock is the chief peak of the chain separating this from the Ober[aar] Gletscher. Reached the Abschweigungen [foot of Abschwung] in about 2½ hrs. at 3, and the 'Hôtel des Neuchâtelois'\*—full of snow, with its kitchen furniture, tables, &c., all lying about in wretched confusion—about ¼ hr. later. Cold heavy rain had now come on, and we thought of little more than getting to the Grimsel, which we did in about 2½ hrs., generally sharp walking, but with a halt. Luckily the heavy rain did not continue long. Grimsel, 6.50 P.M. Total time, nearly 14 hrs., including probably more than 1 hr. of stoppages. It would not be done so quickly, I should think, under all circumstances.

The pass is given in the map of the Oberland glaciers at 9700 feet French = 10,500 English [10,995 feet, according to the great Swiss map]—nearly 300 feet lower than the Matterjoch, and near as much higher than the Buet, being,

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\* [This was the stone hut built on the central moraine by MM. Agassiz and Desor's party in 1840, but which, owing to the great quantity of snow in and around it, they were forced to abandon in August 1843—a few days after Mr. Malkin's visit—for more comfortable quarters on the spot, high above the glacier and on its left bank, where the 'Pavillon' (later called Pavillon Dollfus) was built in 1843. The great boulder of the 'Hôtel' split during the winter of 1843-4, and its fragments were discovered in 1884 much further down the glacier (see *Alpine Journal*, vol. xii. pp. 177-8).]

in short, my second greatest height [the St. Théodule is 10,899 feet, and the Buet 10,201 feet, according to the latest surveys]. It is a very grand and curious one, traversing in its length one of the most extensive glaciers in the Alps, and is so far not difficult to a practical mountaineer that the notion of danger never occurred to me in any individual spot. And I have been more fatigued with easier days—for instance, with the Susten. Still it is not for all the world; and much heat, or much cold, would make it more fatiguing than I found it.

*Round from August 20 to 31, including Tignes, Col de Galèse, Aosta, Col de Collon, Col d'Hérens, Weissthor.*

*August 19.*—I dawdled and breakfasted till 8.45, when I set out with Paccard for Nantbourant, part of the intermediate time having been occupied in catechising Victor Tairraz, Professor Forbes's guide [in 1842] to Zermatt, &c.—a fine, intelligent young man, who is only an aspirant and may hope to be a guide a dozen years hence. Reached the 'Pavillon,' Col de Voza, at 12, having got a cast in a car for a couple of miles or more, and ascended very gently, on account of the heat. View very fine from col. Much to be recommended to any party with a lady to take a *char* to Les Ouches, and there saddle the mule or mules, which would make this excursion to the 'Pavillon' a very easy and pleasant day. The Glacier des Bossons and the cascades might be combined with this—making the day harder, however. 'Pavillon' civil and comfortable, as heretofore. Left it at 1, and reached Nantbourant at 4.10, making rather less than 6½ hours' walking. The descent from the Col de Voza and first views of the Val Montjoie excessively beautiful; duller for 2 miles on each side of Contamines, but the ascent from Notre Dame de la Gorge extremely fine, as is the evening view from Nantbourant. No one but myself. Supper: roast mutton, good; milk, delicious; tea, execrable; butter, not much better; honey, good. Coffee tolerable next morning. Paid 5 francs, which gave satisfaction.

I should have mentioned that, before completing the ascent, on reaching the bridge, there is a fine waterfall to be seen without going 20 yards from the road. Look out for a small path which leads to it. The depth and narrowness of the bed of the river are the most striking points—the volume of water large, this year at all events. The river on each side of the bridge is also remarkable. But the

finest fall of all is on the branch of the stream, which comes down from the glacier of Trelanlai [Trélatête], a short 15 min. from the chalet where you sleep, and just behind a noticeable group of chalets on the hill opposite. The height is not great, but the channel of the river most singular and remarkable for its depth, narrowness, and ruggedness; go higher on the left bank, and you find it still narrower—in one place so narrow above as to be easily jumped—probably not 3 feet over. Formerly a plank served as a bridge, but one frosty morning a woman going over it slipped and was killed, since which it has not been used. A passage formerly by the Trelanlai and Miage Glaciers from this spot into the Allée Blanche. The keeper of the chalet told me seriously that a company had been talked of to rearrange the route, which, he said, half a dozen men might soon do, by cutting stairs here and there in the rocks, the change in the glacier having now rendered the old route impassable. It must be very high, probably 11,000 feet.\*

*August 20.*—Morning very fine. Started at 7.30, visiting the cascade above mentioned, and returning to the road at some height above Nantbourant. Reached Plan des Dames at 9.30; from the upper end of it to the very summit almost all snow; and in the deep basin at the foot of the col the remains of the winter's avalanches lie, according to Paccard, to the depth of 60 feet or more. A few more such seasons and a permanent glacier here. Reached the cross on the ridge at 10.5; slow and steady.

Below the Plan des Dames, about opposite to the last chalet, you may turn towards the left and cross another col, considerably higher than the Fours,† but not commanding a remarkable view, according to Paccard, who has passed it twice. It lies to the left of a large round hump on the mountain ridge. After crossing the ridge you coast the mountain-side to the Col de la Seigne, without descending to Motet. Paccard says it saves 2 hrs., also that scarce a dozen of the Chamounix guides know it; but a guide may be got at Nantbourant, or higher.

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\* [This probably refers to the 'Col dit Infranchissable,' which was reopened to travellers by Mr. Eccles in 1870, and on the Miage side of which a silver mine was formerly worked (see *Alpine Journal*, vol. v. p. 278).]

† [Probably the Col d'Enclave, 8812 feet, is meant, though the Col des Fours is 8891 feet high. but possibly the easy glacier pass of the Col du Mont Tondu, 10,132 feet, leading direct from Nantbourant to the Col de la Seigne, is really referred to.]

Crossed the summit, and reached the highest ridge at the edge of the descent at 10.50. Here the way to the Col des Fours turns off. In crossing some of the slopes of snow deep, steep, and nervous; the scenery very desolate and grand. Saw a large flock of ptarmigan and the tracks of chamois.

Reached first chalet 11.30—the place where Campbell fell, just 15 min. higher. The storm [September 3, 1830], according to Paccard, not very severe. There seems to have been much mismanagement, and some blame attaching to the guide; had he compelled them to stop sometimes and turn their backs to the wind, probably they might have escaped. But they strove on, it appears, till Campbell dropped and died, and the other must have dropped very soon after.

Chapiu at 12.10. 1 hr. 5 min. from the top, but done rather quick. Hotel looks equal to that at Nantbourant. *Eau-de-vie* bad. Stayed 10 min. and started at 12.20. Valley dreary and treeless; rain the greater part of the way to Bourg St. Maurice, which we reached at 3.15. The Val d'Isère is rich and beautiful; the views of it, in descending, are very lovely.

Bourg St. Maurice is a narrow, dirty town, with a tolerable inn—*chez* Magot—where one gets bed, dinner, and fair wine. Walked in the evening a mile out, down the valley; soft and riant, with fine peaks in the distance.

August 21.—Heavy rain in the night; morning doubtful. Started at 9, and in about half an hour reached the village of Séez, where the [Little] St. Bernard road turns off to the left. Here Paccard stumbled on some return mules; and—more for his sake than for my own—I took 4 francs' worth out of them, being a mule for each of us up to Tignes. It may here be observed that the process of riding on a pack-saddle can hardly, under any circumstances, be made agreeable, however many blankets intervene between your person and it. There is something in the construction of the saddle altogether at variance with the human form. Left Séez at 11 and reached Tignes at 4.30, having stopped full 30 min. at an intermediate village, so that Murray's estimate of 5 hrs. from Bourg St. Maurice to Tignes is about right. The valley rich, and ascent not steep, until below Sainte Foi, to which there is a steep climb, and from that to the village of La Thuille first, and then Brennières [Brévières], the ascent is almost continual. The approach to Ste. Foi is strikingly beautiful; its situation is most commanding and

ornamental, and that of another village [Villaroger] on the opposite bank of the Isère is still more remarkable. After passing La Thuille, another quite new and more remarkable view occurs opposite the village of La Gurra, whose church, high perched on a commanding rock, is a striking feature. Directly above is a precipice, topped by the glaciers of the Chaffe Quarre [better known as the Mont Pourri], which here descend to the neighbourhood. The superb cascades—superb even at the distance at which they were seen—descend from the glaciers—one, a perpendicular spout, to the depth probably of 600 or 700 feet. This, however, and other parts of the journey lost much in grandeur by the upper peaks being rarely—and never entirely—visible. Higher up the village the small plain of Brennières is reached, after which a steep ascent through an extremely wide and grand gorge, wooded with magnificent pines, leads to the larger plain of Tignes. One spot is very remarkable—where the road crosses a deep side ravine, going down almost perpendicularly into the Isère, far below. Another steep and grand gorge, bare of trees and more savage, but less grand in its features, leads to another basin—that of Laval [La Val d'Isère], the highest village, which is reached in 1 hr. 30 min. from Tignes. Here larches are nearly extinct. A fine view of the pyramid of [the Grande Motte] is the most striking feature of the view. In character the valley resembles the higher basins of the Rhine—as at Schans, for example. I believe I lost much by the clouds; at one time distant snowy peaks were visible [Aiguilles de Trélatête and du Glacier], which I believe belong to Mont Blanc, and the loss of the Chaffe Quarre is a great loss.

A pass from Tignes to Termignon and Lanslebourg for mules, 3 or 4 hrs. over ice [Col de la Leisse]. It appears to join the route which descends from the Col de la Vanoise.

The inn here about the rudest I have been in, and the hostess almost rude in manner, but not disobligeing. Charge 6 francs, including a bottle and a half of wine and bread and cheese to take with us, leaving about 4 francs for the supper, tea, and breakfast—quite enough for what I had, and yet not as much out of the way as might have been expected.

*August 22.*—A morning without a cloud. Started at 5.30, having engaged a man to go to the bottom of the Little Colouret [coluret=couloir], for 8 francs—quite enough too. But the passage is certainly a little out of the ordinary, and to go up and down it is certainly hard work. The ascent

to the Col d'Iseran soon turns off to the right, passing high above the valley. Behind [S. of] the village of Laval is another pass [Col de La Rocheure or Larossor] to Lanslebourg, by Termignon, running under the foot of the Roche d'Or,\* a snow-capped mountain of great height and beauty, and joining the route from Tignes above mentioned. My guide here—Bock [Boch], a good mountaineer, who knows most of the country—says that there is not more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr. over ice for the mules, which is much more likely; possibly the man of yesterday spoke of the present year and meant snow.

The ascent from Laval is gentle to and beyond the hamlet of Fornet, after which a group or two of chalets is passed, the highest [Saint Charles] at 6.50—1 hr. 15 min. from Laval. Shortly after the path begins to ascend above a narrow gorge, through which the Isère foams for  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr. far under the path, which runs along ugly precipices. For nearly the whole distance at present the channel is covered over with snow, the remains of the avalanches, the water being visible only at intervals. At one spot a cross marks the spot where a priest, returning from Piedmont in 1816 (?), was robbed and murdered and cast down below. Emerging from this gulf (7.30) a large basin of beautiful pasturage [the Prariond] is reached, which is rented by a Piedmontese, who sends thither yearly a large flock of merinos, and pays 300 francs rent, a small sum enough for the extent. At the end of this basin is the foot of the glacier [de la Vache] from which the Isère issues, and it is surrounded and enclosed on all sides by snowy mountains of great height and beauty of form. Leaving the glacier on the right, you mount a steep promontory of green turf, between a deep ravine and the glacier. Stopped to eat high up it for  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr., took to the snow at 9.5, and reached the top of the pass at 9.50, not more than 4 hrs. of steady but not quick walking. Ordinarily there is no snow here, and the ice is not more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr. across. All the way up the Roche d'Or is an object of great and increasing beauty, rising in height as it is viewed from a higher level. From the summit the view is most superb. Looking back, the Roche d'Or and its neighbours bound the view, and on each side the steep

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\* [This name is not now applied, even in the patois form of Rocheure or Rossor, to any point in the neighbourhood. The peak meant is most probably the Grande Motte, which is in the Leisse valley and separated from the Rocheure valley by the ridge of the Pointe de la Sana.]

rocks and glaciated pinnacles of the valley of the Isère. To the E. the view is more extensive, but is still confined by the enormous mountains which bound the valley of Cogne, principally the Levanna, which separates it from the valley of Lanzo, a lofty, glacier-covered ridge of superb outline.\* The pinnacles immediately around on the crest of the mountain are also very grand. The view will be best seen by climbing the round-headed rock to the right of the path, from which a panoramic view of the whole is obtained. Not less striking is the view into the enormous depth of the valley below, from which a perpendicular wall of rock separates you. The glaciers stream down into it far below, and at present the entire basin is deep in snow; its bottom is always, I believe, covered with the remains of avalanches, but now, to within 50 or 60 feet of the top of the Grand Colouret, the whole is an amphitheatre of glittering white. Beyond is seen a lake [Lago Cerrù], separated from the upper plain or basin of Belotte [Bellotta] by another ridge scarcely less steep, though less high, than the Grand Colouret, but from this elevation the difference of level is almost overlooked; and still far below the depths of the Val d'Orco are seen towards Ceresole, which I conceive to be about the farthest point visible.

Formerly, in the time of the Revolution or the Empire, when the traffic over the Mont Cenis was closed, a considerable mule traffic took place over this pass. For mules to descend the Grand Colouret indeed was altogether impossible; but by making a considerable détour to the right, a descent, not so steep but that it could be made practicable by cutting steps in the ice for a long distance, could be effected into the plain of Belotta, and thence by mounting the side of the mountain on the left the Little Colouret was avoided and a practicable descent obtained.

On the other side, from the last chalet [Saint Charles] I think, another pass branches off, leading to the Val d'Aosta by the Col de Rhêmes, a valley of the same name. It is evidently a good bit higher than the Galèse, and there is much more glacier to cross—I believe about 2 hrs. The guide thought it harder than the Galèse, which war'n't nesheshury; but, as he seemed to think more of glaciers than rocks, I demur to that until I have crossed it.†

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\* [In reality the Levanna rises above the Lanzo valleys on the frontier ridge, but is separated from the Cogne group by the deep-cut trench of the Val d'Orco.]

† [The height of the Col de la Galise, or Galèse, is 9838 feet; that of

The Col de Galèse is a nick in the mountain, where the heat of the sun has melted a circular cavity in the glacier, leaving a wall of ice nearly perpendicular and 30 or 40 feet high at its middle. The ends, however, are lower; and the passage down to the rocks was made without any difficulty. Here begins the real difficulty and danger. They are slaty and shivery, and it is necessary to climb in and about, going down as you can for 60 to 80 feet, when the *talus* is at length reached and the danger is over. The rest of the descent ought to be over shingle and loose stuff, in which the feet take hold; now it was over snow, sometimes mixed with shingle, which made a loose mud, very unpleasant. But we soon got upon pure snow, soft enough to take good hold of the feet, and steep enough to look literally perpendicular when viewed from below. However by sticking the heels well in this descent (of several hundred feet, I should think) was easily passed, and then a long slope and the level of the plain of Belotta.

This being passed, we found ourselves on the edge of the Little Colouret, which being full of snow, the guide thought too steep to descend, so led round the rocks to the right and began a horribly steep descent through rocks and turf, traversing back and fore to the bottom of the Colouret, which we reached, probably in a shorter time than it seemed. The footing, however, and handgrip here are good, and there is little real danger if the head be firm, which is indispensable. A steep descent over stones conducts down to the level of the upper plain, where there are chalets; but without descending so far you pass, still on the left, considerably above the level of the lake [Lago Cerrù], a lonely little chapel, looking like a chalet—*Madonna della Neve*—on the right, at the edge of the next steep descent. Higher up than this are the chalets of Serue [Cerrù]. Much time and distance would be saved to the traveller to Aosta by striking up the valley to the left instead of descending farther, and sleeping at the higher chalets instead of descending to Chapis [Ciapili, sometimes wrongly called Ciapini], about an hour below. A broken bridge over a torrent coming down this valley, too broad to leap, involved us in considerable perplexity, and finally, after wasting half an hour, we had to

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the Col de Rhêmes is 10,046 feet according to the French, or 10,174 feet according to the Italian map; but about 3 hrs. over ice and snow are necessary in the case of the latter pass, though the glaciers are perfectly easy.]

return half-way to the chapel, where we found a bridge over the Orco, which we recrossed about 10 minutes below, and shortly after, after passing a desert cluster of large chalets, reached Chapis—wretched quarters enough, the cows being all higher. Reached the bottom of the Colouret at 11.10, being just one hour from the summit. I should think the descent could not be less than 2000 feet [from col to lake is 2159 feet], and from thence to Chapis at least 1000 feet more [1601 feet]; but these estimates are very loose, and the former may be much more. Larches grow above Chapis, but very scattered, and not large, and a little unripe barley about it. I should think the height of the pass could not be less than 9000 feet [9838 feet]. Brockedon says 10,000, but I doubt. The peasants call the whole group of mountains, including the mass on the left side as you descend, by the name of the Galèse [now known as the Pointe de la Galise or Punta della Galisia]. Brockedon\* calls the latter Mont Iseran [following the 1683 map of Borgonio], which name the people of Laval give to a mountain somewhere towards Lanslebourg, but I could not learn where. In short, the names of the mountains are almost inextricable. †

I should have mentioned another high glacier pass to Groscavallo, in the valley of Lanzo [strictly speaking, that one of the three Lanzo valleys which is called Valle Grande], from Laval, intermediate between the Col d'Iseran and the Galèse, passing between the snowy tops which bound the S. side of the Val d'Isère, and leaving the glacier of the Isère considerably to the left—in short, I suppose striking upwards somewhere near Fornet. ‡ In short, Laval abounds in passes and only needs a better inn. §

*August 23.*—A fine morning; mists at first, which cleared and gave a fine view over the mountain peaks. Started at

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\* [See the account of his visit, some time between 1825 and 1836, from the Italian side, to this Col—apparently the only one by an Englishman before Mr. Malkin's expedition—in *Blackwood's Magazine* for May 1836, pp. 649–653.]

† [See *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers*, 2nd series, vol. i. p. 355.]

‡ [The writer here makes a slip, for the valley of the Arc lies between the Laval and Lanzo valleys, so that it is physically impossible to pass directly from Laval to Lanzo. He was probably thinking of the Col Girard, leading from the Arc to the Valle Grande.]

§ [It was not till the summer of 1889 that a fair inn was opened at Laval by M. Moris, which may help to attract travellers to this excellent headquarters for mountain excursions (see *Alpine Journal*, vol. xiv. p. 518).]

4.35, after a very scanty or no breakfast, reached the broken bridge in 45 min., and after a very steep ascent the first and last chalets unoccupied at 5.55. A rapid ascent thence for 15 min. to the mountain plain, after which we bore much to the left to scale a crest of rocks, the top of which and summit of the pass [Col de Nuvolé or Nivolet, 8665 feet] we reached at 6.45, 2 hrs. 10 min.—if very steady not very quick going. Stayed 15 min. View over Val d'Orco, the Levanna, the ranges dividing it from the valley of Lanzo, and the head of the Galèse extremely grand; towards the Val Savaranche less extensive. A gradual descent over snow, where no snow should be, and then by a lake-side and over fine pastures, led in an hour, i.e. at 8, to the first chalets, which are extensive and contain 130 cows and very good milk. A guide of the country is needed for this passage. Had I been left to myself I should certainly have kept too much to the right and entangled myself in the wilderness of mountains between this valley and that of the head of the eastern branch of the Val Savaranche, where the only way is a 'strada delle camozze,' as my guide phrased it.

A long, dull, marshy plain extends for half an hour beyond the chalets; the pastures present the greatest extent of level ground that I have ever seen in the High Alps. Towards Cogne there is still the same extent of barren peaks, with very little pasturage, as far as I could understand, scattered among them, and no way to Cogne across them but for the chamois and their hunters. Indeed the shepherds said that to go to Cogne they should have to descend to Chapis, and go lower down the valley, which, if true, is the strongest possible proof of the utterly impracticable character of these mountains.\* They do, in truth, run into aiguilles and inaccessible rocks in an extraordinary degree; and such appears to be the whole character of the country between the Val d'Aosta and the Val d'Orco. Towards the valley of Lanzo the mountains seem equally high; but the slopes are rather softer, and the clothing of glaciers is more extensive.

After leaving the plain a rapid descent for perhaps 15 min. over rounded rocks—which, however, are not rubbed smooth like the Höllenplatte, and therefore do not, as it seems to me, bear testimony to the presence of an ancient

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\* [Recent explorers—Italian and English—have since 1843 made several passes across this range, and climbed all its pinnacles and peaks.]

glacier—leads to the edge of the great descent, where is placed a cross, the Croix d'Aroletta [or Croce Roley]. The view from hence is superb—down the Val Savaranche and up to its head, shut in by the splendid peaks and glaciers of the Grand Paradis. The continuation of the chain to the N., separating this valley from Cogne, is also extremely grand; the peaks are jagged like a saw for miles, and apparently quite inaccessible. If there be a path, as Murray says, from this valley to Cogne it must be a queer one—probably over the glacier of the Paradis—and the path to the Val de Rhêmes must be equally queer, for such a mass of aiguilles as the whole chain presents I have hardly seen.\* Indeed, the most striking feature of the valley is the excessive perpendicularity and height of the enclosing mountains. Far below the hamlet of Pont—only a spring and summer residence, as I understood—is seen, probably from 1500 to 2000 feet down [1221 feet]. A tolerable mule path, winding like a corkscrew, leads down this almost perpendicular hill-side, by which we reached Pont in 30 min. with little fatigue—no more than walking downstairs. From Pont the descent, though of course constant, is singularly level. To Gioux [Dégioz or Dégioux, the chief hamlet in the Val Savaranche] 2 hrs., where a little bad bread and sour wine were all that was to be had, and that with some difficulty. Let no one look to stay there for the night. The character of the valley continues grand, but very uniform. Murray hardly does it justice. A less pleasing feature is the multitude of crosses, indicating deaths, towards the lower part of the valley, which, as they occur where there is no possible danger in the path, unless from avalanches, seem to intimate a considerable amount of deaths from violence. They are, however, chiefly of the last century and the times of the war. About 2 hours below Gioux the valley becomes much more rich and picturesque, opening out as it meets the Val de Rhêmes; and the path quits the river and is carried, nearly level, along the mountain-side till it descends to Villeneuve by a long and fatiguing slope, much worse than, though not half so steep as, the descent from the Croix d'Aroletta. The cross is clearly visible from Pont, below,

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\* [Mr. Malkin did not foresee that some years after his visit the hunter king Victor Emmanuel II. would construct a bridle path over the Col Rosset from the Nivolet plateau to the Val de Rhêmes, and also another over the Col de Lauzon from Dégioz, lower down the valley, across to Cogne.]

and has a singular and impressive effect. From the heights above the Val d'Aosta there is a noble view of that valley and the Allée Blanche; but Mont Blanc was clouded, and we saw no more than what appeared to be the Grandes Jorasses.

Villeneuve is a detestable place, not even affording a *char*; so we had to walk on to Aosta, rather a slow 2.20 over dusty road and through not the best part of the valley. The approach to Aosta, however, is very beautiful.

Chapis to chalets of Nivolet, 3.25; Croix d'Aroletta, 50 min.; Gioux, 2.30; Villeneuve, 3.25; Aosta, 2.20 = 12 hrs. 30 min. Steady, but not very quick; a hard day.

*August 24.*—Heavy rain in the night and morning. Got up at 5 and went to bed again. Promising to clear all the morning, but did not till 3, after which a lovely afternoon. Wrote letter and journal till about 12. Mr. Duckworth and a party of ladies came from Courmayeur. Walked to see the Roman arches, which are striking. The bridge may have been over the Buthier formerly, but is now 100 yards E. of it—over a conduit of water which does not a quarter fill it—a path underneath. A fine specimen of masonry. The bottom of the tower of the prison, forming part of the walls to the N., seems also Roman. The church [Saint Ours], formerly belonging to the monks of St. Bernard [it is a collegiate church of Austin canons regular, but seems to have had no direct connection with the Austin canons regular of the Great St. Bernard], seems curious, and has a curious cloister, supported by small pillars curiously carved; the cathedral also seems worthy of a visit.

From 3 to 5 a delightful walk down the valley, through vineyards, walnut trees, and rich pastures, giving me a far higher notion of the loveliness of the valley than I had before. Great improvements in the town—the Place considerably enlarged, and a handsome hotel or villa built, and hardly finished, opposite to the detestable old 'Couronne,' which is still the 'poste.' Several large and handsome houses also lately erected. The 'Ecu du Valais' occupies half of the handsome façade of the town hall, unfinished within and half furnished. Master keeps the inn at Courmayeur also. Anyway I have had very comfortable quarters and enjoyed to-day, though an idle day. A glorious starlight night—a night of Italy—the Milky Way glittering like a stream of fire flies . . . a bright planet immediately over the black mountain peak between us and Cogne. N.B.—This is accessible, said to be about 8 hours, and no difficulty in the road; it is called Becca di Nona.

*Copy of a Letter from Aosta.*

August 24, *Wednesday*.—A long day, a good supper, a bottle of vin de Chambave, and a clean house. What more, my dear, can man desire in this world? You would hardly know Aosta again, it is so much improved—a splendid *hôtel de ville* built opposite the ‘*Couronne*,’ where we were before, and, adjoining it, a new ‘*Ecu du Valais*,’ with rooms new, high, white (all except the floors, which have a little of the old leaven), and airy. The master is an old friend of Paccard. . . . I wrote to you from Bourg St. Maurice. . . . The next day, up the valley of the Isère, was one of most exquisite beauty and grandeur combined. . . . We slept still an hour and a half higher (than Tignes), at Laval, in the rudest inn I ever slept in—to be an inn of any kind. Got some coffee and dry bread, however, for supper, and some half-hot meat, which might have been worse; and a double-bedded dungeon, in which Paccard and I slept, and slept right well. The day rather gloomy, which interfered with our enjoyment, as the high peaks were rarely visible.

Yesterday breakfasted early by peep of day, as we could, and started with a guide of the country to take us over the Galèse, about 4 hrs. from Laval to the summit. Of the High Alps I have scarcely seen a lovelier scene than the head of the Val Iseran [d’Isère]—beautiful pastures, enclosed on all sides by glaciers and peaks of unsullied white and beautiful form. Much snow, where there should be none; the passage of the glacier itself short, and of no difficulty or danger whatever. But for the descent of the Galèse towards Piedmont! I thought I knew something of the matter, but this beats cockfighting hollow—and the Straleck, into the bargain, being just as steep on the snow, with a most diabolical passage of 60 or 80 feet down a chimney wanting the fourth side (which would be a great convenience), with a comfortable glacier to break the fall, about 1500 feet below. However my guide seemed to regard it very much in the light of the king’s highway, and made nothing of my knapsack, having been used, as he assured me, to carry much heavier weights down—as a smuggler, I have very little doubt. Anyhow he was a very good guide, and old Paccard, with only one arm and a half, made no more bones.

It is a curious thing that of the persons whom I know to have crossed this—one of the worst passes of the Alps—three, including Brockedon, should have done it lame of one

arm. We slept at the chalets of Chapis, 3 hrs. below the summit; a short day, but we did not want to go lower down the valley, and had better have stopped sooner, for the cows were all higher, and we got no milk—nothing but a little very dry bread, some goat's milk, and wine—and slept in the hayloft. Started at 4.30 on a glass of wine; reached top of Col de Nivolet at 6.45—a desperate climb—and some chalets on this side at 8, where we got milk for breakfast; and right welcome, being, in truth, half-starved. Stayed 30 min., and continued the descent towards the Val Savaranche. View from the Croix d'Aroletta most superb. A perpendicular descent of 2000 feet by a mule path, and then about 5 hrs. of level descent towards Villeneuve, except a steep and fatiguing descent into the Val d'Aosta. . . .

To-morrow we start—weather permitting—for the Valpelline, meaning to recross that way into the Valais by the Eringerthal. . . .

*August 25.*—A morning and day without a cloud. Left Aosta about 7, and reached the village of Valpelline in 2 hrs. 30 min.—a very beautiful walk, turning off from the St. Bernard road, and crossing the stream from St. Rémy near the junction with the other branch from Valpelline. A rich walk, as far as the village, through fields and walnut trees. Victor took us to the house—or *campagne* rather—of a notary of Aosta, where we were received with an excess—or at least a profusion—of hospitality such as I never saw. Coffee in the first place, then, when we could not stop to dine, an omelette for all, with abundance of excellent wine. Found the father, son, and tutor all playing cards together at 10 in the morning to pass the time. Name of my hostess, who has been very and is still handsome, Rosalie Ansermin. House part of an old castle, as shown by the thickness of the walls.

The valley of Ollomont, which leads by the Col de Fenêtre to the valley of Bagnes, turns up to the left here, very narrow. Victor says that there is little ice or snow to cross, which is contrary to the usual statements. From Valpelline upwards the valley is narrow and the ascent pretty rapid. Left at 11.30, and reached the first church-village, Oyace, at 1.10, above which is a tower perched on a rock, a most picturesque object for a long distance below. Up to this village the ascent is very steep. The mountains at the head of the Val Grisanche continually bound the view backwards, while the sides are of the same very steep character as on the side of the Val d'Aosta—a collection of

aiguilles planted upon high precipices. Cultivation extends very high in this valley, which has the afternoon sun all up it, and is desperately hot in a hot summer's day. Reached Bionaz at 2.10; a wretched village, where we got some wretched wine. Indeed, all the Piedmontese mountain villages that I have fallen into on this route are detestable. Hence to Prerayen, 4.10. Rather undulating, but rapid mounting; done slow, however. Larch forests up to Prerayen, and some very fine old trees among them. Passed so many empty chalets that, being tired, I thought the real one never would come. When it did come it was a large one, with plenty of cows, and excellent good people in it, who did all they could for us. The mountain basin belongs to the Jesuits of Aosta, who have built a few chambers over one of the chalets, where they come to spend the hot season sometimes. Dry straw on the floor (their straw) served us all three for lodging, and with good 'couverture' did very well. Supped off polenta, milk, and dry bread; breakfasted on bread and milk—our own bread—with some polenta to take to the mountain; not bad.

A very grand range of snowy mountains at the head of the valley—the nearest the grand range called the Dent d'Erin [d'Hérens], stretching downwards parallel to the Val Tournanche. A pass [Col de Valcornère, crossed by Mr. Mulkin in 1860] from these chalets to Breuil in 6 or 7 hours, said not be difficult; it looks very steep; not, however, much glacier. These snowy mountains are seen from low down in the valley, and it is long before you get any nearer to them.

*August 26.*—Another morning without a cloud. Started at 6, ascending steeply up a side valley to the left [Combe d'Oren]. Passed a group of chalets, dug out of the earth and covered only with loose boards, the only sort of erection which will stand the avalanches, being in truth nothing more than a hole when the boards are removed and piled up. Reached foot of moraine at 7, and on turning it found a large vacant space, or basin, over which the glacier extended about 30 years back. The diminution here has been immense; whether it still continues or not I do not know. On the side of Evolena it reaches nearly to the trees, and therefore is near its greatest size. After crossing a flat we reached the beds of snow at the foot of the glacier, and began to ascend easy slopes at first, afterwards very rapid. Snow hard, and bore perfectly well, almost too hard. After ascending probably 300 to 400 feet we came upon the bare ice, which, however, did not last

long, and after a short ascent we entered upon a broad plateau, like the Grand Plateau on Mont Blanc, terminated by one or two slopes of snow leading to the col. It appeared quite near, but was in truth at a considerable distance. All this part of the route excessively grand. Above to the right is the Mont Collon [more probably the Mont Brulé, 11,881 feet], a grand peak, rounded at the top and forming a perpendicular precipice to the glacier; on the other side a very beautiful mountain [La Sengla, 12,146 feet], rising in gentle slopes, which might be ascended without much difficulty, I should think, and must command a most wonderful view, unless masked by the neighbouring peaks, which are not, perhaps, inferior in height. Reached the Col [de Collon] at 9.10, and rested on a group of rocks at the foot of Mont Collon, where the summit of the passage is marked by a small iron cross, merely stuck into a cleft of the rock, dated 1754. The rust has formed a sort of varnish on it, but has not eaten in the least into the metal. Lichens, and I believe a moss or two. I estimate, with the concurrence of the guide, the height of the passage not less than 9000 feet.\* Forbes measured it last year, and will probably somewhere publish an account of this and other heights, which see.† His method is by boiling water, combined with the barometer, I believe. Started again at 9.50. The glacier on this side is more crevassed than on the other, and the snow being softened by the heat, we proceeded with much caution, especially in descending the first slope, a little distance from the top, in which there was a large open gulf, under which we very carefully picked our way, and close to it. The mountains on this side are of the same character as on the other, but I think still grander; the double impediment, however, of a veil and blue spectacles is rather a bore, though very desirable on such a day as this. The passage winds on this side as well as on the other; so that there is never any distant view; this however, though a loss, adds rather to the grandeur of the immediate scene, which, as far as my experience has yet gone, is of the first order of glacier scenery. A little farther down Victor

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\* Height 10,333 English feet, by Forbes. [According to the Italian map the height is 10,276 feet, while the Swiss map makes it 10,270 feet.]

† [His narrative will be found in his *Travels in the Alps of Savoy*, pp. 273-287. The dedication is dated July 1, 1843, so that the book was probably published while Mr. Malkin was repeating Professor Forbes's 1842 round.]

pointed out the spot where he came last year upon the bodies of two men [more precisely, one body only was found by Forbes's party, the two others having been already recovered. See Forbes, pp. 280, 283], part of a party who in ascending, in the September [October] of 1841, from St. Martin, a village below Evolena, had been overtaken by the *tourmentes*. Five returned; the rest, three in number, perished. We were told at the chalet of Prerayen that they had taken too much *eau-de-vie*, which in bad weather, in the phrase of the master of the chalet, 'coupe les jambes.' The bodies have been removed to St. Martin. They also found two chamois, victims of an avalanche probably, robbed of their horns. A crevassed moraine to pass, and soon off the glacier, i.e. at 11.5, 1 hr. 15 min. from the col, having gained an hour at least on Forbes, who had, last year, great détours to make in order to turn the crevasses. A steep descent, sometimes over rocks, not a vast deal better than those of the Little Colouret, and afterwards sometimes down beds of snow, sometimes on the moraine, sometimes on level snow beside the moraine, in all which, however, we gained much in time and in fatigue on Forbes and [Bernard] Studer, the former of whom, being well versed in moraines, declares this to be the worst that he knows. Got finally off the glacier and its adjuncts and on the turf at 12.30. About level with the end of the glacier are three trees, growing close together, of unusual size. They are the 'pin des Alpes,' the highest tree that grows, called in the Savoyard and Piedmontese patois 'arolle' or 'arolla,' and it is from them that the Glacier d'Arolla takes its name. Gathered a group of fir apples in remembrance of one of the most striking passages that I have ever made, which I mean to take to England. From a little lower the view of the glacier, through larch woods, backed by the high mountains, dividing the valley from that of Bagnes, is very striking. The mountains [Dent Perroc, &c.] which separate this from the other branch [Ferpècle glen] of the Val d'Erin [d'Hérens] are excessively steep and grand—nothing but aiguilles and glaciers; scarce a pasturage, if one, upon them. On the crest there is the most perfect specimen of an aiguille of rock that I ever have seen, as fine as a needle almost [probably the Aiguille de la Za is meant].

The scenery of the valley [of Arolla], down to the point of junction, is very fine, and like that of Zermatt on an immense scale; the sides very high, and the precipices very deep. There is little or no level ground in the bottom—

nothing but a powerful torrent rolling in a very deep-cut bed.

From the pines to the village [Haudères] at the junction of the two valleys, 3 hrs., including a short rest, thence to Evolena about another—neither part done quick. Arrived at 4.30—10½ hours' continual walking, without including about 45 min. rest by the way; but the nature of the descent makes it harder than the number of hours. There is somewhere near the top of the Glacier d'Arolla a practicable path to the valley of Bagnes, which is only separated by one chain of mountains. This path goes round the head of the intermediate valley of Vesonce [? Hérémeuce], as the Col d'Hérens round the Einfischthal and Turtmanthal.\*

The descent to Evolena is not remarkable; and as far as I could judge, in a short morning's walk below, there can be nothing particular in the lower part of the valley. Evolena is a considerable village without an inn; people ill-clad on week days and unused to strangers. The curé would not take us in; and after much difficulty and waiting we got quarters in a house belonging to very poor but obliging people—name Fullonier (one or two *l's*). Nearly eaten up by fleas, who, however, did not keep me from sleeping. Supped off cheese soup, and an omelette, and poor wine. Paccard and Victor in a loft on the hay—better off than I. Forbes and Studer were obliged to get up at 2 o'clock in the morning in this village, to avoid being devoured.

August 27.—Another glorious day. People flocking in from the mountains, clean and well-dressed, and quite different from yesterday. The church, which is of ample size for such a valley, literally crammed. Women all in the same costume—a low-crowned beaver man's hat with a gay tinsel band round it, scarlet stomacher, white sleeves—looking in the mass very well.

The two Fulloniers—brothers—took a Genevese shopkeeper over the Col d'Erin [d'Hérens] last year, the day after Forbes passed it, and will willingly act as guides. N.B.—They had never been over before. One brother lives an hour and a half higher, towards the Ferpècle [chalets], and is concerned

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\* [The pass probably meant is the double passage of the Col de Seilon and the Col du Mont Rouge, both old passes known to the natives, but first traversed by travellers on August 17, 1849, the party consisting of Professor Ulrich, Herren Gottlieb Studer and G. Lauterburg, with a Glarus and a Haudères guide.

See Ulrich's *Die Seitenthäler des Wallis und der Monte Rosa*, 1850, pp. 85–90, and G. Studer's *Ueber Eis und Schnee*, vol. ii. p. 275.]

in, or chief proprietor of, the mountain. He accompanied us part of the way the next day, and appears to possess a very intimate acquaintance with his side of the glacier. By the same token he narrowly escaped breaking his neck on it.

Dined off cheese soup again and a chicken, and started at 1 o'clock for the chalet of Bricolla, which we reached a little before 5, having stopped full half an hour at the house of the brother, to give him and his mule time to eat. Took up a quantity of straw with us, for a bed, on the mule. The scenery of this [Ferpècle] branch of the valley is still finer than that of the other; nothing but a ridge of aiguilles divides the two. The ascent is rapid to the foot of the glacier, and still more rapid above it; and the end of the glacier itself is the finest thing of the kind I have ever seen. It is enormously high, and more pure than common, partly forming an abrupt wall at the summit of a rock, partly sweeping down over it. Wood growing very near the bottom, and not much moraine. The path rises very high above the glacier, and is carried along very considerable ugly precipices. The view of the glacier and of the neighbouring heights is superb, commanding to the right the peaks around the Col de Collon, and on the left the Dent Blanche, or Dent d'Erin. This is not to be confounded with the Dent d'Erron or Orron [d'Hérens], at the head of the Valpelline, before mentioned.

Reached the chalet a little before 5, just in time to escape a tremendous thunderstorm, which came up in double quick time from the Bernese Alps. The lightning vivid, and the crash of thunder magnificent; rain and wind very heavy. Chalet very rude, but delicious milk. Slept with Paccard and Victor on our straw in an outbuilding, of which there are several—resembling chiefly a dog kennel, being built and roofed of rough stone, without door or window, only a hole just large enough to crawl in—inside hardly big enough to lie straight. Victor comforted me for the closeness of our quarters by the assurance that 'plus nous sommes gênés moins nous aurons froid;' and certainly I did not find it cold. Got some coffee made in the usual way and delicious new-churned butter. Early to bed, i.e. about 7.30. Storm gone; night promising.

*August 28.*—A cloudless morning. Guides awoke very early, made breakfast, after which I lay down again till called to start, which we did at 4.30, as soon as light enough to see our way. An hour's walk, without much rising, brought us to the edge of the glacier, which we mounted up

steep slopes of snow, covering probably the moraine, which in common years would be visible. But in no part on this side of the pass did we ever see the ice; it was all one dazzling sheet of pure snow. Last night's rain, frozen on the surface, rendered it more than usually slippery, and great caution was required in crossing the slopes. Last year Victor and Professor Forbes descended from the chalet to the glacier, and had a difficult and fatiguing ascent by the glacier and its moraines, parallel to the course, far higher, which we made easily upon the turf. Our course upon the glacier, still parallel to theirs, across the slopes, south, till we came to a crest of rocks, along which we turned east at right angles to our former course; still parallel to the course of Forbes, who had a difficult and dangerous ascent by the glacier at the bottom of this wall of rocks, of which we traversed easily the top, the heat of the sun acting on the rocks having just melted off the snow a space sufficient to leave room for a man to pass. Traversed this with much care, and at the end dismissed Fullonier, whom we had brought thus far to point out the way by which he returned last year from Zermatt. We were now nearly opposite to Monte Rotta [Mottarotta], a perpendicular rock in the middle of the glacier crested with a precipice of ice, which detaches itself in avalanches, having been about an hour, or rather better, on the glacier. The steepest slopes were passed, and though the ascent to the level of the Monte Rotta, which is left considerably to the right, is steepish, there is never the least danger from slipping, even with the snow frozen, as now. Once upon this level and you have a large undulating plain, with scarcely a crevasse visible this year, rising in rounded slopes to the col—easy and delightful walking. The sun by this time was hot, burning hot on the bare skin, but I never experienced either heat or cold to annoy; the temperature was delicious, with no more than a gentle breeze to temper the heat of the sun. The views on the ascent had been extremely grand; the glacier itself, with its rounded swells of glittering white, with here and there an open gulf, just to remind one that there are such things as crevasses and to be on one's guard, is an object of exquisite beauty. Behind, the vale of Evolena, far in the depths; and beyond the Valais, which was filled with vapour, like a sea of smoke, the Bernese Alps from the Oldenhorn to the neighbourhood of the Gemmi never, however, very distinctly seen. On the left the glacier is overtopped by the superb aiguilles at the head of the Einfischthal, and

the Dent d'Erin or Dent Blanche; on the right a perfect view is commanded of the whole chain which separates the Glacier of Ferpèche (on which we are) from the Glacier d'Arolla. The Glacier of Ferpèche itself divides into two branches [Mont Miné and Ferpèche proper], one of which runs up towards the Col de Collon, and I suspect affords the passage, of which Brantschen spoke at Zermatt, into the Val Tournanche, stopped some time back by the fall of part of the glacier. But the position of this passage is a matter of considerable puzzle to me.\* A high chain of rocks divides the two branches of the glacier, on the lower end of which, on a height seemingly inaccessible, is placed a cross, visible from the valley below. The rocks, though scarped on this side, afford a pasturage on the other, and sheep are driven across the glacier, a worse passage seemingly than the Mer de Glace. I should have mentioned that from the chalet and its neighbourhood the parallel parabolic stripes, spoken of by Forbes in his published letters, are beautifully seen, and have a curious and beautiful effect.

The view from the Col [d'Hérens] is indescribable. I believe the reason why it is said that people never see anything from the top of Mont Blanc is that they can give no clear account of it, combined perhaps with a certain indistinctness from the rarity of the air. There is an immensity in the High Alps, when seen from these elevations, which the mind can hardly take in; and after using all your eyes for half an hour you find on the descent that you have but a hazy recollection, and wonder what you were doing on the top not to know more about it. The crest of the pass is in general a mural precipice, topped by ice. About the middle of it is a small point or aiguille, to the west of which we directed our course, Forbes having tried the east side (when he took his observations) in vain the year before. He descended here what seems a vertical wall, and within 15 feet perpendicular of the glacier was obliged to return to the top (a great height, probably 400 or 500 feet) by an impassable precipice of that height only owing to the lowness of the ice. The way, however, was impassable, for there was no getting down to the rocks in consequence of the

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\* [The Col des Bouquetins is probably meant, which leads, however, into the Valpelline, not into the Val Tournanche, as no direct communication is physically possible between the latter valley and the Ferpèche glacier.]

overhanging snow;\* and going some distance to the S.W. we took Forbes's actual course, down a very steep slope of rock, deeply covered with snow, which by this time was soft enough to plunge in mid-thigh deep. Excessively steep, but no real danger, for we could not well fall out of the snow. After a long descent we were warned of our arrival on or at the glacier both by a more easy slope and a suspicious-looking crevasse—no more than a break in the snow, but long. Within a few yards of it Victor sat down, and shot it in a slide upon his caudal extremity; then planted himself firm below, with a good grip on the rope. Paccard and I followed his example without difficulty.

Being now on the ice, one difficulty was surmounted. From above we had seen the glacier in all its extent, covered wholly with snow, so as only to show here and there large gulfs and the largest crevasses interspersed with bridges of snow. The upper glacier divides itself into two branches, one of which sweeps round under the Dent d'Erron [d'Hérens] and the Matterhorn, the other under the Dent Blanche, the direct course of the ice being impeded by a wall of rocks in the middle of the valley, which maintains the upper glacier at its level and compels it to descend by these two ice cataracts, which of course are impassable. Our way led to the south, guided by a black blunt-pointed aiguille in the chain of rocks, which seemed near at hand, but was in truth distant, and we were besides obliged to make considerable contours to choose the best passages. The snow here very soft and fatiguing to pass, from the effort made in plunging more than knee-deep in it.

I must return, however, to the col, as I see I have only described one half of the view, and that not the best, for the view to the south is far superior to that to the north. For foreground you have the precipice and the deep, deep valley of ice below; to the right the Dent d'Erron [d'Hérens], a sheer precipice on this side rising to a blunt point. In front, and seemingly at hand—for the real distance can scarcely exceed 3 miles—is the giant Matterhorn, going at a leap 8000 or 9000 feet into the glacier below, not with the graceful curve which he shows to Zermatt, but in a dark deep-recessed mural precipice, fringed by the broken edges of the great

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\* [This passage was forced on September 13 and 14, 1871, by Miss Brevoort and Mr. Coolidge's party on their way to and from the Dent Blanche, and is now known as the Wandflubjoch (see *Alpine Journal*, vol. v. p. 277; vol. xv. p. 65.)]

glacier which covers his northern flank and extends to the St. Théodule Glacier. Beyond him the great Gorner Gletscher is seen in all its length, rising to the top of Monte Rosa, which is full in front, the Breithorn and Lyskamm hidden by the Cervin. Still to the left is the whole extent of the Findelen Gletscher, rising with a gradual slope to the Weissthor, and flanked by the Strahlhorn, beyond which stretch, still leftwards, the peaked summits and glaciers between Zermatt and Saas. Zermatt is not seen, but the valley of Zmutt, the heights of the Schwarzsee above it, and the Reifelhorn [Riffelhorn] seemed melted, as it were, almost into a plain, though there is little enough of plain about them. We stayed more than half an hour, ate some chicken, and drank some wine. I had not much appetite, but experienced no difficulty, or sensible oppression of breathing, either here or on the ascent, nor either of the guides. Victor said he had not suffered from it even on ascending Mont Blanc, which he had attempted six times and only completed once.

Left chalet at 4.30; edge of glacier, 5.30; level of Monte Rotta, 7.10; col, 7.50 = 3 hrs. 20 min. of ascent. Stayed till 8.30 and reached the crest of rocks [Stockje] forming the second great descent to the Zmutt Glacier at 9.55. Last year this was covered with flowers, a sort of *jardin*; now it presented alternate slopes of snow and rock, with flowers beginning to sprout, of which I gathered a few, unknown to Paccard, of delicious scent. There is no difficulty here till within 100 feet or so of the bottom, where the slope ends in a precipice, down which there is a very steep couloir, by which it is necessary to descend when the glacier, which here is considerably inclined, is in too bad a state to traverse higher. This year, however, by keeping to the left, we got down over slopes without difficulty to the ice, and struck across the glacier in the direction of Mont Cervin, at the foot of which the hard slopes of snow which have descended in avalanches offer a safe track. Saw here a herd of 5 or 6 chamois, who piloted us across, it being the received opinion that there is no danger in following the track of these strange animals across a glacier; and in this short distance I had occasion to see how nicely they chose their way over the best passages, even where the crevasses were covered strong enough to bear them.

By this time we were nearly clear of the snow, and much precaution was necessary, as the snow, if masking a crevasse, would not bear a man. Victor led the way, sounding

before him at every step; but, spite of all our care, Paccard got into a small crevasse—which Victor and I had passed—middle-deep, but was soon lugged out by the rope. Once on the ice all danger was over, for to see the difficulty is to avoid it. Many large crevasses, which it would have cost us trouble to turn, were filled up level with the hard winter's snow; and we made quick way, especially on the lower part of the glacier, which contains hardly a crevasse.

*(Extract from a Letter to A. T. M.—Account given by Paccard of this Misadventure.*

'He told me of your saving him at a crevasse, which, he said, was bridged over with snow; that you had ropes, which, however, were not attached; and that you, with great presence of mind, thrust the long and stout *bâton*, made out of root, which you carried, under his arm.'

Continuing our course diagonally towards the great buttress of the Cervin, on which the Schwarzsee is situated, we reached the lateral moraine at 12.15, and sat on the stones to finish our chicken and wine. The descent of the second crest had taken from 9.55 to 10.40, some time being occupied in hunting for the best passage, and our shoes so softened by the snow that it was necessary to descend circumspectly. The passage of the glacier to this point, therefore, took about 1 hr. 30 min. Another hour brought us off the ice, which, for a long distance from its extremity, is covered wholly with stones, and on to the turf, very near the place at which our party of ladies descended from the Schwarzsee three years ago; kept down the right side of the torrent through the magnificent forest of larch and the 'Pin des Alpes,' and thought the valley even more glorious than the last time—more full of subjects for the painter—perhaps because one was glad to return to mother earth after so long a sojourn in the neighbourhood of the skies. Instead of crossing the high bridge, which has been rebuilt, Victor says, still higher than before, we kept all the way on the right bank, for the sake of the shade—a magnificent walk, with deep precipices, covered with larch, going down to the torrent—not a walk for a dark night. This may be rather longer, but it is more beautiful than the way over the bridge, on the other side of the valley. After a long and rapid descent we fell into the way from St. Théodule, and reached Zermatt, right glad, at 3.15.

Left chalet, 4.30; entered glacier, 5.30; top of Monte Rotta, 7.10; col, 7.50 = 3 hrs. 20 min. ascent without stopping

more than to breathe. Left col, 8.30; top of second descent, 9.55; bottom of it, 10.40; moraine under the Cervin, 12.15; reached the turf, 1.30; Zermatt, 3.55 = 6 hrs. 15 min. of descent. Total, 9 hrs. 35 min. of going.

Inn at Zermatt much improved by the new building; \* no meat, but soup, omelette, rice and potatoes, and stewed plums made a good dinner—not too inflammatory. Saw the Oran, who grinned with pleasure, and turned up his eyes when he heard whence we came. Engaged him for to-morrow for the Weissthor. Saw an eagle on our descent for the first time, far below us, on the second chain of rocks.

*August 29.*—Saw Brantschen, and questioned him as closely as I could about the Weissthor, which he avers to have passed, with another guide and an Englishman, some years ago. Says that the passage is not very difficult when the snow is not too hard, which I interpret to mean that there are very rapid slopes to descend on the side of Macugnaga.

Started at 2 and reached the village of Findelen in rather less than 2 hrs., easy walking. A splendid evening. Passed the time very pleasantly till sunset, supped in a clean chalet, and went to sleep in a grange with the guides on heating hay—not so pleasant. Got well through the night, however.

*August 30.*—Another cloudless morning. Up long before light; made coffee, and started at 4, before Orion had paled his fires and before there was good light to walk by. This, however, soon amended itself. Came fairly abreast the foot of the Findelen glacier in 30 min. It is of great height, and has considerably retrograded, as the bare space at the end of it testifies. The ascent continues in a deep valley between an old moraine and the mountain, and after some time mounts and is carried along the top of the moraine, which is now covered with a scanty vegetation and distant by a considerable interval from the ice. About 2 hrs., or rather more, brought us to the foot of a black rock, bordering the

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\* [The change is thus described by M. Desor in his *Excursions et Séjours dans les Glaciers*, 1st series, 1844, p. 114: 'Depuis lors' (his first visit in 1839) 'la petite maison du docteur de Zermatt a fait place à un grand et bel hôtel où l'on est fort bien logé, dit-on. La cuisine s'est singulièrement perfectionnée; on y dîne confortablement et le mouton n'est plus le seul et unique mets. Mais comme balance de ces agréments on a—des touristes!']

glacier, which there was some difficulty in passing, the glacier being too crevassed to traverse. This gave occasion for some very pretty scrambling between the two. Soon after entered fairly on the glacier, which is here none of the best—in short, to use a favourite expression of the guides, ‘bien mauvais.’ The snow, however, was very hard and bore us well across the crevasses; and it was not long before the difficult region was crossed, and nothing remained but a series of undulating swells to surmount, free from crevasses and danger. Little fatigue, except from the increasing rarity of the air, by which Peter was very considerably knocked up; neither Paccard nor Victor felt at all affected. The direction lies very close to the Strahlhorn, which rises immediately from the edge of the Col towards Macugnaga. Opposite is the peak of Monte Rosa, for it is this point, and not the more massive one nearer to the Lyskamm [=the Twins], which is considered to be the summit. Nothing can be grander than the scenery of the glaciers, and it is remarkable to see how even the Cervin himself from this height loses a good deal of his imposing proportions. The Col d’Erin still maintains itself on a level, or nearly so, but we agreed in thinking the Weisssthor a little higher. [According to the Swiss map the New Weisssthor is 11,959 feet high, and the Col d’Hérens is 11,418.] From the summit the view is most superb, finer even than that from the Col d’Erin. Beneath a deep and impassable precipice, extending from the Strahlhorn to Monte Rosa, crested this year with an overhanging drift of snow, probably from 25 to 30 feet in height. About the middle of the col is a rock, which rises to some height above the passage; the sun had melted the snow at its extremity and left the black points bare, while above it rose an enormous billow of snow, curling over, as if ready to break, to the height, I should guess, of 80 to 100 feet. I never beheld so singular and beautiful an object. Deep below the great glacier of Monte Rosa, with the ridges of the Pizzo Bianco sweeping round it, white and polished as the silver horn of the Jungfrau, the glacier itself tossed into enormous hills of snow, and these undermined by deep caverns of ice. The valley of Macugnaga and of Turloz are down deep out of sight, as is also the Lago Maggiore, for the intervening range of mountains rises to a great height, and though the plains of Lombardy must, I have no doubt, be visible, they were hid by the vapour, which by 9 o’clock was curling up

from the village below. It is a view difficult to take in, more difficult to describe, but not to be forgotten.

Reached the top in 4 hrs. 45 min.—not quick walking—from the chalets, which are little more than 1 hr. 30 min. from Zermatt. It might, therefore, be done in a day by starting very early. But it is very desirable to be early on the glacier, the lower part of which is none of the best. But for so great a height it is an easy ascent.

Passed the traces of many chamois, but saw none, also the traces of several wolves, on their way apparently to the Italian valleys. Several sheep had been worried lately; and a meeting took place between one of these animals and a chamois hunter on the mountain above the chalets, when both were so frightened that they ran away—the hunter without firing.

Returned to Zermatt by a different route, traversing the broad plateau of ice which intervenes between Monte Rosa and the Strahlhorn to the edge of the ridge which forms the prolongation of the Reifel. The highest point of this is called the Stockhorn, I think; it forms a blunted pyramid of little height above the glacier, and from this point a continued line of rocks bounds the Gorner Gletscher to the Reifelhorn and below. These heights are now covered with snow. Leaving the Stockhorn on the right, we gradually descended to the level of the glacier, which we reached without difficulty (the rocks here being far less steep than on the Col d'Erin) in about 3 hrs., of which the half was occupied in traversing the high plateau. No difficulty, and few crevasses occurred in this route; and, if no very great difference exist in other years, I should recommend the descent to be always made by this route, as, even in case of the Gorner Gletscher being bad to traverse, there can never, I think, be any difficulty in descending along the ridge of the Stockhorn and Reifel. The power of crossing the upper plateau, however, must always be left to the consideration of the guides. About an hour of the Gorner Gletscher, after which we began again ascending by the rough path towards the Reifelhorn, which we passed, and descended to Zermatt in about 2 hrs. after quitting the ice. This route is longer by an hour than the other. Total, near 11 hrs. going—i.e. 4 hrs. 45 min. ascent, 6 hrs. descent.

I think the question of a pass to Macugnaga is settled. Brantschen and Damatter both assert they have passed it—the former with a traveller and another guide, the latter with two fellow countrymen. Damatter pointed out the

way, which is immediately round the corner of the Strahlhorn, on a narrow shelf of rocks, and, as far as I could see—not very far—it did not appear very difficult. But this year it was unapproachable, on account of the curling drift of snow, which overhung all the crest of the pass. The unseen descent may be very difficult. Victor had reconnoitred it from Pedriolo, and could not make out how or where it was to be made.\*

*August 31.*—Another cloudless morning. Inn at Zermatt improved: better wine, cooking; and new rooms built, excellent bed, and altogether quite comfortable.†

(*To be continued.*)

## NEW EXPEDITIONS IN 1889.

### *Mont Blanc Group.*

PIC OR AIGUILLE DU TACUL.—This was ascended three times in July last from the Glacier de Léchaud by a small tributary glacier, which has for its southern boundary the ridge on which the Capucin Rock is. This glacier is called by the authoress of 'The High Alps in Winter' the Glacier du Capucin. From the *bergschrund*, at the head of it, the route is straight up the rocks to the peak, without touching the snow couloir leading to the Col du Tacul, described in the abovenamed book. About 6 hrs. from the Montanvers suffices for the ascent, and the descent may well be made by either of the well-known routes. This variation, which does not seem to have been recorded, is strongly recommended, as both the glacier and rocks, without being difficult, are decidedly of a more interesting nature than those leading direct from the Lac du Tacul or by way of the Glacier des Périades; it also affords a greater variety of scenery, including a near view of the Capucin Rock.

The first of these ascents was made by Messrs. J. W. Wicks and E. W. Henderson on July 19.

\* [It may be well to recall here that Mr. Malkin, in his notes sent to these pages in 1880 (see *Alpine Journal*, vol. x. pp. 44, 45), points out that Damatter's route would have led to Mattmark and not to Macugnaga. Dr. Schulz thinks that this pass lay further to the south, and would have led to Macugnaga (*S. A. C. Jahrbuch*, vol. xviii. p. 179), but Mr. Conway's view (*Alpine Journal*, vol. xi. p. 202), that it was really the Rofel Pass, seems to be the true solution of the puzzle.]

† [Mr. Malkin sent a revised copy of his notes on the passes he crossed in 1843 to the third edition of Murray's *Handbook for Switzerland*—published in 1846—and it is well worth while comparing the two versions, which correct and supplement each other.]