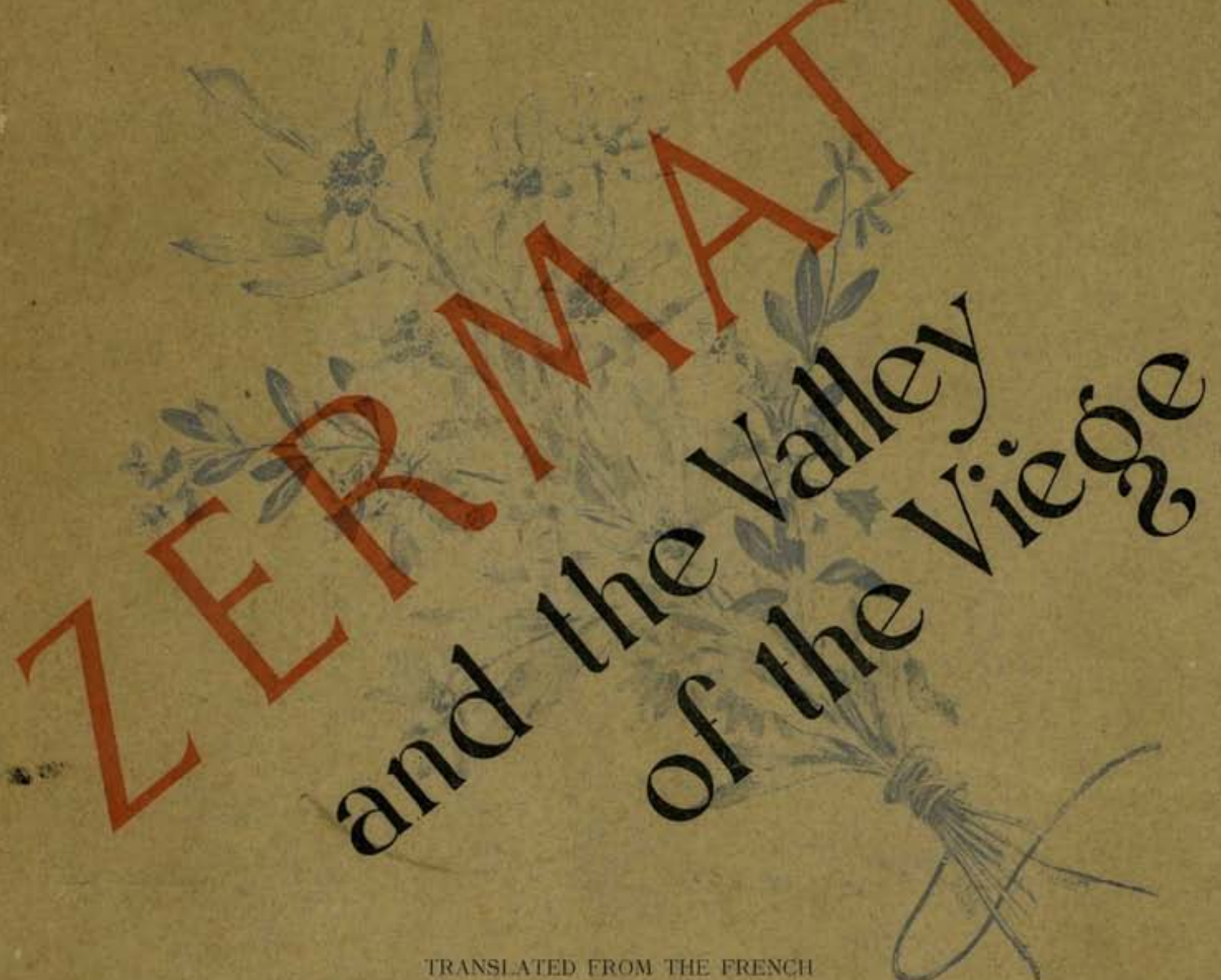


EMILE YUNG

ZERMAATT
and the Valley
of the Viege



TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

Mrs. WHARTON ROBINSON of LONDON.

GENEVA.

E. THÉVOZ & Co.

3, Rue du Mont-Blanc, 3.

LONDON.

J. R. GOTZ.

150, Shaftesbury Avenue, 150.

1894

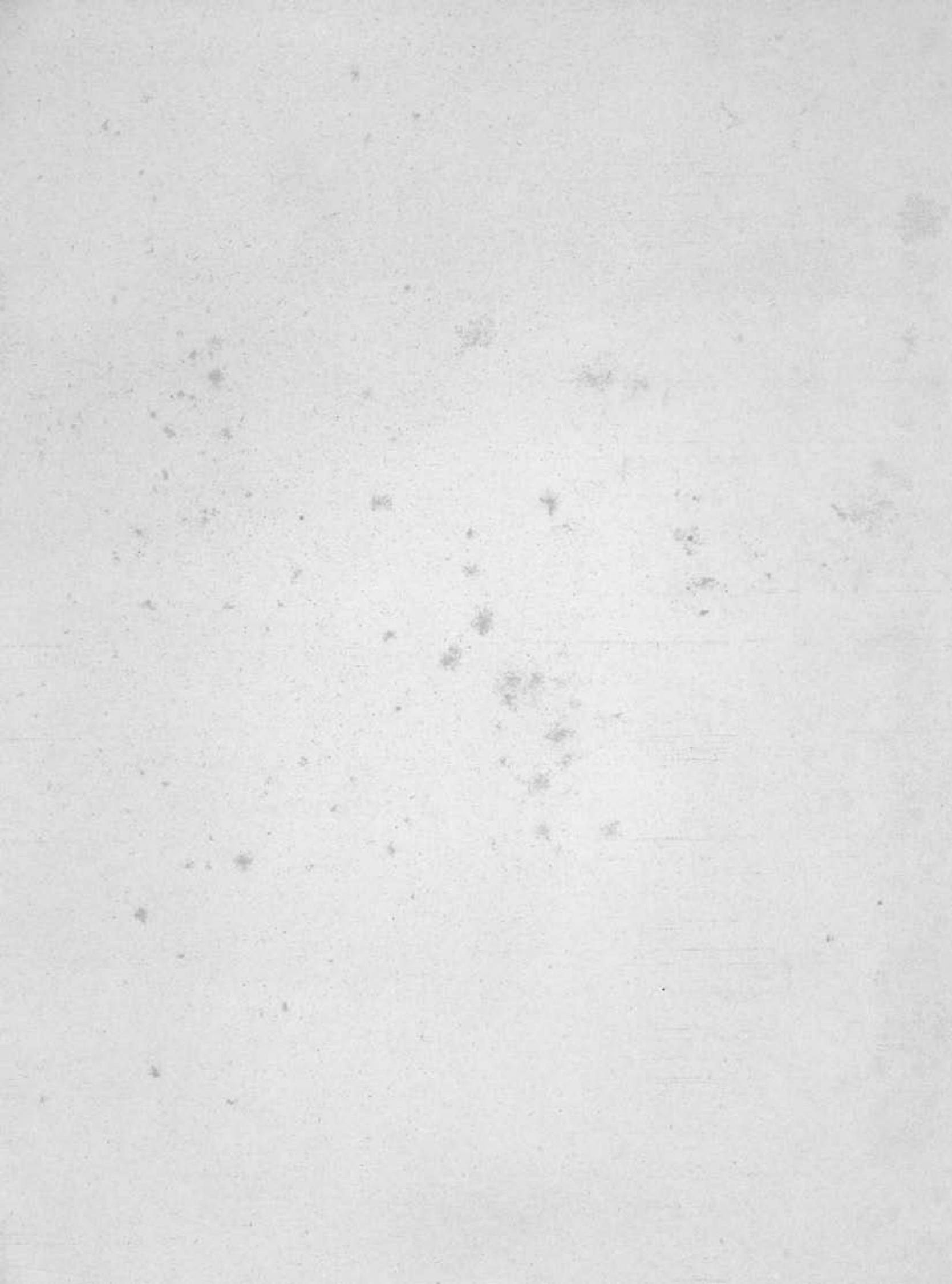
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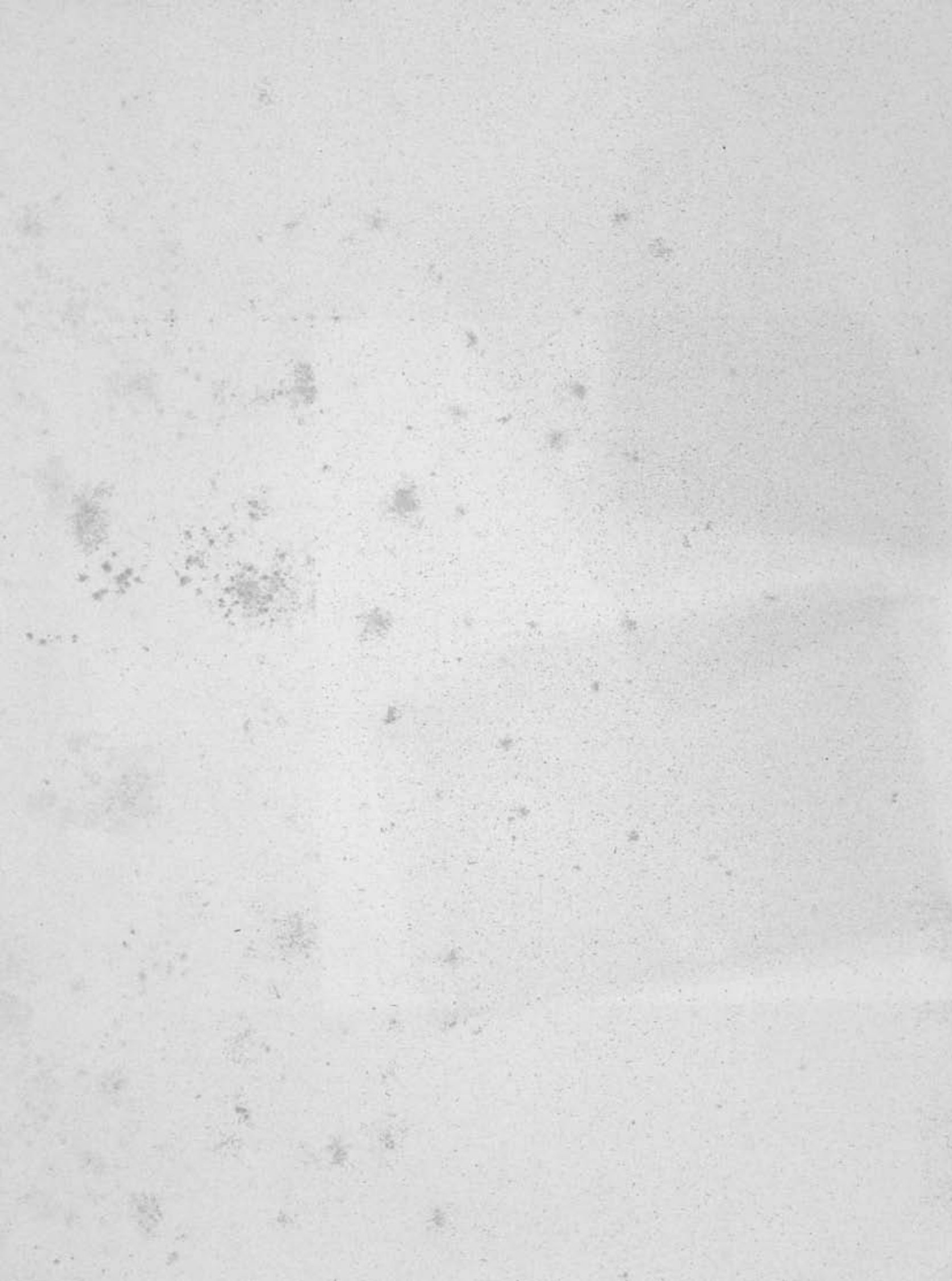
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Zermatt

AND THE

VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.

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ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



VIÈGE.



Zermatt

AND THE

VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



THERE exists in the heart of the Pennine Alps, near the group of Monte-Rosa, an incomparable centre for excursions :—a little village surrounded by green pastures, many-tinted rocks, and the dazzling whiteness of the eternal snows ; one of the most striking and grandiose scenes in Switzerland.

Innumerable beauties are assembled in this spot ; pleasant paths that plunge into the shadow of the pine-woods, pastures enlivened by tinkling cattle-bells, vocal waterfalls, deep ravines, fields of wild-flowers climbing to the very edge of the glaciers, vast tracts of untrodden snow, proud and lofty peaks, an azure sky swept sometimes by awful tempests :—every harmony, every contrast, the charms and terrors of nature in her glory.

In this little corner of the world is to be found wherewithal to excite the curiosity of the learned, and to satisfy an artist's aspirations ; to move the most sluggish mind, and to strengthen the most desolate soul. For such reasons as these it is, no doubt, that in our restless times thousands of travellers flock yearly to this spot. The weary and the pessimist assuage their moral lassitude, and those whose malady is merely physical, are restored and, as it were, transfigured, by the revivifying breath of the

heights. All carry away with them fresh energies and aptitudes for feeling, comprehending,—in a word, for living.

The longitudinal valley of the Rhone, running nearly east and west, is somewhat monotonous, in itself despite its numerous little towns and hamlets. It is however agreeably varied by a multitude of branches lurking half hidden among the hills, and delicious in proportion as they are concealed from casual observation : we mean the lateral vallies, mysterious enough a century ago, but now open to every traveller. At each step a new surprise, an unexpected view awaits us. The torrents by which these side vallies have been formed, flow more or less directly towards the Rhone by irregular and tortuous channels. They descend, bounding from rock to rock in cascade after cascade, from the great glaciers of the Bernese and Valaisian Alps. Vestiges of an ancient splendour, minute *débris* of frozen streams which covered Switzerland during the glacial period, they roll, with a kind of melancholy, their greyish waters over the fallen boulders in the depths of the gorges ; they polish and wear away the gneiss, schist, and other primitive rocks which form, so to speak, the skeleton of this beautiful country ; constantly eating out their beds deeper and deeper, and carrying away by degrees immense quantities of material which they transport to the Rhone, and which the Rhone in its turn distributes all along its course as far as Lake Lemman, raising it's bed and gradually filling up the valley. Nowhere else, probably, can the observer obtain a better idea of the slow work of erosion,—the incessant chemical and mechanical action of water, filing away and disintegrating the mountains.

The most picturesque, and therefore the most frequented, of the lateral vallies are those to the south. The most celebrated of these is the *valley of the Viège*, taking its name from the decayed city near which it debouches, and it is this latter that we now propose to visit.

Beyond Stalden the valley of the Viège divides into two branches : the

valley of *Saas* to the east, and that of *St. Nicholas* to the west. They are separated from each other by the group of the *Saasgrat*, on *Mischabels*, and bounded on the east by the *Weissmiess* and the *Fletschhorn*, and on the other side by the *Weissborn*, the *Rothhorn*, and the *Gabelhörner*;—all rivalling each other in magnificence.

The valley of *Saas* is especially famous for the horrible ravages which nature has wrought there:—avalanches, inundations, landslips, and other similar catastrophes, still commemorated here and there by chapels and shrines. It is somewhat narrower and shorter than its neighbour, but quite as wonderful. Like the *St. Nicholas* valley, it is watered by a torrential little river, the *Viège de Saas*, which joins the *Viège du Gorner* at a little distance below *Stalden*, and flows at the bottom of a ravine whose depth in certain places exceeds three hundred feet. Its sides are clothed with larches sheltering the rarest alpine flowers, and by verdant meadows studded with rustic chalets. It is a favourite haunt of naturalists and painters, the former of whom find an abundance of plants, insects, and minerals; and the latter the most enchanting subjects both for form and colour. The principal localities of the valley are *Saas-im-Grund*, and *Saas-Fée*; and from the head of it, the pass of *Montemoro* leads to *Macugnaga* in Italy.



* * *

DESPITE all its seductions we turn aside from the valley of *Saas*, in order to concentrate our attention on the beauties of its sister valley *St. Nicholas*, whose culminating point is *Zermatt*, the subject of this book.

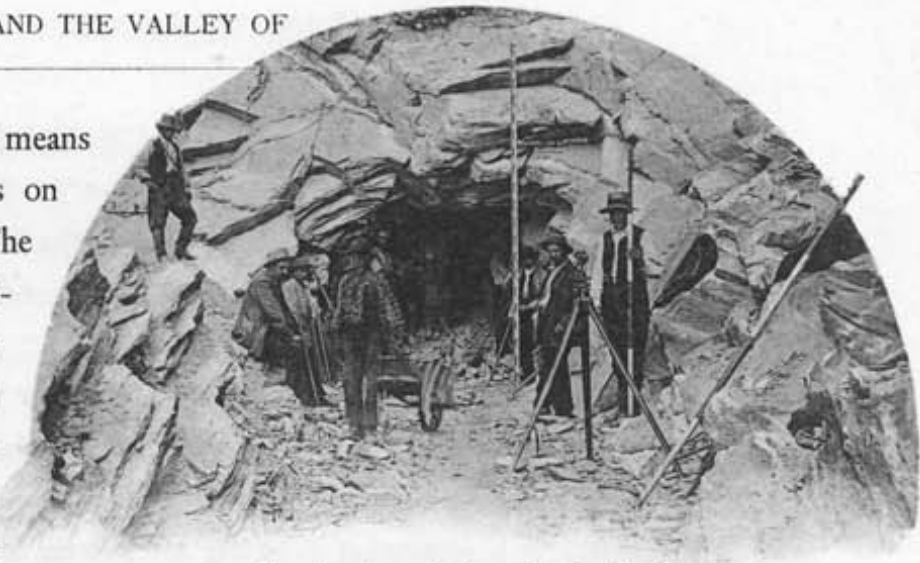
Formerly—and in no remote past, seeing that it dates but from two or

three years ago—the only means of reaching Zermatt was on foot or on mule-back. The narrow track is impracticable for carriages as far as St. Nicholas; and even beyond it the vehicles in use are necessarily of very limited dimensions. At the present day a railway

runs from one end of the valley to the other, so that by changing trains at Viège, one can be transported to Zermatt in less than four hours, without fatigue. Quietly seated in a comfortable carriage, we travel over a line measuring some thirty-five kilometers, and with a maximum incline of only twelve in a hundred.

The construction of this railway,—the original of which idea is due to Messrs. Charles Masson and Conrad Gysin,—was authorized by the Swiss Federal Council at the close of the year 1886. It was completed by the engineers Messrs. J. Chappuis and E. de Stockalper, within the period between March 1889, and July 1891. The work was carried on with such remarkable celerity, that on the third of July 1890, the line was able to be used as far as Stalden, the first station. On its completion, it was inaugurated by a brilliant fête on the 6th of July last year.

It is a narrow gauge like all mountain railways. The rails are one metre (three and a half inches over three feet) apart; and the trains are composed of three or four compartments, first and second class, with a central passage running through them, and so arranged that the passengers may enjoy the view. They are propelled by a little mountain locomotive on the Abt system, comprising two machines capable



Construction of a tunnel under the line.

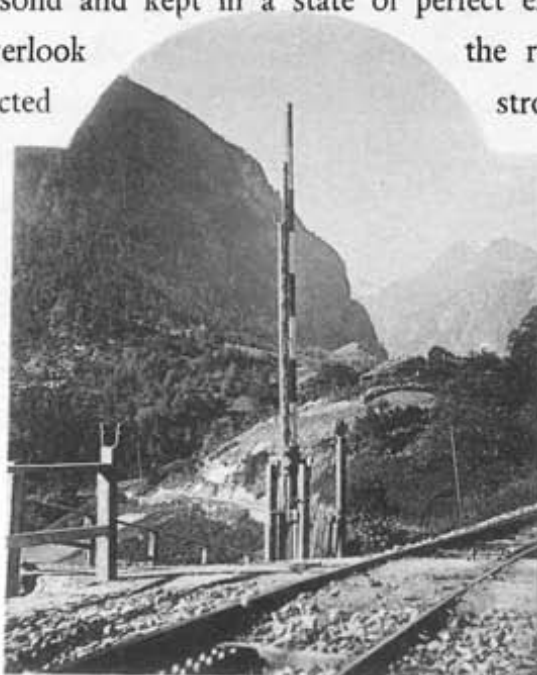


of acting simultaneously : one proceeds by the ordinary method, the other moves by means of cog-wheels, helping the first engine up those slopes which are too steep for the ordinary mode of progression, by the wheels simply resting on the rails. The different pieces, or blocks, of the cog-wheels if laid end to end, would cover eight kilometres. Several breaks of different systems,



render the safety of the traveller almost absolute. In fact a mere glance at the construction and the rolling stock of this little railway suffices to convince the most inexperienced, of the care and accuracy bestowed on the making of them. The rails rest on metal sleepers to which they are fixed by innumerable bolts. The cog-wheel is double, with teeth alternating above and below ; so that it bites with four teeth at each revolution. The locomotives are solid and kept in a state of perfect efficiency. On the heights which overlook

the railway, the Company has constructed strong buttresses to prevent all danger of landslips. Engineers and persons interested in the technical details of mountain railways, will do well to read a little pamphlet written about the particulars of the Zermatt line by Mr. Ed. Lullin.



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THE railway runs first along the right bank of the Viège upon a very gentle incline until close upon the village of Neubrücke, beyond which commences the series of iron bridges that carry the trains alternately from one bank of the river to the other. Speed is slackened just below Stalden, and the cog-wheel begins to act. Now begins the incline, one of the steepest of the whole route. *Stalden* is the most important place on the line after St. Nicholas.



Station of Stalden.

The station is simple and pretty. A stay is made here of from five to ten minutes : barely time enough to cast a glance at this charming spot ; to which, however, we shall return later on. On a fine summer day there is so much stir and movement here, that one might fancy oneself close to a large town. There are refreshment rooms, numerous hotel porters, guides, newspaper sellers, busy coming and going, —all the disagreeable bustle of a large railway terminus ! But we are spared the presence of the abominable omnibus, for which there is absolutely no room in the narrow village streets. Thanks to steam, the refinements of civilization have penetrated into a wild region unprofaned for centuries



Station of Kalpatran.

by the hand of man. Nevertheless there is no great harm done as yet. We shall be able to convince ourselves of this bye and bye. The train now enters a *défilé* hemmed in by precipices, traversing a tunnel fifty-five metres

in length, and crossing narrow bridges, thrown boldly from one abrupt mountain's flank to another :—marvels of science defying the marvels of nature, and such as would have been deemed utterly impossible only a few years ago! As the road advances, the point of view keeps changing; fresh summits are revealed; village steeples glitter in the sun, and the eye plunges into dark chasms that make one's blood run cold. Throughout the whole of this portion of the line between Stalden and St. Nicholas, we know not which to wonder at the most : the colossal difficulties presented by nature, or the audacious genius of man, who has conquered them.

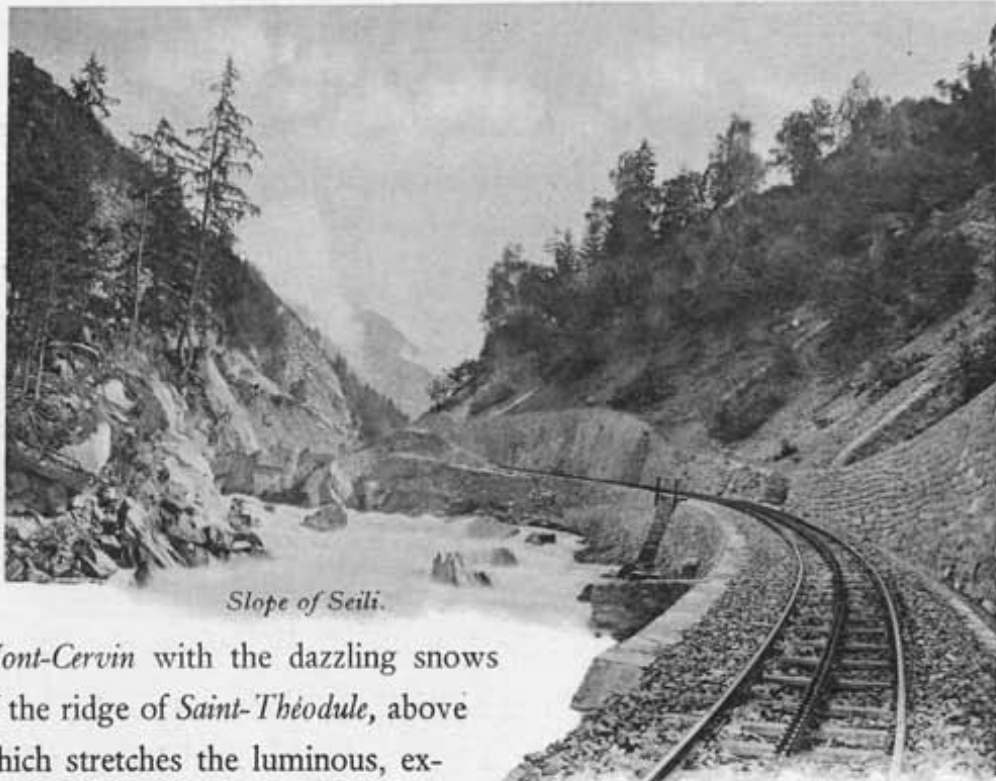
At *Kalpatran* another halt is made, where the engine takes in a fresh supply of water to enable it to storm, so to speak, the steep heights of *Kipsen* and *Seili*, above which, at an altitude of 1130 metres above the sea level, amidst fresh verdure stands the pretty village of *St. Nicholas*. It is at this point that the ascending and descending trains usually cross each other; and the passengers alight for a moment to enjoy the glorious mountain view. Exclamations, and expressions of admiration in every language of the world, are heard on all sides. Those who



Tunnel near Stalden.

are not in haste, prolong their halt until the coming of the next train; and so attractive are the charms of the place that many even give up a whole day, or more, to its enjoyment.

From St. Nicholas to Zermatt the valley widens, and gradually reveals the sublime summits which crown it:—first the *Breitborn*, then the *Petit*



Slope of Seili.

Mont-Cervin with the dazzling snows of the ridge of *Saint-Théodule*, above which stretches the luminous, exquisite, violet-tinted sky of Italy! On either side of the line are seen traces of avalanches, rugged landslips, and vast scattered blocks that have fallen from the upper peaks, constantly worn and gnawed away by the action of time. Unfortunately the speed of the train allows only a hasty glance at all this. One would fain be all eyes and ears! For while admirable outlines and varied tints attract our sight, our hearing is appealed to by a multitude of harmonious sounds: the sough of the forest, the lowing of herds, and the sullen fall of stones into some deep ravine.

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



STEEP HEIGHTS OF KIPFEN.



Station of St. Nicholas.

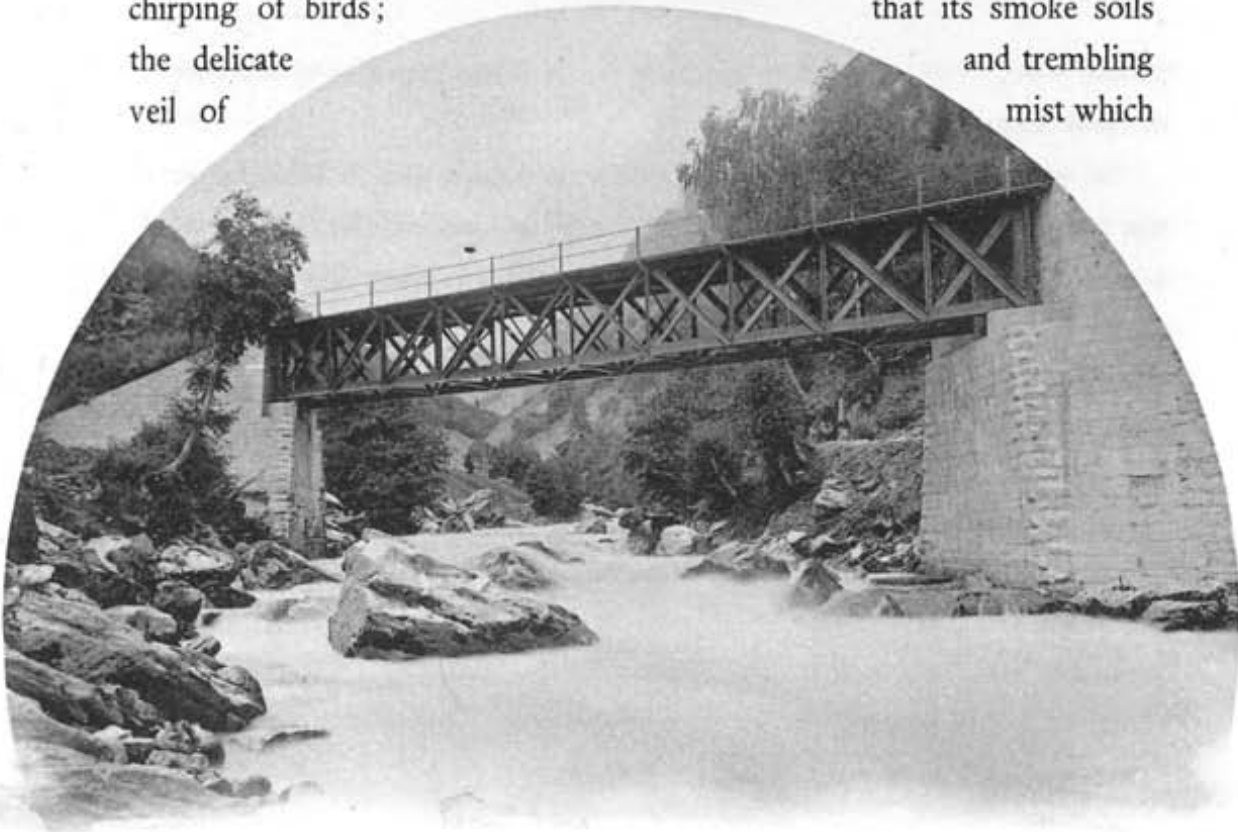
Now we pass *Herbringen*, with its chalets black as though steeped in ink; *Randa* with its shining church-tower; the two glaciers of *Biess* at the foot of the *Weisshorn* and *Festi*; filling the gap between the two highest peaks of the *Mischabels*, the *Nadelhorn*, and the *Dôme*. And here, at length, is *Täsch* at the bottom of a sombre gorge,—the last station before Zermatt.

Now the air grows keener, and an increased luminosity indicates the approach to the head of the valley. This is due to the brilliant and icy reflections from the glaciers; and after having surmounted a final steep slope, the train reaches its goal. We get out at a short distance from the village, amidst a cosmopolitan crowd of people oddly accoutred in mountaineering costume:—gaiters, hobnailed shoes, and coloured veils over their hats. Here are sunburnt faces, ontlandish accents, gestures of surprise, eager bustle in search of a lodging. Nor is this always an easy quest during the months of July and August, when two thousand tourists are staying in Zermatt, whose native population does not exceed five hundred souls.



IT is quite understood that we do not intend to make any criticism on these mountain railways which men multiply, perhaps excessively, from greed of gain. It would, indeed, be ungrateful on our part to speak ill of them, since we have just proved the advantages of the Zermatt line, and have given due credit to those who planned and realized it, for their ingenuity, enterprise, and perseverance.

Nevertheless we cannot but confess that the shrill whistle of a locomotive by no means harmonises with the bleating of flocks and the chirping of birds; that its smoke soils the delicate and trembling veil of mist which



the sun draws up around the tree-tops; that its breath disturbs the peace of these solitudes, and dims the transparency of an atmosphere purified by the snows. And, moreover, the train brings so many *blasé* and irreverent



Station of Zermatt.

people who, even more than the railway spoil the beauty and the charm of these scenes.

In order to pay our homage worthily to nature, and to taste the joys she has in store, it does not suffice to salute her carelessly in the course of a rapid journey; and this is what we have hitherto been doing. Carried along by the steam-engine we have only had a slight foretaste of the attractions peculiar to the valley of the Viège. We must now see more of them; and inspired by our earnest desire, and by a legitimate curiosity, we purpose going over again on foot, the marvellous road whose details we have rather guessed at than seen, from our seat in the railway carriage.

* * *

ARE we not, first of all mountaineers? And is not our love for the mountains able to overcome fatigue and difficulty? We would live their lives, understand their moods, penetrate to their very hearts, conquer them wholly, and elevate our spirit by contact with theirs;—for they have a spirit, pure and strong. Mountains never yield up their secret to mere passing worshippers: frivolous and noisy folks who think to praise themselves in praising the sublime heights, and seek for nothing beyond a trivial amusement. But they reveal themselves without reserve to the silent and modest wooer, who, fondly gazing, awaits in mute contemplation the hour when they will deign to speak, and when that hour arrives, commemorate with pen or pencil, their mysterious aspects, their confidences, and the exquisite emotions which they awaken.

Since for a thorough study of our beloved mountains, it is necessary to watch them patiently, and to select a good point of view, we shall not hesitate to leave the beaten tracks for more unfrequented spots, little known, but often the best worth knowing. We will pause, if need be, beside precipitous rocks, on steeps calcined by the sun, or in the jagged hollows of some ravine; we will not limit our steps to turf-clad slopes under a blue sky; we will wander freely as did our more simple fore fathers before the invention of those ingenious methods of locomotion, whose very rapidity is often disturbing and unsatisfactory.

An hour's idle stroll through the streets of Viège, is by no means an hour lost. One gets a melancholy impression of slow decay; one feels the strange ineffable charm of the beauties of the past.

Viège is a dead town, a mediæval city fallen into

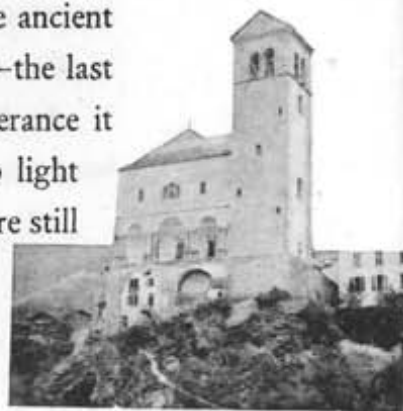


decrepitude. The sight of it evokes distant memories, vague and half effaced images. Its ancient churches, the remains of its *châteaux* formerly inhabited by the counts of Hübschbourg and the many patrician families who succeeded each other for centuries upon this corner of Valaisian soil, give it an austere aspect. It is ill-kept and dirty;—and perhaps for that very reason all the more picturesque!



Church of Viège.

The principal street leads to an open place surrounded by little shops. And here converge a number of dark, narrow alleys paved with round pebbles, where in the midst of all sorts of rubbish, some sickly blades of grass grow feebly. The walls of the houses are tottering, and are scarred with irregular fissures, caused by the earthquakes which have been but too frequent in this district. Nevertheless, here and there, among these ancient dwellings, the eye discovers some charming architectural design:—the last remaining testimonies to former splendour. With a little perseverance it might be very possible for the archæologist and the antiquary to light upon, some lucky “find” here. On more than one antique portal are still to be seen locks of wrought iron which are real works of art.



On market days the old city is aroused for a few hours from its sleepy state, and is crowded by people from all the neighbouring district; but generally speaking, few persons are to be seen in the streets, the inhabitants being either occupied in tilling their fields, or shut up in their houses. Through the half-closed shutters one gets a glimpse here and there, of some worn face with faded hair :—faces that look as if they belonged to another century; so much have the antique air of their contrast between all nal, lavish, youthful-

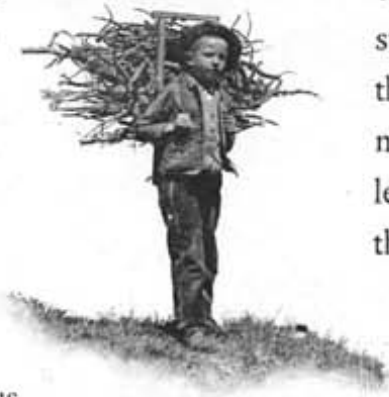
We climb a lane towered church on and from the little marble colonnade, a suddenly bursts upon us.

the greyish river over an almost level bed, bordered by immense, vertical banks; in the foreground spreads an extent of cultivated land; beyond that, are forests; and still further away, snowy peaks under a soft and brilliant light.

From this terrace, as from a sort of observatory, we are able with the help of one of Dufour's or Siegfried's maps, to take our bearings, before setting out on our march.

The path rises gently at first, on the right bank of the Viège amidst tufts of willows and barberry-bushes. In front of us rise the marvellous summits of Mont-Balfrin, a promontory of the Mischabels, whose gloomy base appears to close the valley; but from whence the latter divides into two branches. On the left are fields and vineyards; on the right, naked and rugged rocks.

A good hours walk brings us to *Neubrücke*, a mere hamlet, where a



the dwellers here caught surroundings. What a this decay, and the eterness of nature!

leading up to the square-

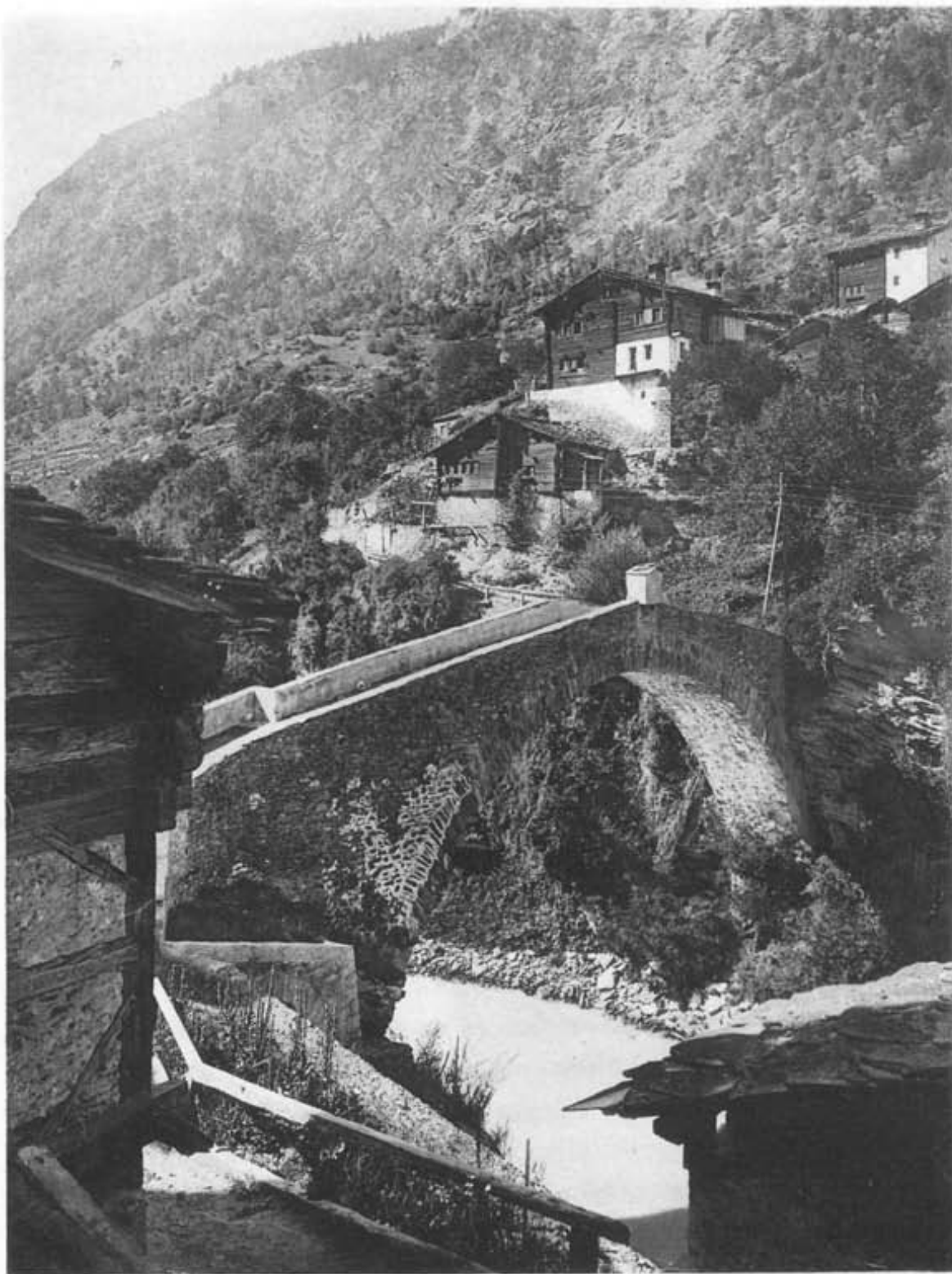
the summit of the hill,

terrace with its magnificent view

At our feet flows



ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



BRIDGE OF NEUBRUCKE.

few chalets are grouped at either end of the bridge formed by a single stone arch, whence the village takes its name. It is one of those romantic spots that tempt one to cast anchor for the rest of one's days, so sweet and soothing is all around. A refreshing air from the neighbouring heights, plays deliciously on our face, and the keen breath of the glaciers seems to condense innumerable odours into one subtle fragrance. A little chapel invites us to meditation; and on the centre of the bridge stands a shrine containing an image of the Madonna with the infant Jesus, carved in wood. This modest

the devout moun-
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scape a touch of poe-
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along the path lead-
And yet Neubrücke

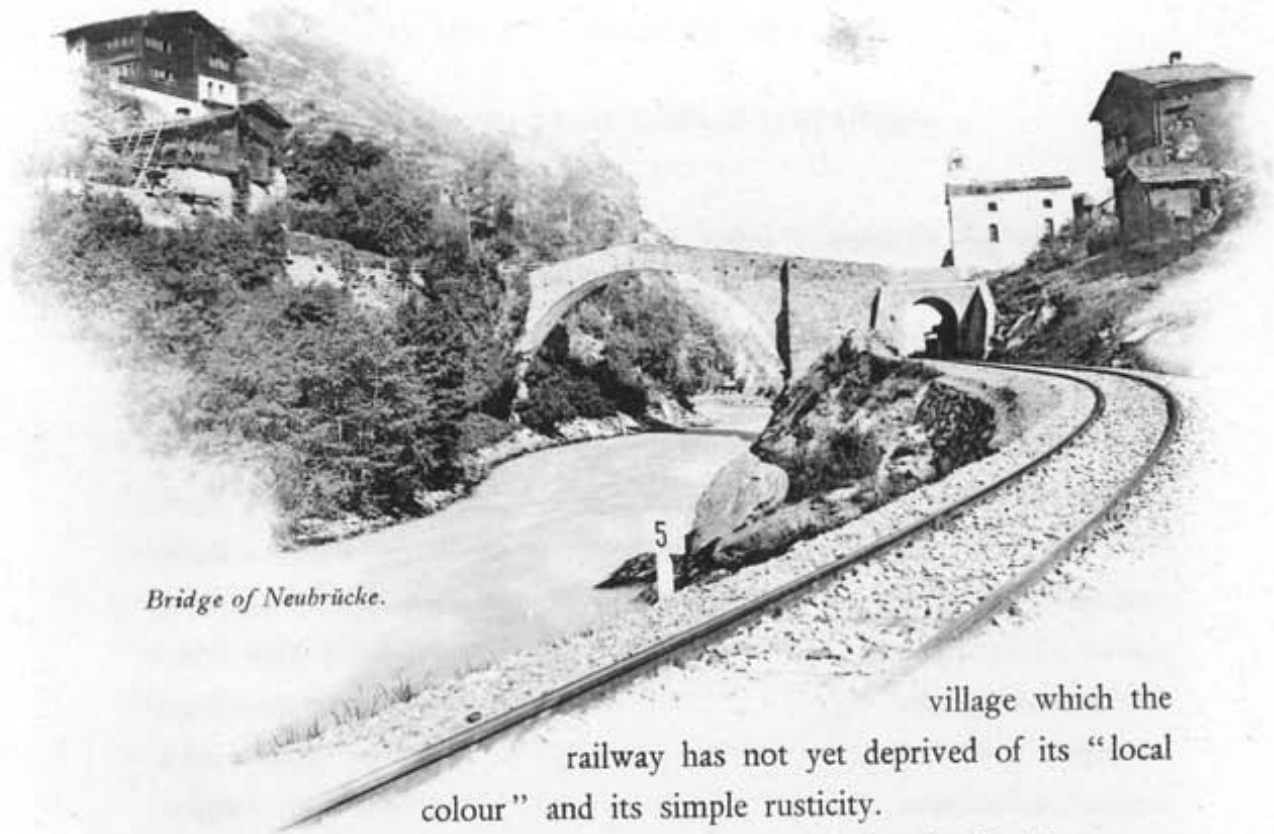


Oratory upon the bridge of Neubrücke.

the sense of internal well being which takes possession of us at *Stalden*, a short distance further on, and whose white church we can already perceive, perched on the summit of a rock.

Situated on a comparatively fertile soil,—notwithstanding its proximity to the glaciers—*Stalden* is a genuine mountain village: a cluster of chalets and barns, admirably situated at the very mouth of the valley of St. Nicholas. It is a place much frequented by passing tourists from Saas and Zermatt. It possesses a good hôtel; so that travellers who know what they are about, are not content with merely passing through, but take the opportunity of remaining there some hours at least, in order to enjoy the charm of this

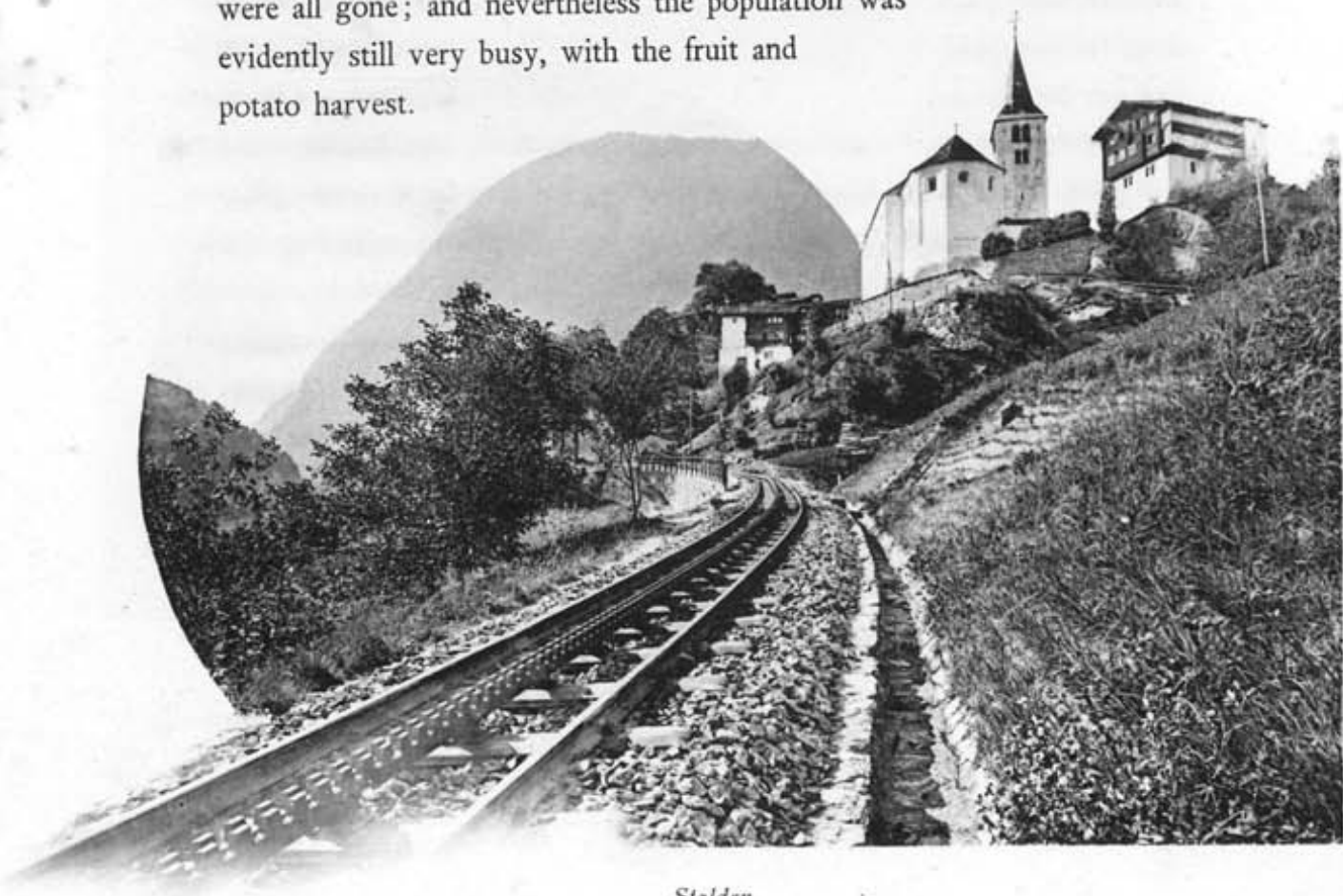
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ing to *Staldenried*.
is but a fore taste of
refreshment and



Bridge of Neubrücke.

village which the railway has not yet deprived of its "local colour" and its simple rusticity.

I shall always remember with tender melancholy, the ideal hours we passed there on a certain autumn evening, when the leaves were beginning to turn, and the sadness of winter to descend upon the earth. The tourists were all gone; and nevertheless the population was evidently still very busy, with the fruit and potato harvest.



Stalden.

The women especially worked hard, returning home with slow steps, and bent beneath the weight of baskets full of vegetables; while the men chopped the dry wood they had heaped up during the day before the doors of their chalets. On all sides was heard the tinkle of goat-bells and sheep-bells, as the little shepherdesses drove home their flocks that frolicked along the pathways.

At this moment, near to the fountain in the one street of the village, a group of children were amusing themselves by watching the dying convulsions of a salamander that had been

crushed by the hoof of a cow. The unfortunate reptile writhed in pain, and the pitiless boys laughed to such a degree at the spectacle, that they attracted the attention of a priest who happened to be passing by. Then took place, on this pastoral theatre, a touching and simple scene. The good

curé delivered on the spot, an extempore sermon on compassion; he found the precise phrase adapted for exhorting the children never to take pleasure in the sufferings of another;—even though that other were but a poor wounded and defenceless animal; he touched the right chord so accurately that for a few moments his audience appeared to be deeply impressed.

But this was only of brief duration. The instinct of cruelty, which had been lulled for an instant, speedily awoke again in the breasts of the little savages; and when the priest was out of sight, we saw them stone the luckless salamander to death,

The instinct of lull for an instant, speedily awoke again in the breasts of the little savages when the priest was out of sight, and then carry about its mutilated



body, singing a song of triumph! Upon this cruel, though, alas, natural scene, the night fell:—a clear night of fairylike beauty, full of gleams of mysterious lights, and echoes of unknown voices!

Two roads start from the station at Stalden. One of them descends to the level of the river, and then mounts again to penetrate into the valley of Saas; the other traverses the village, and, near

a deserted mill, begins to rise rapidly on the left bank of the Viège, reaching an elevation of nearly two hundred metres above the river.

We will take the latter road. Following the sinuosities of the mountain side, it plunges between two huge rocky walls, where, poor pigmies that we are, we feel as though we were menaced by the jaws of some gigantic vice. But at every step, new prospects open before us. Around Stalden we have green meadows, trellised vines, fruit-trees and luxuriant kitchen



Church of Stalden.

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.

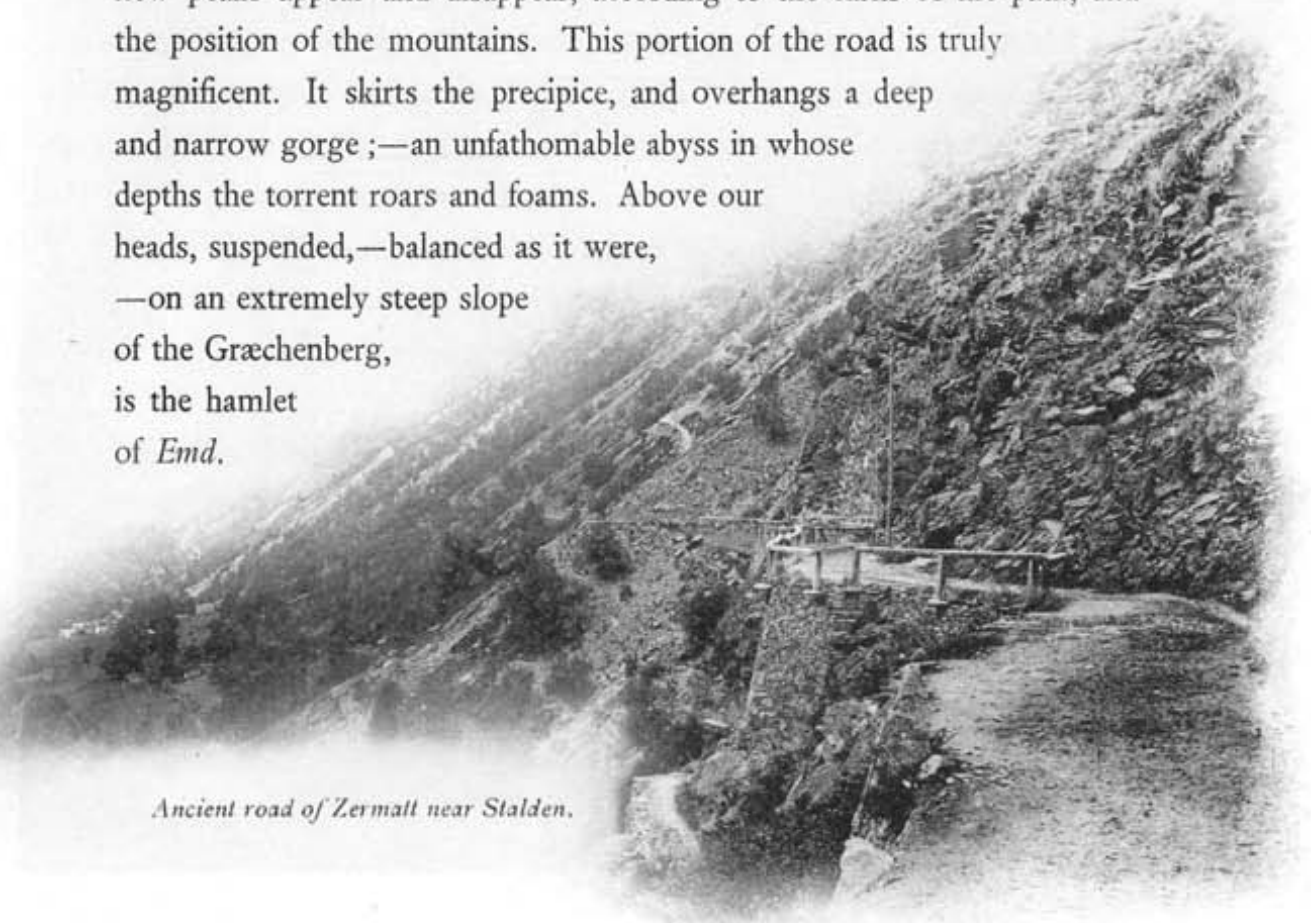


STALDEN.

gardens. But farther away, although still not devoid of occasional gleams of gaiety, and the smile of a blue sky, the landscape grows more sober and severe. The vegetation becomes less varied; the birch and the fir-tree hold almost undivided sway; and mingled with their sombre verdure, are the still gloomier tints of the great grey rocks.

One ought to turn often towards the north, to enjoy the route already travelled;—the soft slopes, and the fine outlines of the Bernese Alps, and especially the mass of the Baldschiederhorn (Stockhorn, Breitlauhorn, &c.). Perched high to the east, an hour's walk above Stalden, we perceive *Staldenried*, a little jewel of a village, with its dark chalets rising one above the other, and its bright church with a graceful steeple. The leaves are moist with dew; in the bushes, great spiders are spinning their webs; clouds of insects, tiny blue or yellow flies, swarm in the air; and as we advance, new peaks appear and disappear, according to the turns of the path, and the position of the mountains. This portion of the road is truly magnificent. It skirts the precipice, and overhangs a deep and narrow gorge;—an unfathomable abyss in whose depths the torrent roars and foams. Above our heads, suspended,—balanced as it were,
—on an extremely steep slope
of the Grächenberg,
is the hamlet
of *Emd*.

Ancient road of Zermatt near Stalden.



As we approach *Kalpetran*, the road twists downward in several curves to the village of that name. *Kalpetran*, like the other villages, is only a small agglomeration of houses; and possesses as its distinctive feature, a saw-mill on the bank of the river, moved by two mill-wheels. We cross the Viège upon one of those corbelled bridges, to the construction of which the inhabitants of the valley have applied a very ancient architectural method. A curious study might be made on the historic evolution of bridges; from the quivering tree-trunk roughly squared, and thrown across the river, to the solid iron viaduct of our modern engineers. Here we see the ancient methods of construction side by side with the recent modes which so entirely sacrifice picturesqueness to security.

We have now once more reached the right bank of the torrent, broken by enormous blocks of gneiss, against which the waters dash themselves. Beneath the rays of the morning sun, thousands of drops dispersed by the violence of the shock, take the most delicate prismatic colours; whilst amid the most enchanting verdure, we slowly climb upward to *St. Nicholas* (1164 metres) a large and handsome village whose churchtower suddenly breaks on us as we emerge from the forest, glittering in the sun.

Its inhabitants, numbering from seven to eight hundred, are victims to the railroad, and have been deserted by tourists. In fact these latter are now merely passers by; and consist, moreover, of active pedestrians who care nothing for carriages or *chaises à porteur*; whilst formerly it was the custom to hire strong little vehicles at *St. Nicholas* which carried the tired traveller to Zermatt. And this trade, now fallen into decay, was notwithstanding its modest



Saw-mill of Kalpetran.



Road from St. Nicholas at Zermatt.

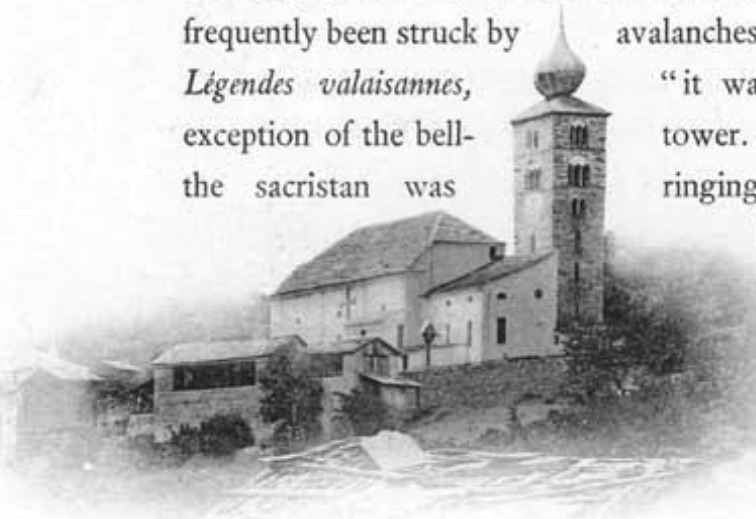
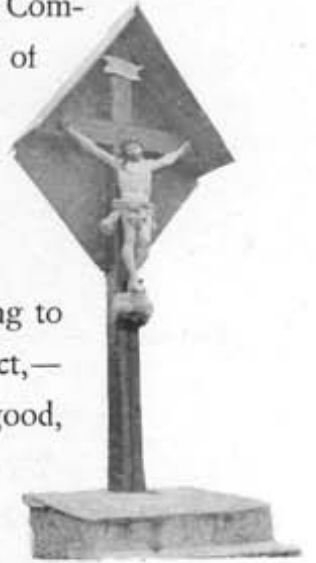
pretensions, a very profitable one. Thus the population, which struggled strenuously, but in vain, against the construction of the railway line, have had to suffer the rebound of that "progress of civilization", which for them is summed up in a good deal of hard cash lost to them for ever! Their bitterness occasionally manifests itself in an outbreak of anger. For instance two years ago, an engineer of the Viège-Zermatt Railway Company, was attacked and injured by the inhabitants. This act of barbarity gave rise to a trial which is still spoken of; and shews that in the Valais, men are still not far advanced beyond the times when they were as primitive, and often as savage, as nature herself.

Let us not exaggerate matters, however; and instead of yielding to the temptation of generalising from an absolutely exceptional fact,—which would be unjust, for the people of the country are really good, honest folks,—let us, without reservation, enjoy the glorious position of the place; tax the hospitality of its excellent hotels; and refresh our tired limbs on its fine turf, and in its pure and wholesome air. We must not omit to visit the little cemetery, where the image of the Saviour pensively gazes on the rows of tombs. Among these are the graves of the brothers Knubel, killed on the Lyskamm in 1877, as well as of other victims of disastrous mountain ascents. The church has frequently been struck by

Légendes valaisannes,
exception of the bell-
the sacristan was

avalanches. "In 1749," as we read in the tower. The catastrophe happened while ringing matins. He imagined there had been a tremendous gust of wind.

But what was his stupefaction on descending from the belfry into the choir, to find



Church of St. Nicholas.

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



ST. NICHOLAS.

General view.

himself under the open sky!" And the legend goes on to narrate how the people of St. Nicholas, weary of always having to repair their church, resolved to rebuild it some distance off, in a place called *Im Feldi*, which was less exposed to danger. But every morning the workmens' tools were found to have been transported to the old spot at the *Sparenzug*; a proof that the saint was firmly minded to have his temple on the site where it had originally been constructed.

From St. Nicholas the road goes on at a level. It crosses a little bridge near *Schwiedern*, and proceeds through young plantations of birch, between whose trunks may be descried the cascades of the *Blattbach* and *Dummibach*. Thence it reaches the chalets of *Herbringen*,—black as though dyed in ink,—and skirts past some moraines and traces of avalanches. At length, after two hours walking, and after having for the first time enjoyed a good view of the Breithorn at the end of the valley, together with the gloomy Riffelhorn, and the little Mont-Cervin sticking up like the horn of a rhinoceros,



Randa.

we reach *Randa*, built on the summit of an ancient moraine. From thence we can admire the famous glacier of Bies, almost vertical, with emerald tints on the sides of its slanting *crevasses*, and hanging menacingly from the crests of the rocks.

“In fact this splendid glacier,” writes Mr. Ch. Grad, “has more than once precipitated itself upon the village. It crushed it for the first time in 1636; then in 1819 in the midst of the winter came a fresh fall. This last time the village was partly covered with its *débris*, but the disaster was less extensive, because the habitations had been rebuilt farther off. Nevertheless so terrifically violent was the concussion of the air, that a number of chalets and barns were carried away like dead leaves, and their fragments thrown to a great distance. The engineer Venetz, calculates the entire mass of ice, snow, and rock which crashed down upon the valley, at 1,300,000 cubic metres. During five days the course of the Viège was interrupted, and it was necessary to pierce an opening for it through the mass of ruins. Farther on, between Randa and Täsch, in the spot called *In der Wildi*, where the river spreads out upon a flat plain, amid enormous blocks of stone that have fallen from the Dôme de Mischabel, tradition speaks of another village buried with all its inhabitants under the *débris* of a mountain.” (*Observations sur les glaciers de la Viège*, 1868.)

Randa (1445 metres) is an exceptionally favourable position for studying glaciers. It possesses a good hotel (Hôtel du Weisshorn) which is a starting point for the great ascents. It was from here that Tyndall accompanied by the guides Bennen of Steinhaus, and Wenger of Grindelwald, started on the 18th of August 1861, to conquer the summit of the Weisshorn (4512 metres) which up to that time had been deemed inaccessible. They took the little zig-zag path, still to be seen climbing among the pine-trees opposite to Randa, and bivouacked the same evening on a projecting spur of the gigantic Weisshorn. After having minutely

examined the three-sided pyramid which the mountain forms, they decided on attacking it by the eastern ridge. The following day, in splendid weather, after having surmounted a thousand difficulties, crossing broken ice, and making their way along ridges sharp as the blade of a knife, they victoriously achieved the summit. In default of a banner, they planted a rough ice-hatchet bearing a red handkerchief. And they admired the spectacle with such a transport of emotion, as, Tyndall narrates, that it was



Täsch and the valley.

impossible to analyse their feelings. "I opened my note-book to record some observations; but I soon gave it up. There was something unfitting,—something almost like a profanation, in mingling science with that silent worship which was the only 'reasonable service'."

Since that memorable day in alpine annals, several successful ascents of the Weisshorn have been made; and the Alpine Club has had built upon the *Hoblicht*, at a height of 2859 metres, a refuge-hut whence there is a fine

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE NEAR ZERMATT.

view, and which is the final goal of tourists who are not sure-footed enough to climb higher. Three hours and a half suffice to reach this from Randa.

From Randa also one mounts the first slopes which lead to the highest points of the Mischabel: the *Täschhorn* (4498 metres) and the *Dôme* (4554 metres). This latter is the loftiest of all the summits belonging exclusively to Switzerland. But we are too near them at Randa to judge of their grand dimensions. It is better to see them from a distance; and therefore we content ourselves for the present, with saluting them as we pass by.

The road continues for an hour without offering anything remarkable; and crosses the widening valley as far as *Täsch*, a little village whose slated roofs shine in the sunlight. To the left opens a dark ravine bearing an impetuous torrent in its depths, and celebrated for the rare plants that grow on its brink. Opposite to this, may be remarked several fan-shaped agglomerations of stones, which our geologists term *cônes d'éboulement*. The Viège now flows peacefully through a plain about a kilometre long, but formerly it often overflowed, being swollen by the melted snows, and formed a vast temporary lake, the traces of which are still to be seen.

From *Täsch* to Zermatt is not more than a good hour's walk; and the ground is got over with the cheerfulness inspired by the prospect of a speedy arrival. One last compression of the valley, hides the Viège again for a few minutes. We hear it foaming in the narrow gorge, and soon afterwards cross it by the bridge of the *Bühl*. This leads us back to the railway line once more; and there the final amphitheatre opens before us. We are at the entrance of the sanctuary whose impassible inmates are the Dent-Blanche, the Cervin, the Breithorn, and all the high dignitaries of the chain of Monte-Rosa.

* * *

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



ZERMATT.

General view.

ZERMATT! This name of world-wide renown, can scarcely have any indifferent hearers. It sounds like a shout of triumph, and even in the minds of those who have never visited it, conjures up grandiose and magnificent images. Let us then, make an attentive study of this queen of

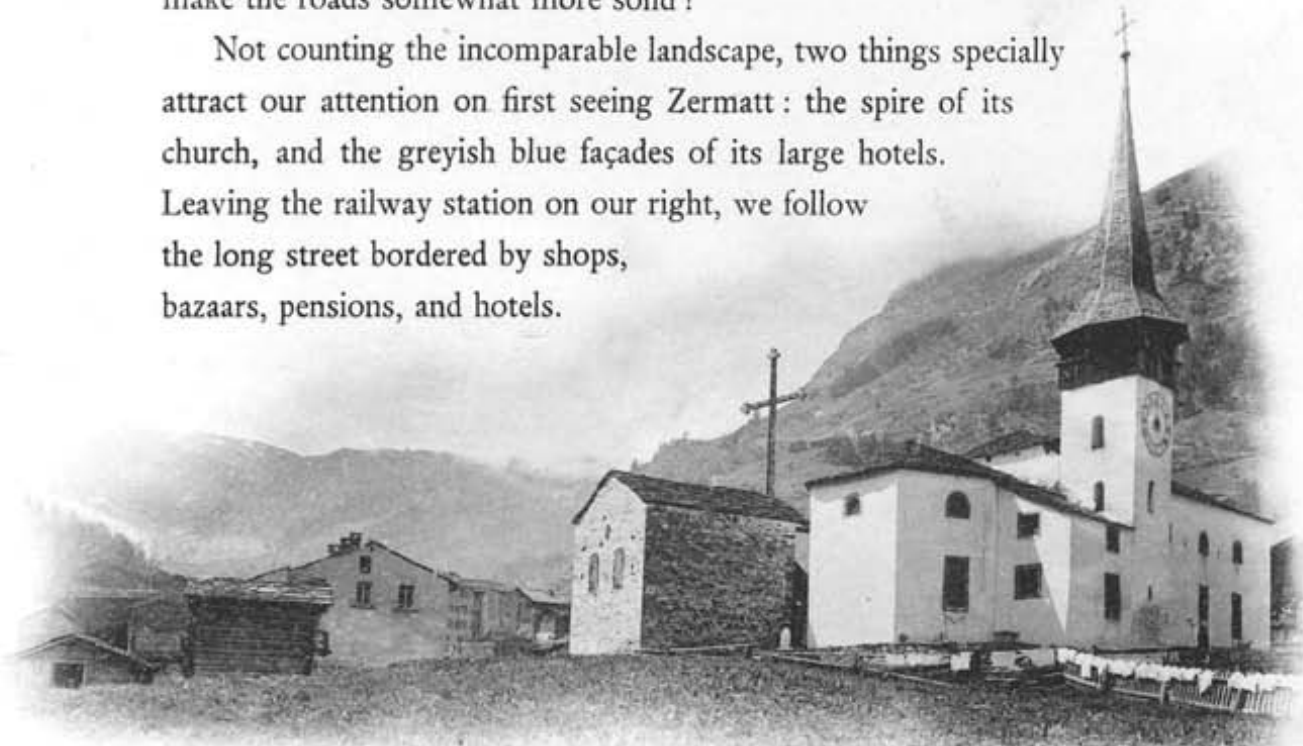
Swiss alpine stations. The first impression one receives on arriving at Zermatt is certain to be a strong one, but it naturally varies according to the weather. If the sun shines, it is extremely cheerful; if it rains, exactly the reverse must be said! No one can behold Zermatt in the full sunshine, without enthusiasm; but rain there, is intolerable; and the tourist who happens to pass through it in bad weather, carries away a detestable recollection of it. The fact is that in this case, the frame is the chief part of the picture! If that be hidden behind clouds, nothing remains but a commonplace village. "It is the dreariest hole in all the valley", says M. Grad. Its alleys are so dirty, so muddy, and so ill kept, that it is almost impossible to move about in them, and one has to remain shut up in one's hotel;—which is not amusing. And yet stones are plentiful



Street of Zermatt.

enough all around, to show that it need not be a very costly business to make the roads somewhat more solid !

Not counting the incomparable landscape, two things specially attract our attention on first seeing Zermatt : the spire of its church, and the greyish blue façades of its large hotels. Leaving the railway station on our right, we follow the long street bordered by shops, bazaars, pensions, and hotels.



Church of Zermatt.

From June to September, this street is crowded by a throng of tourists which changes every day. Since the establishment of the railway, the number of strangers has notably increased. Last year it was so great, that the hotels were obliged to refuse visitors, and to send their overflow to Randa and St. Nicholas. To the English, who always constitute the majority, are added French, Germans, Italians, and Russians. And besides the robust alpine climbers, there is a considerable number of invalids suffering from catarrh and *sclerosis*. Occasionally the terraces of the hotels exposed to the sun, are covered with these unfortunate cripples stretched on invalid chairs, and seeking for some invigoration from the bracing oxygen of the mountains. In the evening, the healthy and active, returning



Mont-Cervin Hotel.

from their excursions, describe to them the sights they have seen during the day. Conversation in the salons is lively enough, but necessarily monotonous. It turns almost exclusively on possible, or impossible ascents, the probabilities of next day's weather, and on to-day's table d'hôte. Sometimes an orchestra is heard; there is singing and dancing, and amid these scenes, so deserted but a short time ago, the life of the gay world pulses strongly.

Zermatt hidden at the end of its narrow valley, and barely seen by Saussure during his celebrated travels in the Alps, was at first frequented only by naturalists, attracted by its plants and its minerals. In the course of fifty years, a taste for natural history having spread, tourists came in greater numbers. But up to 1852 there were no establishments to receive them. In 1839, Dr. Lauber had obtained from government the exclusive privilege of lodging strangers. His house, pompously christened "the Monte-Rosa Hotel", possessed at first only three beds, and could not shelter more than from ten to twelve travellers in the year. The history of the development of Zermatt, will be read with interest in the work which

J. O. Wolf has published on the valley of the Viège. At the end of these pages we have drawn up a list of the principal works on this locality, which is doubtless destined to grow still more in importance; since a concession for a railway to the Gornergrat and the Cervin, has just been granted (February 1892) by the Swiss Federal Council to the heirs of M. Heer-Béatrix of Bienne, and to M. X. Imfeld, engineer of Hottingen. The real creator of Zermatt as a summer resort, was Alexandre Seiler,—« papa Seiler » as he was called,—the type of an intelligent hotel keeper, and an upright and industrious man of Zermatt in 1855, the insufficient place. He at once perceived the advantages offered by a spot of such exceptional beauty. He undertook the task of providing strangers with good beds, wholesome and abundant food, and of facilitating their access to the neighboring mountains, by increasing the number of roads.



M. Alexandre Seiler.

He set to work immediately with boundless energy and self-reliance. He began by enlarging the *Monte-Rosa Hotel*, which thenceforward continued to be his head-quarters. Then he bought, and transformed the *Mont-Cervin Hotel*, built some years before



Monte-Rosa Hotel.



Hôtel de Zermatt.

by the Valaisan counsellor of state, M. Clémens. Finally he hired from the commune, the *Grand Hotel de Zermatt*.

These three first class houses, directed by M. Seiler's energetic wife (who became his widow in July 1891), his son, M. Joseph Seiler, and some other members of his numerous family, give to Zermatt its special physiognomy as we observed just now. Their fine façades with wide casements, completely overwhelm the modest chalets of the old village, that look surprised to find themselves in such sumptuous company! By degrees they have received so many modern improvements that they are now celebrated every where as models of their kind. But M. Seiler's hotels are not the only ones in Zermatt. There are other smaller houses well frequented



Zermatt near the bridge of the Trift.

and deserving of recommendation; but we must go to Seiler's in order to understand something of the complex machinery of one of the most important and lucrative trades in modern Switzerland.

An army of cooks, laundresses, butchers, bakers, chambermaids,—all admirably disciplined, and under the active supervision of their masters,—ensure, from the first of June to the fifteenth of October every year, a regular service; and provide for the (sometimes very exacting) requirements of the cosmopolitan customers, who do not understand the difficulty of feeding many hundreds

of persons at such an altitude. From daybreak breakfast—coffee, tea,

chocolate, &c.,—is ready

for the guests. At mid-

day lunch is served;

and at half past six in

the evening, dinner, the

principal meal of the day.

And every day, in all

M. Seiler's hotels,

those at the Riffel

and Schwarzsee,

of which we shall

speak farther on, as

well as the lower

ones, the same re-

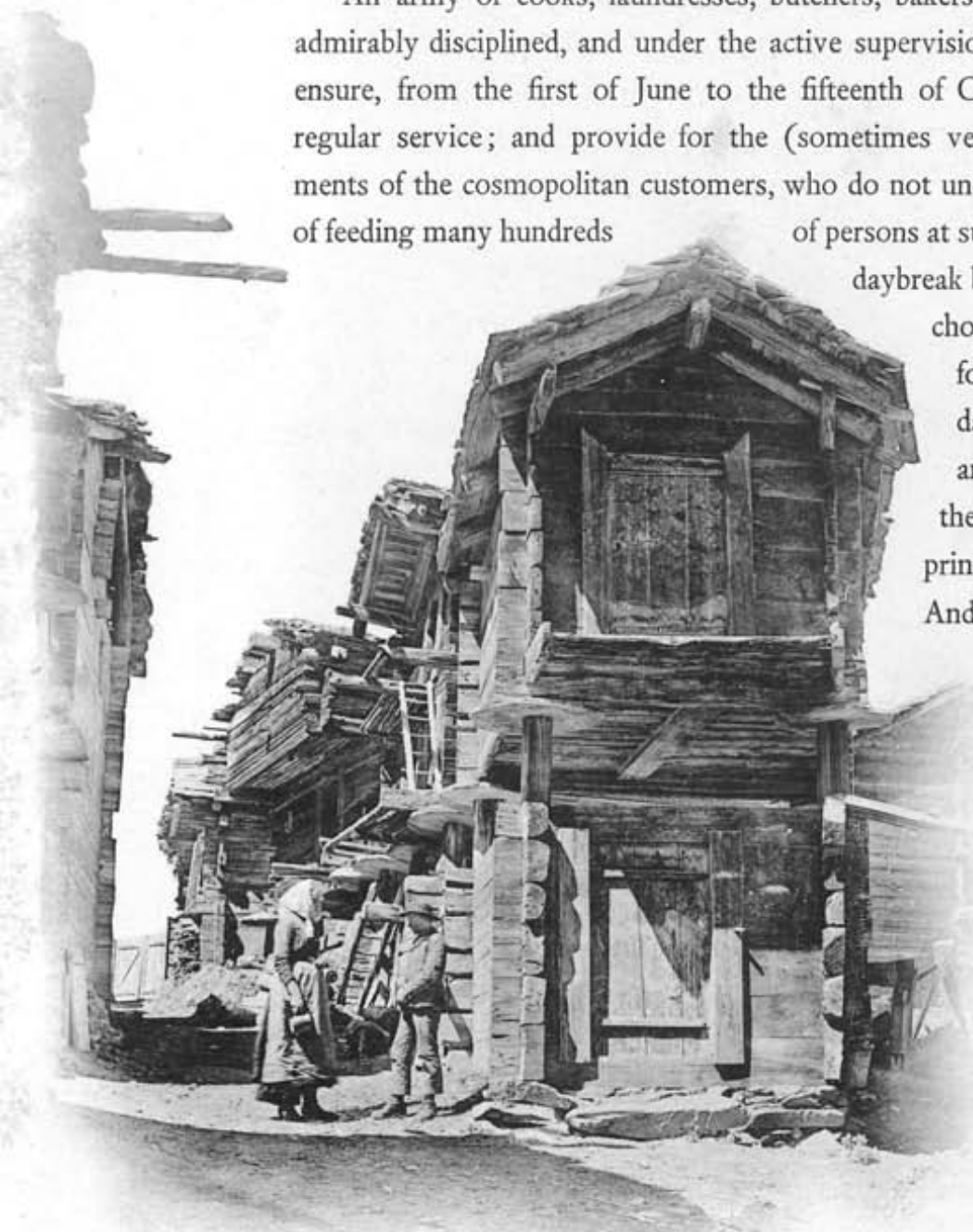
pasts with frequent-

ly varied *menus* are

served at the same

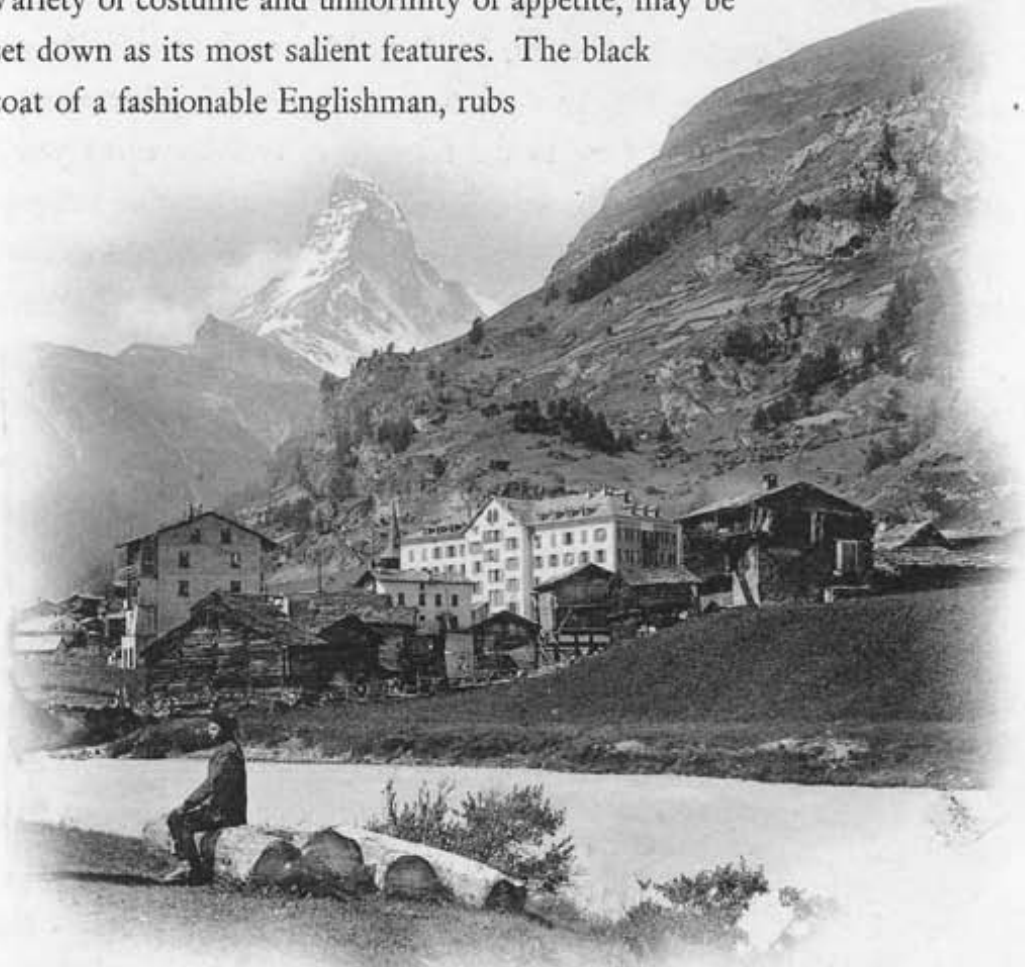
hours with mathe-

matical punctuality.



A street of Zermatt (Unterdorf).

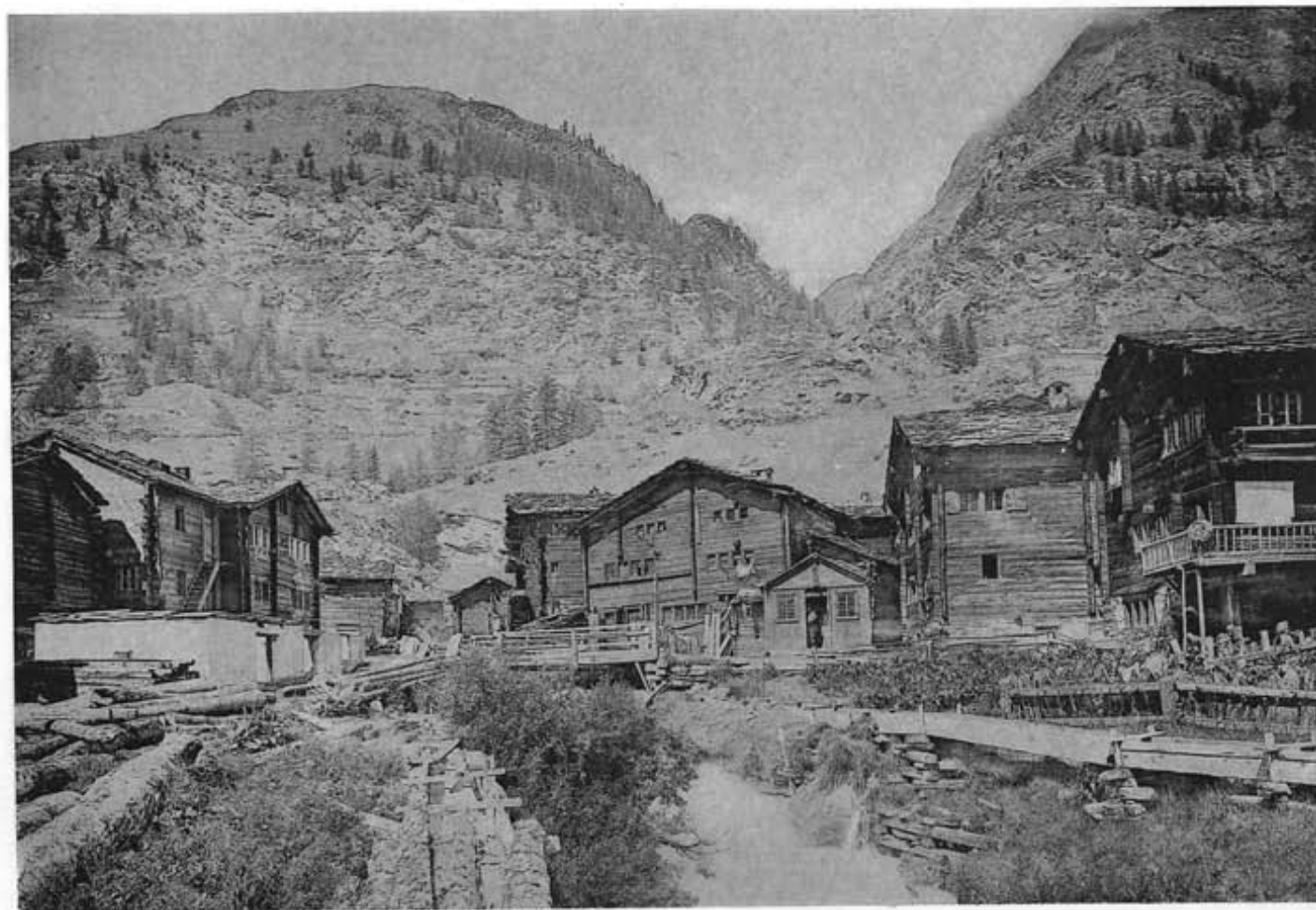
The spectacle offered by the vast dining-rooms at the hour of the table d'hôte, would need to be described by a more practised pen than ours. Variety of costume and uniformity of appetite, may be set down as its most salient features. The black coat of a fashionable Englishman, rubs



Zermatt and the Cervin.

against the rough jersey of the mountain-climber ; gold-studded shirt-fronts and sweeping trains, are seen side by side with the flannel waistcoats and short petticoats of Alpine clubbists of both sexes. Here a priest offers a dish—considerably lightened of its load—to his neighbour, a tall English woman with coloured spectacles ; there a retired officer with waxed moustaches, recounts to unheeding ears his past campaigns which are not

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



ZERMATT AND THE TRIFTBACH.

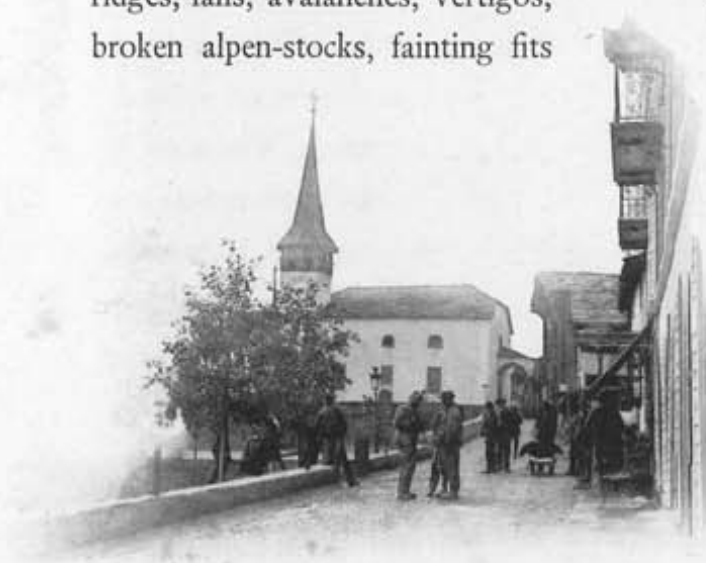
interesting enough to slacken the play of his auditors' knives and forks; over yonder a spoiled brat—a little Parisian for certain—seated beside his too indulgent mama, scandalizes the company by his impudence and his slovenly ways; while the stout gentleman opposite, immensely proud of having climbed the Riffel alone, imagines himself to be amusing his audience by the exaggerated recital of his problematic feats.



Ah! there is nothing like your rogue of a big mountain, for developing the appetite and heating the imagination! And how pleasant it is, seated in the evening before a smoking plate of soup, to satisfy both :—the one with savoury viands, and the other by incredible stories!

As to stories, you will hear plenty of them, and fantastic enough too, during this hour of confidential ease, if Fate should happen to place you near to that gentleman from the South of France,—a roundabout, good-natured sort of fellow,—whose incessant monologue will probably fill your dreams with terrible visions of precipices, bottomless gulfs, sharp ridges, falls, avalanches, vertigos, broken alpen-stocks, fainting fits

cracking ice, abrupt peaks, and sun-strokes! Thanks to his *tartarinoscope** he, who has probably not got even as high as the Gornergrat, has seen a thousand times more of such accidents and such terrific adventures than you, his neighbour, just come back from Monte-Rosa



* The allusion is to M. Daudet's clever skit: *Tartarin sur les Alpes*.

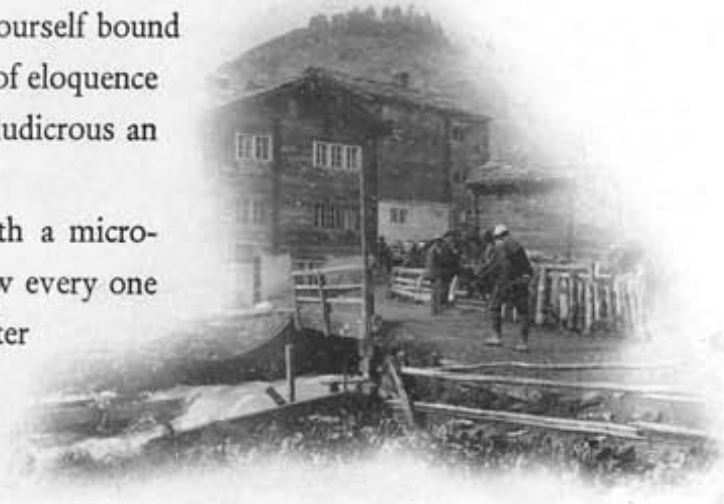
or Mont-Cervin; but who nevertheless, feel yourself bound to listen by a kind of fascination to this flood of eloquence poured forth with so much fervour, and so ludicrous an air of conviction!

The tables d'hôte of Zermatt, are in truth a microcosm! What a variety of manners! And how every one carries his own customs about with him! After the enforced mixture of the common meal, each resumes his accustomed demeanour; members of the same nationality consort together; and social distinctions, confused for a moment, are rigidly observed. The Germans linger in the café of the Hotel Mont-Cervin, to read the newspapers and enjoy a *chope* of excellent beer:—another benefaction of M. Seiler. The French sip their indispensable black coffee

as they chat or play billiards. The English, more solemn, especially when accompanied by their wives, assemble in the salon, to listen to youthful performers exhibiting their powers

on that inevitable

pianoforte which follows the human race everywhere:—even to the least accessible limits of the habitable globe! And meanwhile the dreamier and more melancholy individuals—belonging, for the most part, to northern lands—wander through the dark pathways, and listen to those sounds of evening which utter a different kind of music beneath the starry sky.

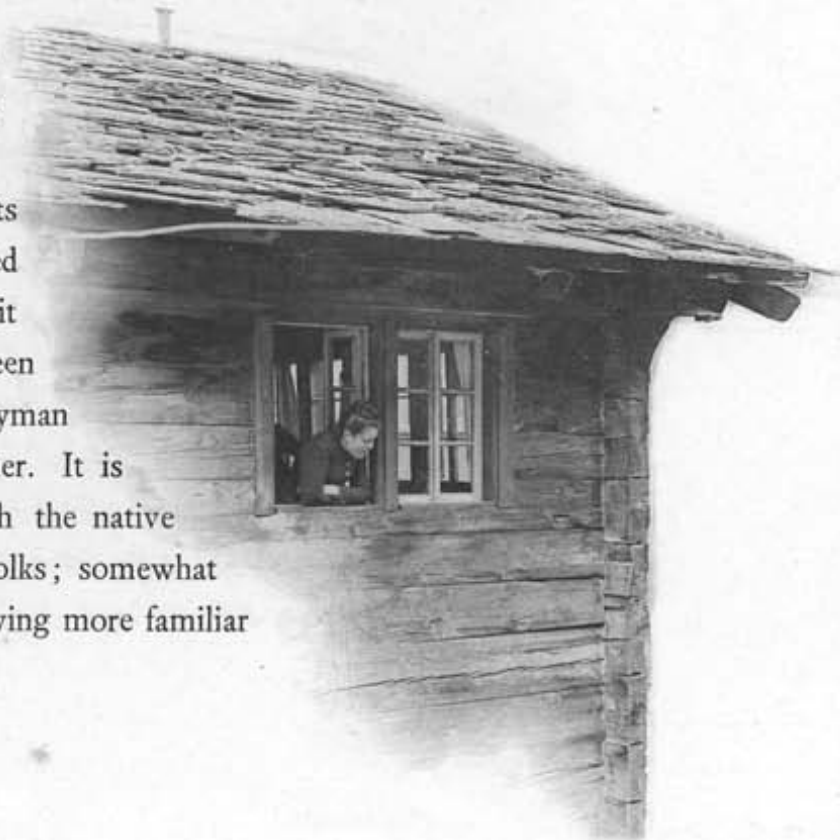




The English church of Zermatt.

Thus the evening passes peaceably; and it is frequently shortened by an early retirement to rest, in preparation for some projected excursion that requires us to rise next morning with the dawn.

A WHOLE day is not too much for visiting the village of Zermatt: its chalets, its shops, its church, and its garden of Alpine plants, backed by a hillock on whose summit the pretty English church has been constructed. An Anglican clergyman officiates here during the summer. It is interesting, too, to mingle with the native population. They are honest folks; somewhat rough and cold at first, but growing more familiar





*Interior of a
chalet's kitchen.*

by degrees, and initiating you into their way of life. It is nearly always the same :—a patient struggle with the forces of nature. These men are husbandmen, herdsmen, and shepherds. Their great anxiety is the care of their flocks and fields. The winter is long with them. They pass it beside their hearths, scarcely ever leaving their dwellings save to carry food to their cattle or their sheep, distributed among the barns and stables of the neighbourhood. Some go forth to shoot the game, which is becoming every year more rare; others chop wood, or carve it into a thousand objects, of a somewhat rude kind of art, that are sure to be sold in the summer. But, in truth, their winter life is very much like that of their friends the marmots, still pretty numerous on the neighbouring heights.

It is only diversified by the amusements of the Sunday ; an occasional game of cards with the neighbours, a dance to the music of an accordion, or simply the recital of pious legends, given by

the older men in the great room of the chalet, with its modest furniture, its religious pictures hung upon the walls, and an air of comfort and cleanliness that offers a contrast to the exterior of the house.

In summer, things are very different! Whilst the women go to the fields, and take up all sorts of masculine occupations,—it is a woman, for instance, who exercises the functions of village barber,—the men are employed as guides. And among them are to be found some real masters of their difficult calling :—men with a firm foot, a sure eye, invulnerable against vertigo, and at the same time sufficiently instructed to give information as to the topography of the country, its fauna, its flora, and its mineral structure. They are to

Interior of a chalet.



and evening, in front of the great hotels,—especially the Monte-Rosa and the Mont-Cervin,—at the service of the tourists, ready to engage themselves at prices fixed by a tariff, which of course varies according to the duration and difficulties of the excursion.



In front of the Monte-Rosa hotel.

It is then we are able to study them. There are some of all ages: very old men who have braved the worst dangers of the higher peaks; and very young ones ready to risk their lives on hitherto unattempted summits. For these people are something like sailors; they have a hereditary delight in the terrible,—a passionate attachment to their mistress the great mountain that is at some seasons not less awful than the sea.

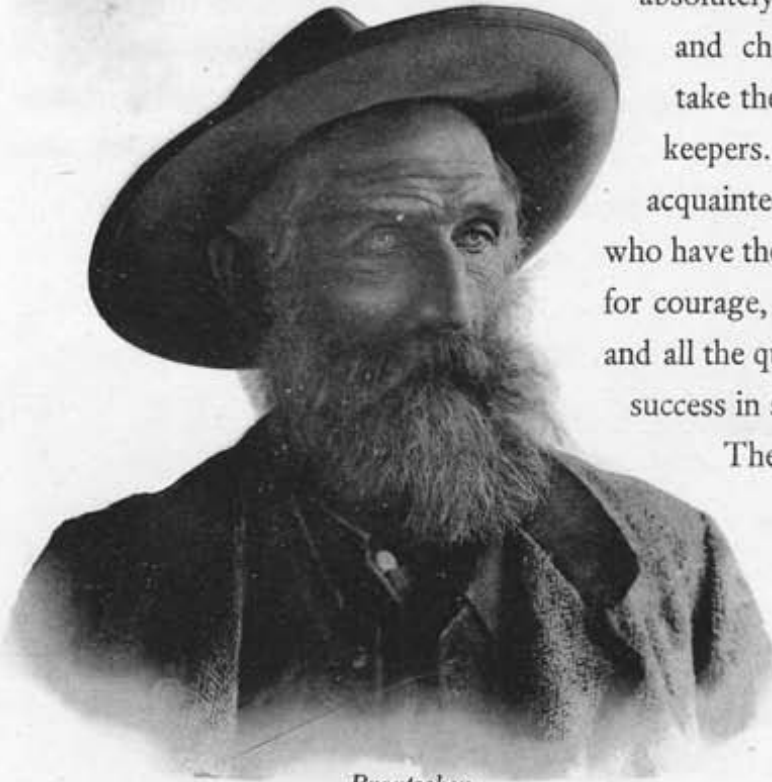
The guides are distinguished by their grey woollen clothing, their lean muscular bodies, their clear and frank glance, the carriage of the head accustomed to look upward, and their generally gentle and modest air. Naturally all are not of equal merit. But even among those who are not official guides,—that is to say, who have not received the diploma conferred by the government of the canton Valais after special examinations,—there are many quite competent to direct ordinary excursions, such



as we speak of in these pages. When, however, any great ascension has to be made,—that of the Lyskamm or of the Cervin, for instance,—it is

absolutely necessary to pick and choose; and also to take the advice of the hotel keepers. These latter are acquainted with the guides who have the highest reputation for courage, coolness, prudence, and all the qualities necessary to success in such circumstances.

The names of some of



Brantschen.

the guides are celebrated in the world of alpinists:—Brantschen, Knubel, Taugwalder, for example. See there, just in front of the church, Pierre Taugwalder, the only survivor, except Whymper, of the frightful catastrophe of the 15th of July 1865. And although a quarter of a century has elapsed since then, you may still trace in the eyes of this sturdy little man quietly smoking his pipe as he sits huddled up there, a gleam of the terror



Pierre Taugwalder.



Peter Knubel.

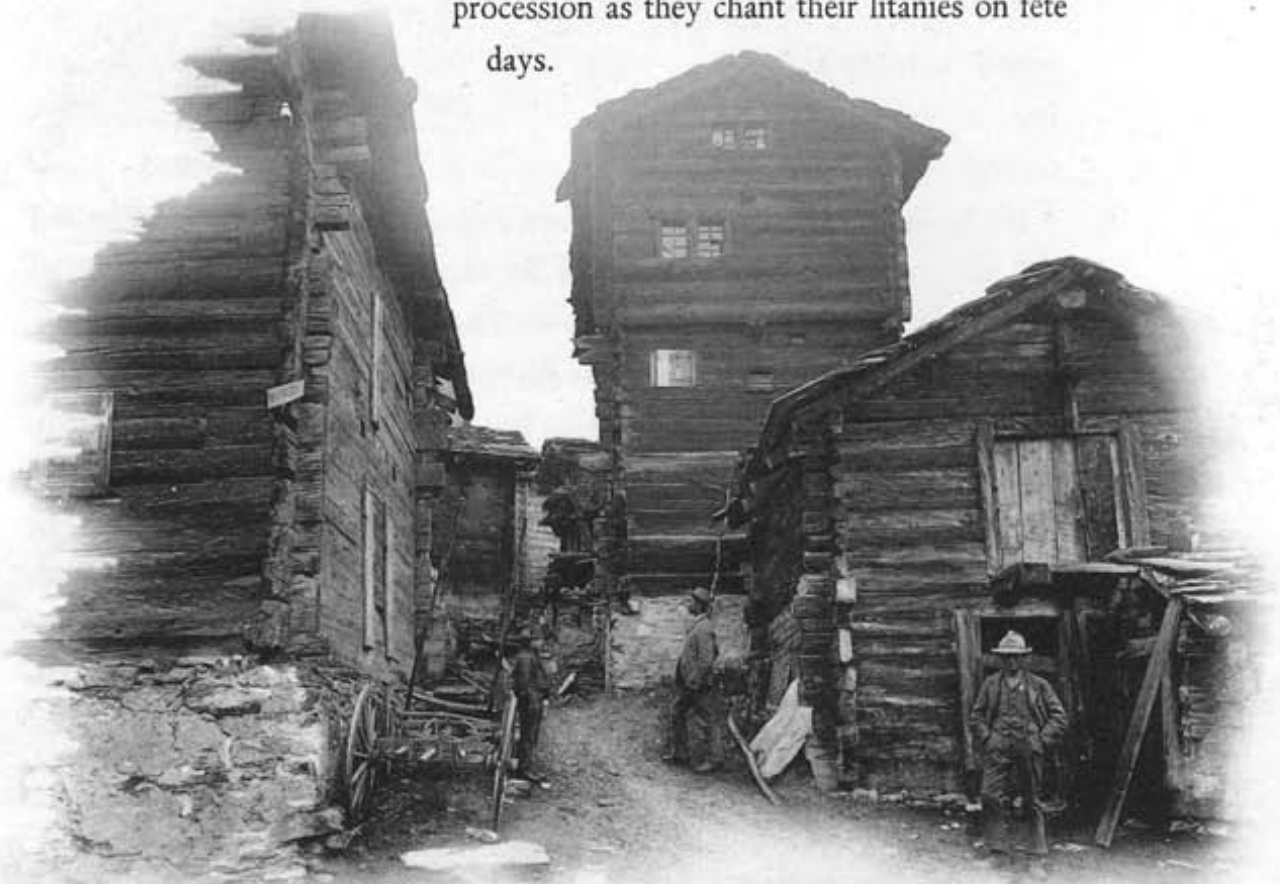
of that unforgettable day when Death brushed him with his dark wing, and when as with the rapidity of a lightening flash, he saw for one moment the guide Michel Croz, Hadow, Hudson, and Lord Douglas, rolling down from depth to depth even to the glacier of the Cervin.



Curé Welschen.

It is a fine and robust race, this race of brave, pious, faithful mountaineers. None love their native land better than they; none are more attached to the faith of their ancestors.

These same men, so bold and ardent in the face of danger, say their prayers to God with the simplicity of little children. No money would bribe them to set out before having offered up their vows before the altar; and it is a sight to see them crowd to mass on Sundays full of faith and reverence, or carry banners in procession as they chant their litanies on fête days.



A street of Zermatt (Oberdorf).

The inhabitants of Zermatt, numbering about five hundred, are all Catholics. They belong to a parish which has long been independent, and has been for many years under the spiritual direction of an excellent man : the curé Welschen, himself a native of Zermatt. The principal church, dedicated to St. Maurice, is in the centre of the village. It is a plain building modestly decorated. "Its cheerful chimes with their simple 'refrain', says M. Alfred Cérésolle,



sound morning and evening on every Sunday and festival. When any danger—

An interment in Zermatt.

a storm, an unseasonable snow-fall—menaces the peace of the valley and the safety of its hearths, the bells of St. Maurice sound the alarm, and call all hearts to prayer."

The same author, in his valuable book on Zermatt, informs us that : "of the four bells hung in the belfry of the church, three bear an inscription ; the smallest is without one. On the second, dedicated to St. Agatha, are the words : *Vivat fraternitas. S. Agatha, 1697*. The third, cast in 1640, is dedicated to the



Tomb of Michel Croz.



Tombs of Hadow, Wilson and Hudson.

Blessed Virgin and St. Theodule, patron saint of the canton Valais. The fourth and largest, consecrated to the Holy Family and the Trinity, was east at Tæsçh in 1702."

All around the church is the cemetery ;—a poor little cemetery wherein repose, among the rest, those destroyed by the terrible mountains hard by. To the southward of the church beneath a block of granite, is the tomb of Michel Croz where the inscription runs : *To the memory of Michel Auguste Croz, born at Tour in the valley of Chamonix, in token of regret for the loss of a brave and devoted man, beloved by his comrades, and esteemed by strangers. He perished not far from hence, like a man of courage and a faithful guide.* On the north are the tombs of Hadow



and Hudson, that of K. Wilson who died of a fall on the Riffelhorn, that of a Russian officer, Edouard von Grote, precipitated to the bottom of a crevasse when crossing the Saas at wooden crosses bearing the names planted on the every day one tive kneeling

Zermatt, &c. Little of the deceased, are other graves; and may see some relatives beside them, weeping and praying.



The abundance of visitors has attracted to Zermatt a considerable number of traders of different kinds: a chemist, a florist, a photographer, a bookseller, sellers of mountain costumes, iron-bound shoes, ice-hatchets, and alpenstocks. The bazaars above all find plenty of customers. All manner of delicacies are to be bought there, the fruits of milder climates, and newspapers from almost all lands. But what we do not find there are the costumes of the country! I asked in vain for the great cylindrical hat of the Valaisan peasant-woman garnished with coloured ribbons. It is true

that this characteristic head-dress is scarcely ever worn now except

on great fêtes;—and rarely then! The women adorn

their heads with a silk kerchief of some bright colour,

which simple though it be is not unbecoming to

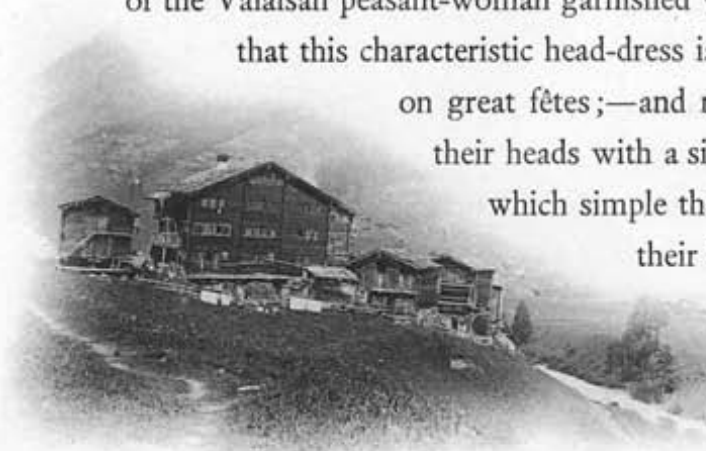
their faces tanned and bronzed by sun

and wind. Some guides keep

shops for the sale of plants

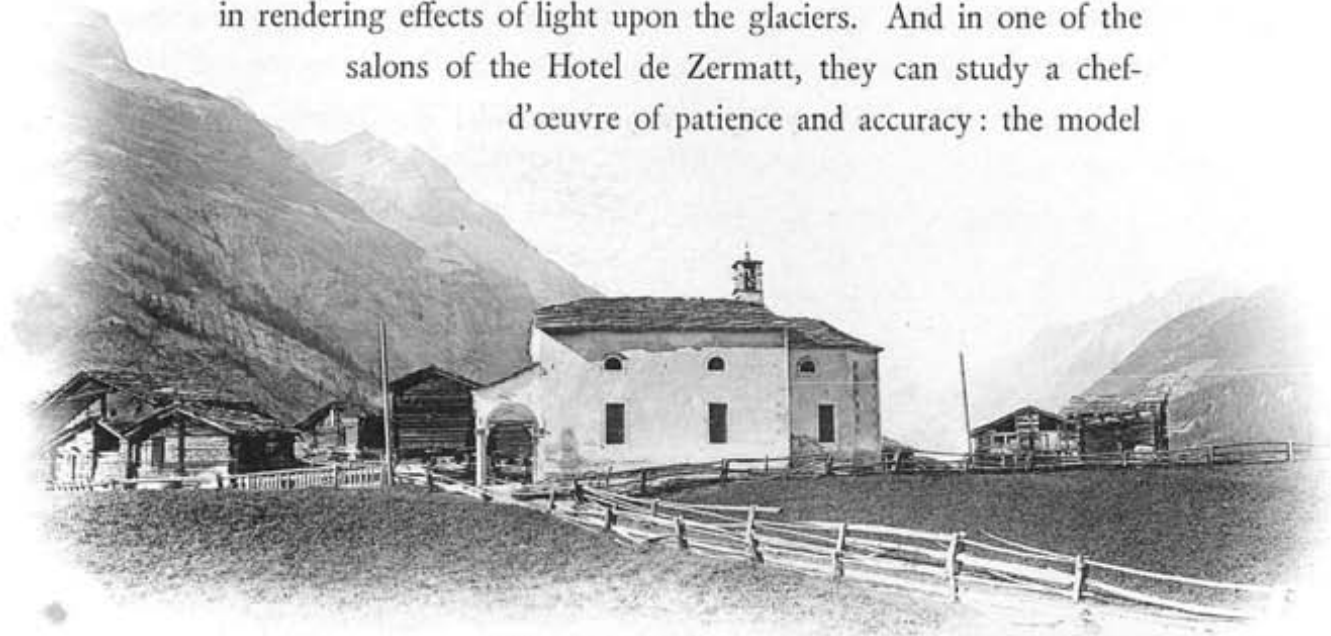
and minerals, which are

frequented by collectors.



Chalets of Oberdorf.

And artists never fail to admire, at the southern extremity of the village, the picture gallery of the painter Loppé, whose skilful pencil is so happy in rendering effects of light upon the glaciers. And in one of the salons of the Hotel de Zermatt, they can study a chef-d'œuvre of patience and accuracy: the model



Village of Winkelmaten.

in relief of the mass of Monte-Rosa, modelled by the engineer Imfeld, whose knowledge of the Swiss Alps is unsurpassed.

* * *

IN order to obtain a general idea of the topography of Zermatt, the best way is to ascend the *grande rue* as far as *Oberdorf*, the most elevated and picturesque portion of the village. From thence the street runs into a pathway skirting the left bank of the *Gornerbach*. This stream descends in a nearly straight line from the Gorner glacier, and, with its three affluents, the *Triffibach*, the *Z'Muttsbach*, and the *Findelenbach*, constitutes the source of the Gorner Viège, which flows rapidly down the slopes below Zermatt, where we have already seen it.

We cross the rivulet by the first bridge to our left, and mount to the summit of a low hill crowned by fir trees, which overlooks the hamlet of *Winkelmatten* (1676 metres). From this moderately elevated spot, the eye discerns the semi-circle of mountains. The Cervin, distinctly outlined against the sky, marks pretty nearly the south; whilst facing it at the



Village of Platten.

opposite pole, and at the very end of the valley, are seen the white crests of the Bernese Alps. In front of the Cervin, and very much below it, may be remarked the dark and jagged summit of the Hoernli, which in its turn looks down upon the rich pastures of the Staffelalp. An isolated house stands on these pastures, the *Hotel of the Schwarzsee*, built in 1887. It is the property of M. Seiler, and takes its name from the pretty little « *Black Lake* », near which it is situated.

To the right of the Cervin,—that is to say, against its western

Les Dourleys Beauvais (France)
 J'ai senti sans mes pieds ^{le bruit} grandir le sombre abîme
 Et reconnu de Dieu la plus haute ^{sublime} hauteur
 Le Mans (autre) France
 L. J.
 J'ai couronné
 Professeur de langue
 d'été de 1887
 d'homme et d'œuvre H.



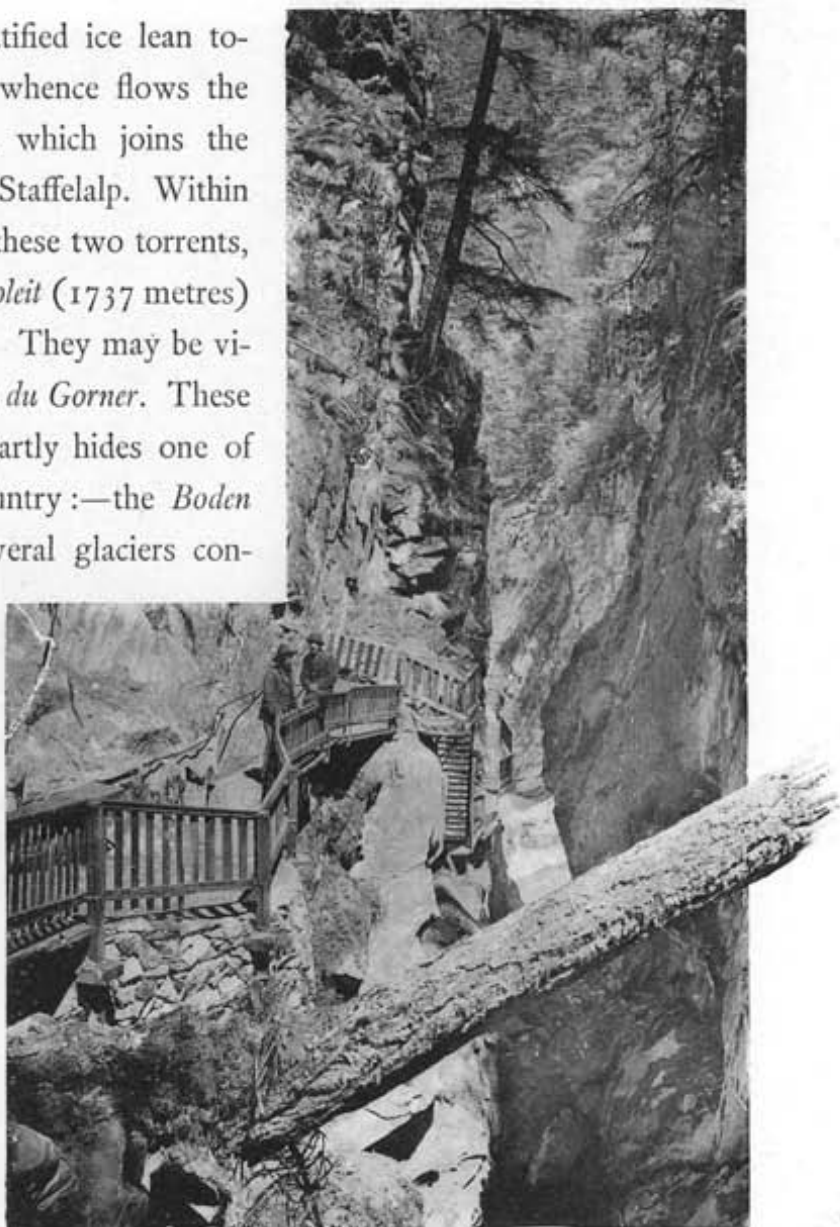
GORNER GORGE.



GORNER WATERFALL.

side—gigantic masses of stratified ice lean towards the glacier of Z'mutt, whence flows the stream of the same name, which joins the Gornerbach at the foot of the Staffelalp. Within the space comprised between these two torrents, the hamlets of *Platten*, and *Aroloit* (1737 metres) are situated on a gentle slope. They may be visited on the way to the *gorges du Gorner*. These gorges pierce a rock which partly hides one of the choicest gems of the country :—the *Boden glacier*, a point at which several glaciers converge together, the principal of them being the Gorner glacier. For some years past the *gorges du Gorner* have been accessible throughout their entire length, thanks to the solid galleries constructed by the brothers Taugwalder, and Lauber ; they are deep, narrow, and savage, full of the noise of waters, and never fail to impress the visitor profoundly.

From our observatory we can contemplate fresh meadows where herds of cows are feeding ; fields of barley, oats and rye, intersected rectangularly by little walls of unmortared stone ; and paths leading to the numerous chalets scattered over the first slopes of the mountains. Above these are forests of pine,



Gorner gorge.

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



BRIDGE ON THE ZUM MUTH RIVER.

larch, and arolles surmounted in turn by barren rocks, and finally the eternal snows. To the east of the Cervin spreads the vast plateau of ice which joins it to the Breithorn,

Théodule, or the metres) leading to

This is the most the easiest, of the around Zermatt.

celebrated since to it in 1792 by de Saussure; and,

fuss-Ausset. In 1865 the latter built a small wooden house there, on a bare ledge of rock. The house was subsequently strengthened by a stone wall, and was inhabited during more than a year by the brothers Melchior and Jacob Blatten, chamois-hunters from Meyringen, and by Antoine Gorret of Valtournanche, whom M. Dolfuss-Ausset had charged with the task of making daily observations, with a view to determining the mode of formation

of glaciers. Here also, during the summer of 1884, M. Ed. Freudenreich of Berne, made some experiments as to the purity of the

with the *col de Saint-Matterjoch* (3322

Valtournanche. frequented, and high passes

It has been the visits paid Horace Benedict later, by M. Dol-



Sunset on the Mischabels.

air, by very highly perfected methods, which enabled him to establish the extreme rarity of the atmosphere, and the almost total absence of microbic germs, in that region.

The lesser Mont-Cervin, and the Breithorn, are hidden from us by the spur of the Riffel. But we can admire in all its brilliancy, the ice coming



down from the Théodule to the glaciers of the Gorner and Furggen, whose bluish tints are mingled with the grey, green, or rose colour of the neighbouring rocks. Turning towards the east, we see the gorge of Findelen, which

must be passed to reach the Stellisee; and on

the north we behold the large basin of the valley of the Viège, bordered on the

right by the peaks of the Mischabel,

on the left by the Mettelhorn, the

rocks of the Kühberg, and the

gorge of the Trift whose torrent

descends from the Gabelhorn.

Lastly, at our feet, lies Zermatt.

The point of view is enchanting; but

with the exception of the Cervin, which from here rises in all its majesty into the azure sky, the other mountains are better seen from a higher elevation. As to gaining greater heights from Zermatt, one has only to choose one's route; for all the paths are well kept, and the number of walks is considerable. We will not attempt to counsel the tourist as to which of them we should take, the best plan being always to wander on according to one's own taste, and one's special bent. Moreover persons who are pressed for time, may profitably consult the itineraries arranged for them in the guide-books. During a whole season one might vary one's excursion each day without going far from Zermatt.



THE most celebrated excursion is that

to the Gornergrat. We leave

the hotel before dawn. Above the jagged crests of the mountains, float those rosy clouds,—delicate, and constantly changing masses of vapour in the broad morning light—which indicate a fine day to come. The guides are all ready for a start; parties are being organised; the click of iron-tipped alpenstocks, and the merry voices of alpinists, hailing the first rays of the dawn, are heard everywhere. In the principal street of Zermatt there are hundreds of these amateur mountaineers, moved by the same aspiration, and about to disperse in all directions to climb the marvellous paths that lead aloft.

As for ourselves, we resume the stony way bordered by wooden fences, as far as Winkelmaten.

Here, turning to the right, we cross the Findelenbach,

and shortly afterwards ascend to the pine-forest whose shadow falls upon great masses of the *alpenrose*, or wild rhododendron. We meet groups of women carrying milk to the village; others are seen kneeling on the



Bridge on the Zum Muth river .

ground to cultivate the meagre soil that nourishes them; others again are driving their flocks to pasture. The rays of the sun which has just risen behind Monte-Rosa, touches their weather-browned foreheads. These women are certainly not handsome; but they are robust and well-set; their honest, good humoured faces are pleasant to look upon; they move with an active step, and "live laborious days". The children wear a droll costume, and look like little old men and women in their long skirts, and

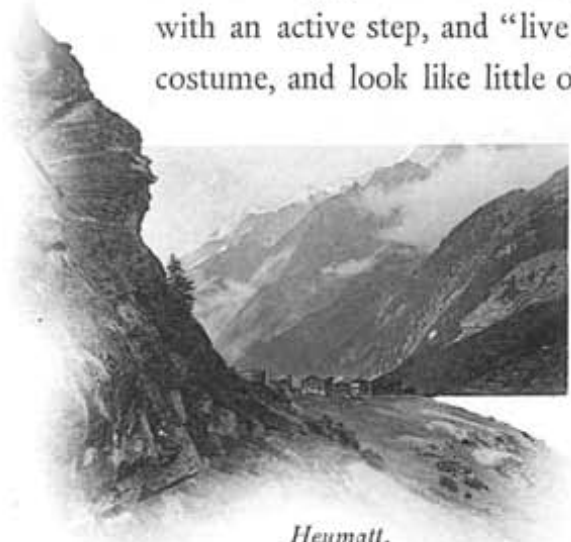
caps fitting tightly to the head. But what cheeks they have!

How vigorously the blood circulates in these young bodies, brought up in the open air and sunshine!

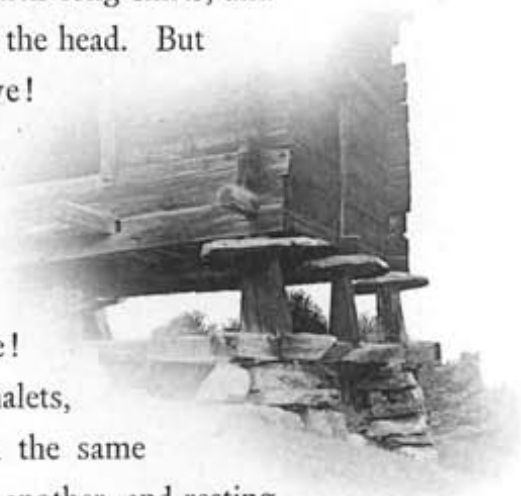
We pass clusters of chalets,

and barns all built on the same

model:—beams made of larch-wood fitting in to one another, and resting on four or six stone pillars surmounted by a wide platform of slate, to protect their contents from mice, or other creatures. The interior is usually divided into two floors, which contain the harvest. The ground floor is frequently used as a stable for sheep and goats.



Heumatt.



Riffelalp terrace.

An hour's easy climb brings us to the *Riffelalp* (2227 metres). Several paths meet on the terrace of a large, first-class hotel built by M. Seiler in 1884. It is filled chiefly by English tourists, who prefer it to the hotels in Zermatt, either on account of its greater quietude, or because it is nearer to the great excursions around Monte-Rosa. People are beginning to construct private dwellings near the hotel; and truly it would be hard to find a more delightful *villeggiatura*. The panorama visible from this spot,



Riffelalp Hotel.

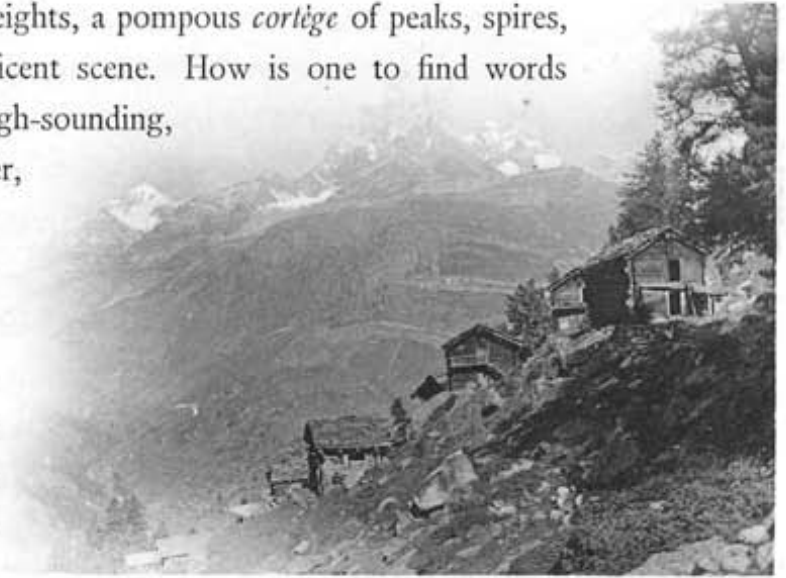
is one of the sublimest in Europe. Before us rise the pyramid of Mont-Cervin, the glaciers of the Waldfluh, the Dent-Blanche (4364 metres), the Ober- (4073 metres) and the Unter-Gabelhörner (3398 metres), the Trifhorn (3737 metres), the Rothhorn (4223 metres), the Schallhorn (3978 metres) and the matchless peak of the Weisshorn (4512 metres)

And all around these supreme heights, a pompous *cortège* of peaks, spires, and obelisks, fill up the magnificent scene. How is one to find words sufficiently accurate, clear, and high-sounding, to describe the mingled disorder, confusion, and harmony, of such a spectacle? Our vocabulary seems miserably inadequate!

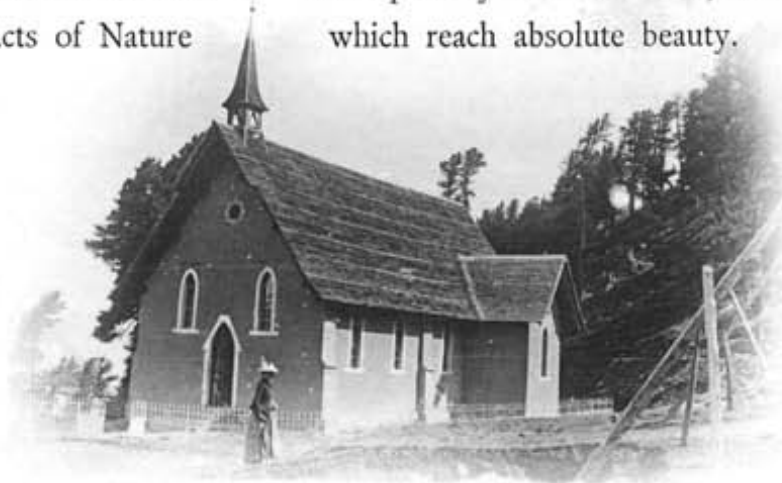
An inhabitant of the plains, whom we will suppose never to have set foot in such elevated regions, and who should have reached the Riffel without much fatigue, need not made a long stay

there to enjoy,—if he be ever so little of an artist—a profound and pure delight. His delight, moreover, will be tempered with humility, for he will feel how insufficient are all our artistic methods to depict similar grandeur, or to express to others—to the inert crowd that rests content on a lower level, how glorious are these regions of the air.

All descriptions are pale and poor, halting miserably among our conventional formulas with their poverty and scantiness, in face of the great facts of Nature which reach absolute beauty.



Riffelalp chalets.



English church of the Riffelalp.

Nature, in grandeur of outline, and subtlety of hue, in depth, in purity, immeasurably surpasses the dreams of the loftiest imagination. Thus the

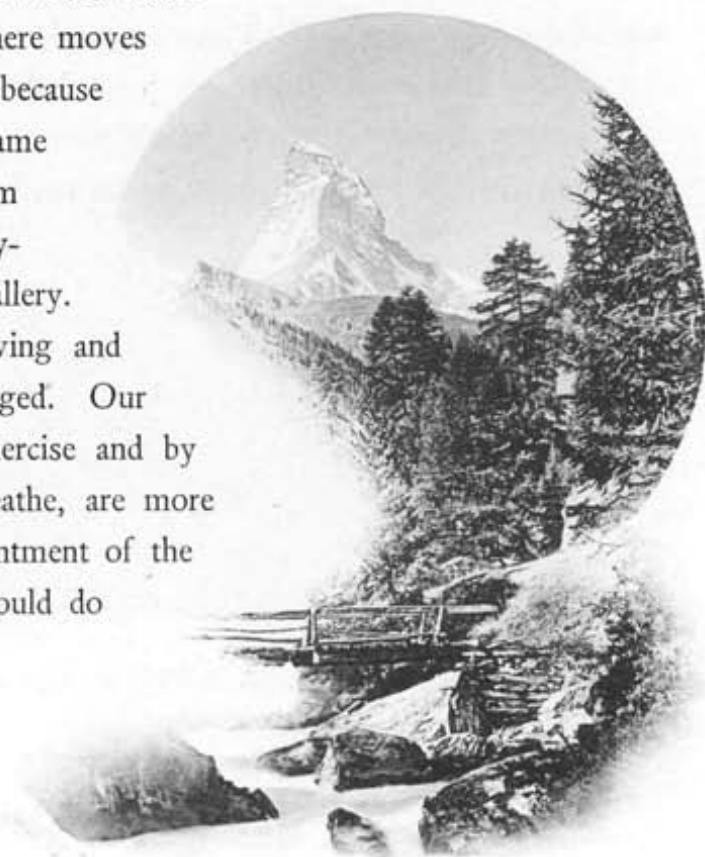


Riffelalp carriers.

finest pictures, the noblest poems, can never give more than a feeble image of the incomparable reality which meets our eyes under these pellucid heavens; and can represent only one passing aspect of these vast forms which vary so incessantly. The true beauty of the mountain masses consists in their constant changes of aspect, the play of light and shade, the varying clouds,

the mists that rise from the depths of some valley, the proportion and intensity of shadow and colouring, and, in a word, all the subtle mutability which would lose all its charm by being fixed and motionless.

Moreover, it must be admitted that if the spectacle we behold here moves us so strongly, it is partly because we are ourselves in a frame of mind very different from our mood in the chimney-corner, or in a picture-gallery. Our capacity for perceiving and comprehending, is enlarged. Our senses, stimulated by exercise and by the pure oxygen we breathe, are more susceptible to the enchantment of the outer world; and we should do



well to profit by this phase of physiological excitement—this intensifying of the vital force, with the feeling of infinite delight which accompanies it—to seize on pen or pencil and attempt a description.



Going to the Gornergrat.

.
A further ascent of three hundred metres by the easy slope of a well kept road, leads us to the Hotel of the Riffelberg, in a still more superb position.

Here, by means of a system established by M. Seiler, the traveller can at once take his place at the table d'hôte; tickets issued at Zermatt, entitling him to a repast. Here again we find a considerable number of visitors; but more passing travellers than boarders. For we are at a sufficient altitude to have cold weather sometimes even in the full summer; snow often falls in the month of August;



and as there are no trees at this height, one does not know how to shelter oneself from the scorching heat of the sun, or the sudden changes of temperature. A procession of mules, and *chaises à porteur* is continually

passing. In the immediate proximity of the hotel, the road divides. One of its branches leads to the gloomy rock of the *Riffelhorn* (2931 metres), the ascent of which, although not highly dangerous, necessitates,



Riffelberg Hotel.

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



RIFFELHORN AND THE MATTERHORN.

nevertheless, a certain amount of prudence. At its foot, in a tiny valley, repose the calm, transparent waters of two little lakes in which the Cervin is reflected. The other branch mounts, in less than an hour's walk, to the summit of the *Gornergrat* (3136 metres) marked by a humble booth where refreshments may be had.

The view from the summit is fairylike, unimaginable!—A “symphony of mountains”, a “cantata of sunlit Alps”, to borrow the expressions of Amiel, the poet-philosopher. In addition to the western summits which we have mentioned, we have here, in this supremely splendid of all Alpine panoramas, the summits of the Mischabels, the Dom (4554 metres)



Riffelhorn and the Matterhorn.

and the Täschhorn. Then come the Alphubel (4207 metres), the Allalinhorn (4034 metres), the Rimpfischhorn (4203 metres), the Strahlhorn (4191 metres), the two highest Swiss points of Monte-Rosa, the Nordend (4612 metres) and the Dufourspitze, separated by the little hollow of the Sattel, so named from its resemblance to the shape of a saddle. Then, passing from the east towards the south, the Lyskamm (4538 metres), the Twins: Castor (4230 metres) and Pollux (4094 metres), the Breithorn (4171 metres) and the Lesser Mont-Cervin (3686 metres). All these sovereign mountains—excepting only the last named—are upwards of



Gornergrat shelter.

4000 metres high. Their royal mantles of snow flow down even into the valleys that separate them, and are fringed with dazzling glaciers—gigantic mirrors reflecting those celestial beams which penetrate us and make us glow to the inmost soul. They are all equally imposing; each one has its own character which attracts us by some special feature; but it is impossible to award the palm of absolute superiority to any one in particular:—not even to the summit of Monte-Rosa. This mountain, in fact, does not tower supreme over the others to the extent that might be anticipated when we consider its superior height. The reason is that we see it too near at hand. One must view it from as far away as the Mettelhorn to perceive its supremacy. Giants are best contemplated at a distance.

Although accessible to every one, the Gornergrat is lofty enough to give to these who dare not affront the dangers of the great ascents, a fore taste of the impressions made by these latter:—the powerful emotions, the enthusiasm that take possession of our whole being, and that our lips can express only by brief exclamations, and cries of admiration and gratitude.

Having braved no danger, our triumph is inglorious; but by way of compensation, the mind and heart being less agitated,—and especially being free from that anxiety about the descent, which always haunts one on the great summits —are able tranquilly to master the subtle



Group on the Gornergrat.

relations of things, and their hidden harmonies. Unfortunately the Gornergrat is so much frequented, that one can rarely escape the *banale* crowd of tourists. It is desirable, therefore, to remain until sunset to obtain the solitude which is indispensable for enjoying all the poetry of nature. Or one may withdraw to a little distance;—climb, for instance, the ragged crest which is a prolongation of the Gornergrat, and push on as far as the *Hobthälligrat* (3289 metres) whence one can enjoy the same view, but in peace and silence.

In any case, it is good to postpone one's return, to as late an hour as possible in the afternoon, in order to see the glow of the setting sun, upon the flanks of Monte-Rosa, the enormous shadow of Mont-Cervin projected on the glacier of Furgg, and the gradual fading of the pallid skies after the great enchanter has disappeared below the horizon.

ZERMATT AND THE



PANORAMA OF THE

TT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



OF THE GORNERGRAT.

We descend near the little lakes of the Riffel; an imposing calm spreads around us; the darkness rises slowly; Zermatt is already plunged in gloom, while the peaks still shine in the sunlight. In order to vary our route, we turn the flank of the Riffelberg, by means of a little path overhanging the *crevasses* of the lower extremity of the Gorner glacier (the *Boden glacier*), the only great ice-field visible between this point and Zermatt. From time to time the sound of tiny runlets of water is heard, flowing from the glacier, as well as the cracking noise of the vast frozen surface, which Ch. Grad has described in his "*Observations on the glaciers of the Viège*". An hour later, the shades have gathered thickly; there is nothing visible save the stars in heaven, and the twinkling lights in the chalets of Zermatt on earth.

* * *



Lake of the Riffel.

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



HERMATJE AND THE BODEN GLACIER.

*Ried*

A FEW simple strolls among the fields and flowers, may be welcome after the sublime, but somewhat melancholy impression—(on certain minds even painfully depressing)—made by the spectacle of these inviolate and desert heights.

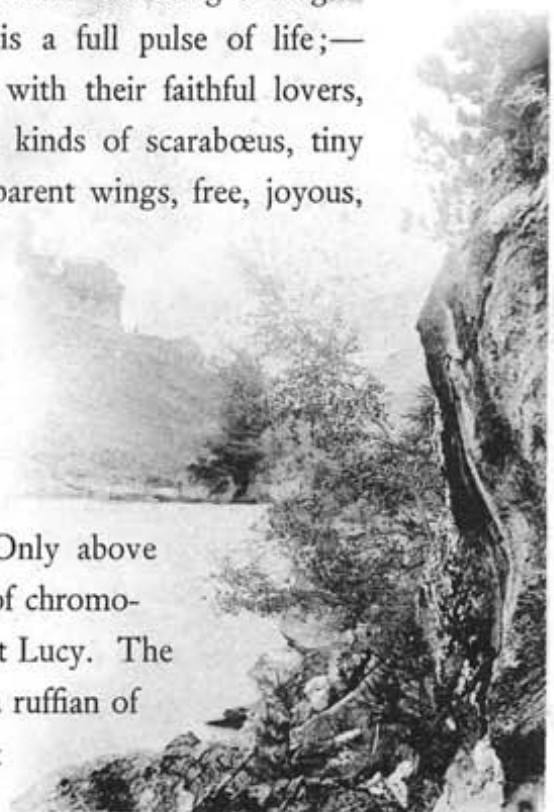
Let us go up, one morning, to *Ried*, to the north of Zermatt, on the right bank of the Viège,

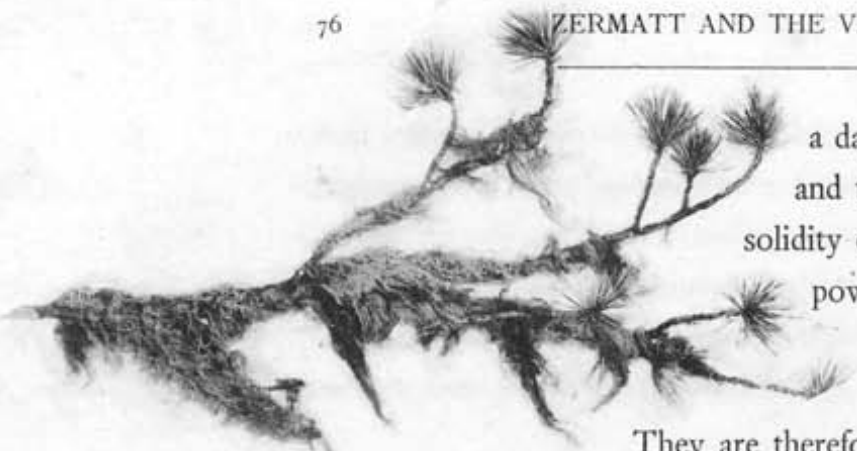


and visit the chapel of *Haueten* which is quite near, in the midst of a meadow bordering a magnificent forest. Here is a full pulse of life;—multitudes of flowers with their faithful lovers, the butterflies, various kinds of scarabœus, tiny flies fluttering on transparent wings, free, joyous, and ardently enjoying the brief instants of love and life accorded to them. How many keen suggestions are offered to us by this spectacle of rejoicing nature!

The chapel is poor, and even somewhat neglected. Its whitewashed walls are bare. Only above the altar hangs a picture of no value,—a sort of chromolithograph—representing the martyrdom of saint Lucy. The executioner, in a blood-red mantle, suitable to a ruffian of his sort, is plunging his poniard into the throat of the saint. We find here no touch of edification, and hasten out of doors again to seek one. Oh, how far the subtle perfumes of the field surpass in healthy sweetness the smell of incense! And how much better a moral is preached by the glorious spectacle of Nature, than by the artificial legends of man!

After having steeped ourselves in the full sunshine that floods the upper part of the valley, and glistens on the rippling waters of the Viège, we plunge into the deep shadow of the arolles. These trees are reckoned among the finest and the rarest of the Alpine region. They flourish in

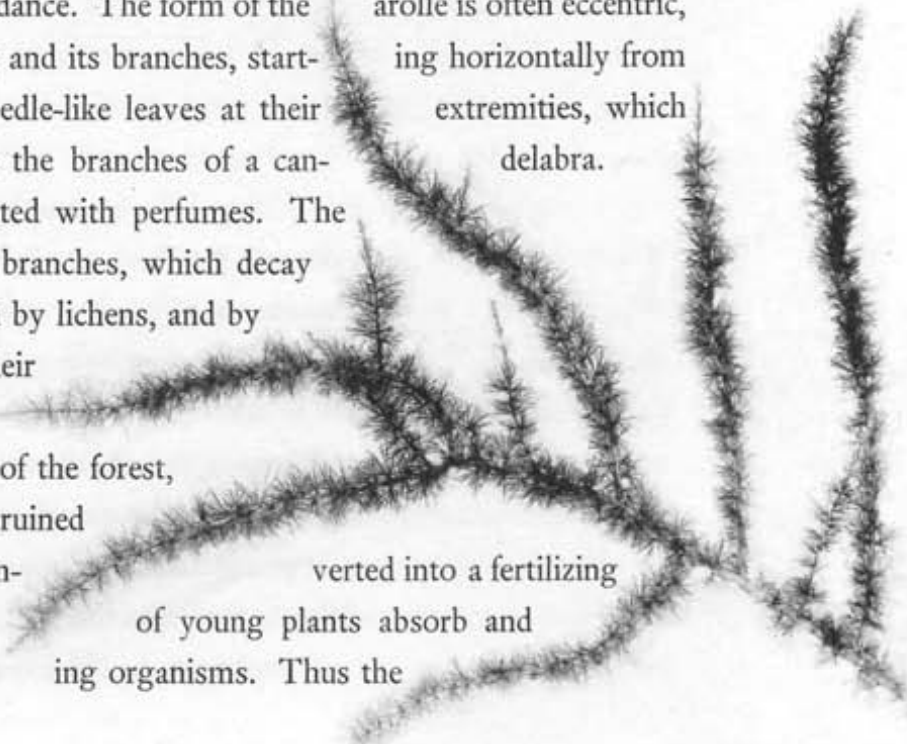




a damp soil better than the larch does ;
and they also bear the cold better. The
solidity of their trunk, and their long and
powerful roots, enable them to stand
more successfully than other
trees against violent tempests.

They are therefore found at a great height :—even
in the neighbourhood of glaciers.

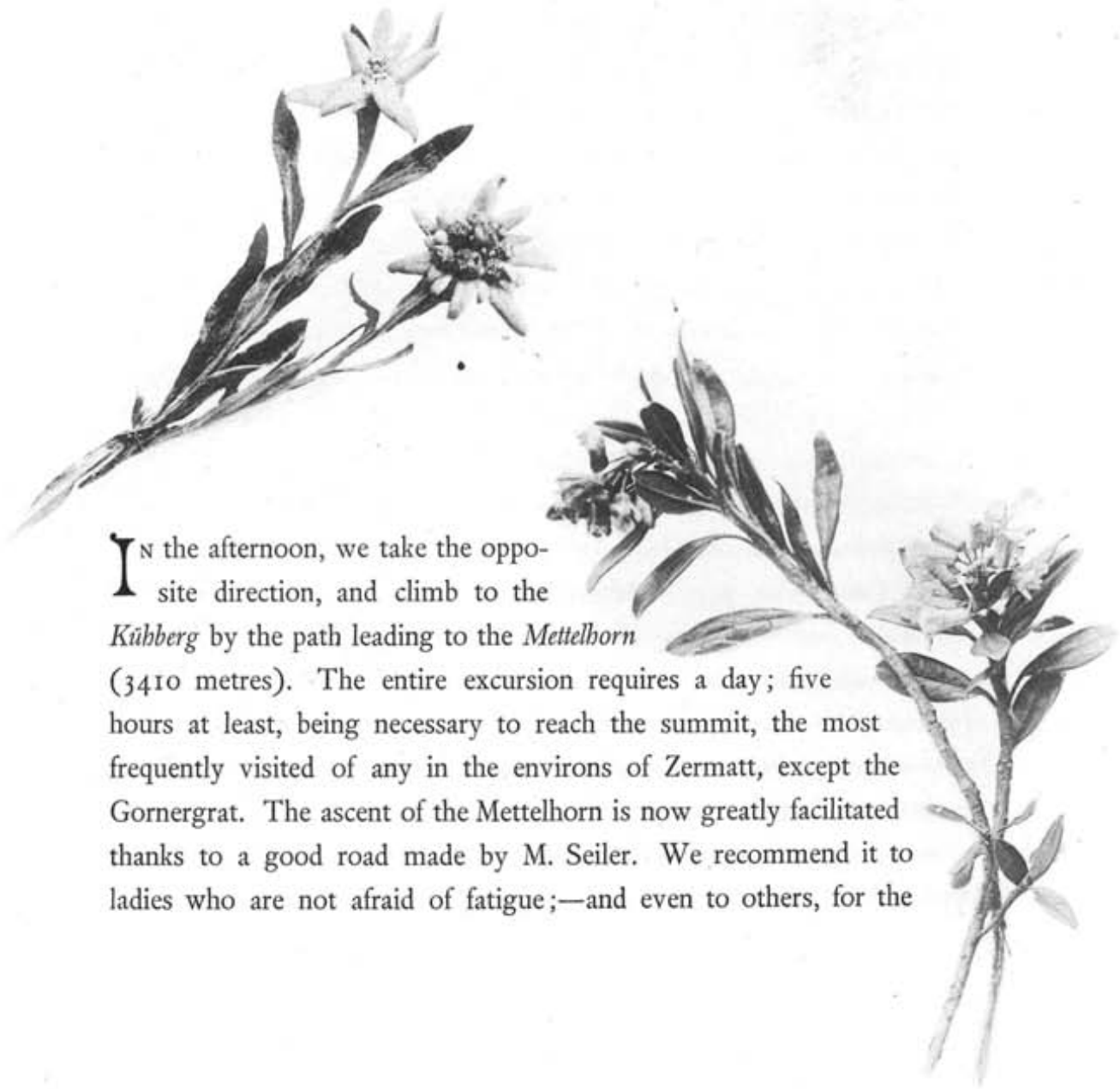
The arolle is one of the most robust of trees. It grows very slowly,
and attains a great age. Tschudi mentions one, seventy years old, which
only measured six feet and a half in circumference, and whose perfectly
smooth bark displayed no wrinkles :—a sign of youth in this tree, as in
the human face. They are met with in the neighbourhood of Zermatt,
sometimes standing in proud isolation, sometimes in little groups. It is
rare to find large forests of them ; and here, around Haueten, they may be
observed in special abundance. The form of the arolle is often eccentric,
irregular, and contorted ; and its branches, starting horizontally from
the trunk, bear long, needle-like leaves at their extremities, which
sometimes turn up like the branches of a can- delabra.



The air is impregnated with perfumes. The
soil is strewn with dry branches, which decay
and crumble away, eaten by lichens, and by
the larvæ of insects. Their
dust is carried by the
rains into the soft moss of the forest,
is insinuated among the ruined
trunks, and gradually con- verted into a fertilizing
humus, which the roots of young plants absorb and
transform into fresh liv- ing organisms. Thus the

substance of the fallen matter,—withered leaves, exhausted roots, and so on is revived. Thus death begets life, a process of new birth is always going on within the bosom of this moss-covered necropolis of trees, and new flowers bloom in the rays that filter through the leafy boughs.

We follow our way in haphazard fashion, and here and there we light upon delicious spots where man has not intruded:—peaceful retreats where one would fain remain for ever.



IN the afternoon, we take the opposite direction, and climb to the *Kühberg* by the path leading to the *Mettelhorn* (3410 metres). The entire excursion requires a day; five hours at least, being necessary to reach the summit, the most frequently visited of any in the environs of Zermatt, except the *Gornergrat*. The ascent of the *Mettelhorn* is now greatly facilitated thanks to a good road made by M. Seiler. We recommend it to ladies who are not afraid of fatigue;—and even to others, for the

road is practicable for mules to within an hour of the summit. From the latter we see fewer glaciers than from the Gornergrat, but more mountains, the position of the Mettelhorn being more central. The whole chain of the Meschabels is displayed; Monte-Rosa especially is seen to greater advantage than from the Gornergrat; as we have already remarked; and it is perhaps the best point from whence to contemplate the dazzlingly white Weisshorn



The Breithorn seen from the Mettelhorn.

which looks almost as though one could touch it with one's hand. Nevertheless, easy though it be, the ascent of the Mettelhorn is something decidedly more than a promenade; and we will, therefore, stop short for today at the Kühberg, a hill which looks down immediately upon Zermatt.

The path begins near the railway station. It first crosses a wild jumble of rocks composed of quartz and felspar, and passes over the plateau where the chalets of *Balm* are situated, surrounded by browsing flocks of sheep and goats. Among them are to be admired some he-goats remarkable for the length of their horns, and the gentleness of their looks. These handsome animals are quite tame and docile, and seem to ask to be caressed.

Nor are caresses refused them, so honest, confiding, and expressive is their physiognomy!

The path proceeds zig-zagging along the edge of a torrent, which is sometimes completely dried up by the summer heats. Then it turns to the left, and keeps along about half-way up a slope, absolutely starred with

edelweiss. The Kühberg, together with the slopes of the Hohbalm, and the Hohlicht on the other side of the Triftbach, is the favourite *habitat* of these flowers like white stars of cotton-wool, which bend in the wind upon their frail little stalks.



During the months of July and August, they are to be found there by hundreds and thousands, rooted into the tiniest crevices of the rocks. In a few moments one may gather an enormous bouquet of these wild and poetic flowers. The Edelweiss is more sought after by tourists at Zermatt than any other flower. It has the place of honour on the dinner-table, in the windows of the hotels, and in the shops. The little shepherd boys gather them for passing visitors, and drive quite a profitable trade; for it is customary to send them to absent friends in little pine-wood boxes, which the post distributes daily in great numbers and in all directions. The edelweiss particularly affects a soil dried up by the sun. Thus its tissues are so free from moisture that it may be preserved indefinitely. It is the flower of unfading memories.

When we have loaded ourselves with great sheaves of the various plants which grow near the



edelweiss, and which, in certain places, transform this arid plateau into a wonderful garden, we return from the Kühberg across some poor pastures to its southern extremity, whence a steep road,—almost vertical at its commencement—descends to Zermatt nearly parallel with the stream of the Trift. This rugged way back is delightful. The murmur of the torrent, the fresh current of air constantly kept up by the falling water, the rustling of the pine-leaves, the sound of the pebbles constantly rolling downwards,—all this makes up a harmony of which one never grows weary. And then, at certain turns of the path, in the shadow immediately beneath us, we obtain a bird's-eye view of Zermatt, which by a singular effect of perspective, appears as though sunk in the bottom of an abyss.



The village looks so diminished, and yet its smallest details are so distinct that one might make a plan of it from this height. There is the *grande rue*,—there are the hotels, the bazaar, the church, Oberdorf, the junction of the Trift with the Viège; there come the yellow squares of barley and oats, relieved against the green background of the lower valley; and further still in the distance, the glaciers of the Findelen and Gorner, with their delicate azure tints.

AN other admirable and enchanting walk is the excursion to the *Stelli-See*. It may be accomplished in a morning; but a whole day is not too long if one wishes fully to enjoy all the beauties met with at every step.



The Stelli-See.

The Stelli-See is a little lake whose calm and limpid waters reflect as in a mirror the sapphire sky, and the silvery peaks. It is situated at a height of 2543 metres on a lofty and narrow platform, not far from the lateral moraine to the right of the Findeled glacier, and the roads leading to the Ober-Rothhorn (3418 metres), or the Unter-Rothhorn (3106 metres) on the one hand, and to the Cima di Jazzi (3818 metres) on the other. We may remark by the way that these are comparatively easy ascents, which no Alpinist should neglect. But we have made up our minds beforehand, to do no more than stroll at our ease, and to make no great effort. We therefore content ourselves with casting a resigned—though perhaps slightly envious,—glance at the caravans of robust Alpine clubmen, who pass us

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



THE STELLI-SEE AND THE CERVIN.

with a stroug and rapid stride on their way to the summits. We too may attain them some day :—who knows? But for the present we limit ourselves to admiring them at a distance.

Set us take some provisions, a botanical case, a geological hammer, a case for collecting insects, and set off for a day of delicious wandering :—a stroll begun purposely without any fixed goal!

From Winkelmatten, two roads lead to Findelen. The one passes by the Riffelalp, and continues through the woods as far as the glacier which it crosses obliquely to reach the hamlet. This road is the shadiest, the pleasantest, and the longest. The other skirts the right bank of the



Chalets of Findelen.

Findelenbach. It has no shade beyond Zum-Stein, a group of miserable chalets; and from thence is exposed

and horribly stony. But one can reach Findelen by either of these roads in less than two hours.

Findelen (2075 metres) is a little village of small farmers grouped



Eggen.

around a modest chapel which contains no other ornament than some coloured prints of the Stations of the Cross. Between three and four hundred feet higher, lies another hamlet : *Eggen*. This is a gem of absolutely primitive simplicity.

about twenty houses
 details of an exquisite
 amid the mountains,
 different from all
 An artist could not
 A painter especially
 a hundred charming

The village consists of a double row of
 bordering the only street; and is full of
 rusticity that give to this spot hidden
 a certain delightful individuality,
 the other villages in this valley.
 fail to be enthusiastic about it.
 would find himself attracted by
 "motives" for his pictures :—

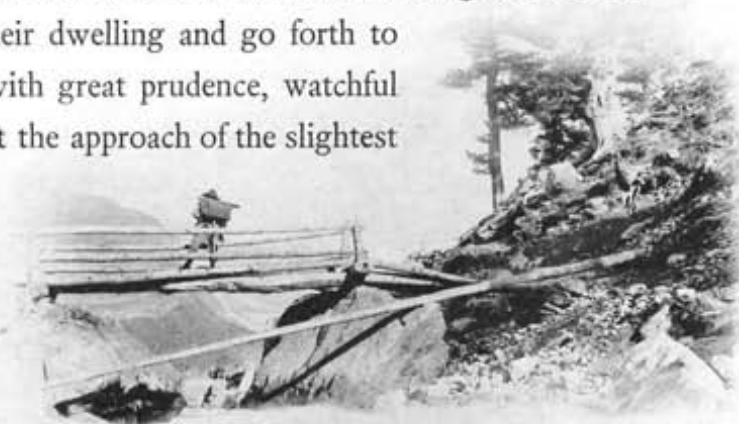


by the irresistible temptations of form and colour. Here a young smiling girl, reposes at her ease on a huge block of granite which looks as though it had yielded under the firm curves of her robust young form; there a mother, sitting in the open air, nourishes her baby at her sun-burnt breast, the little one's face expressing boundless content; further on some satin-coated cows are voluptuously chewing the cud; two powerfully built guides are returning home and singing a song of triumph; a poor little lame old woman is collecting her sheep; and an idiot beggar sits laughing in a corner, covered with many-coloured rags to which the full glare of the summer sunshine lends a sort of splendour!



The whole soil of this little Findelen valley, is honeycombed with holes made by the marmot. There are few places in the canton Valais where these rodents are more numerous. The marmot, as is well known, digs out its burrow in the driest slopes covered with short turf. Various narrow and tortuous passages, from eight to ten metres long, lead to a large chamber where the animals live together in one family. Very often as many as twelve or fifteen marmot's are assembled here together. At the dawn of day they leave their dwelling and go forth to seek their food; moving with great prudence, watchful eyes, and attentive ears. At the approach of the slightest danger they regain their burrow with wonderful swiftness. They are very timid, and their sole defence is in flight.

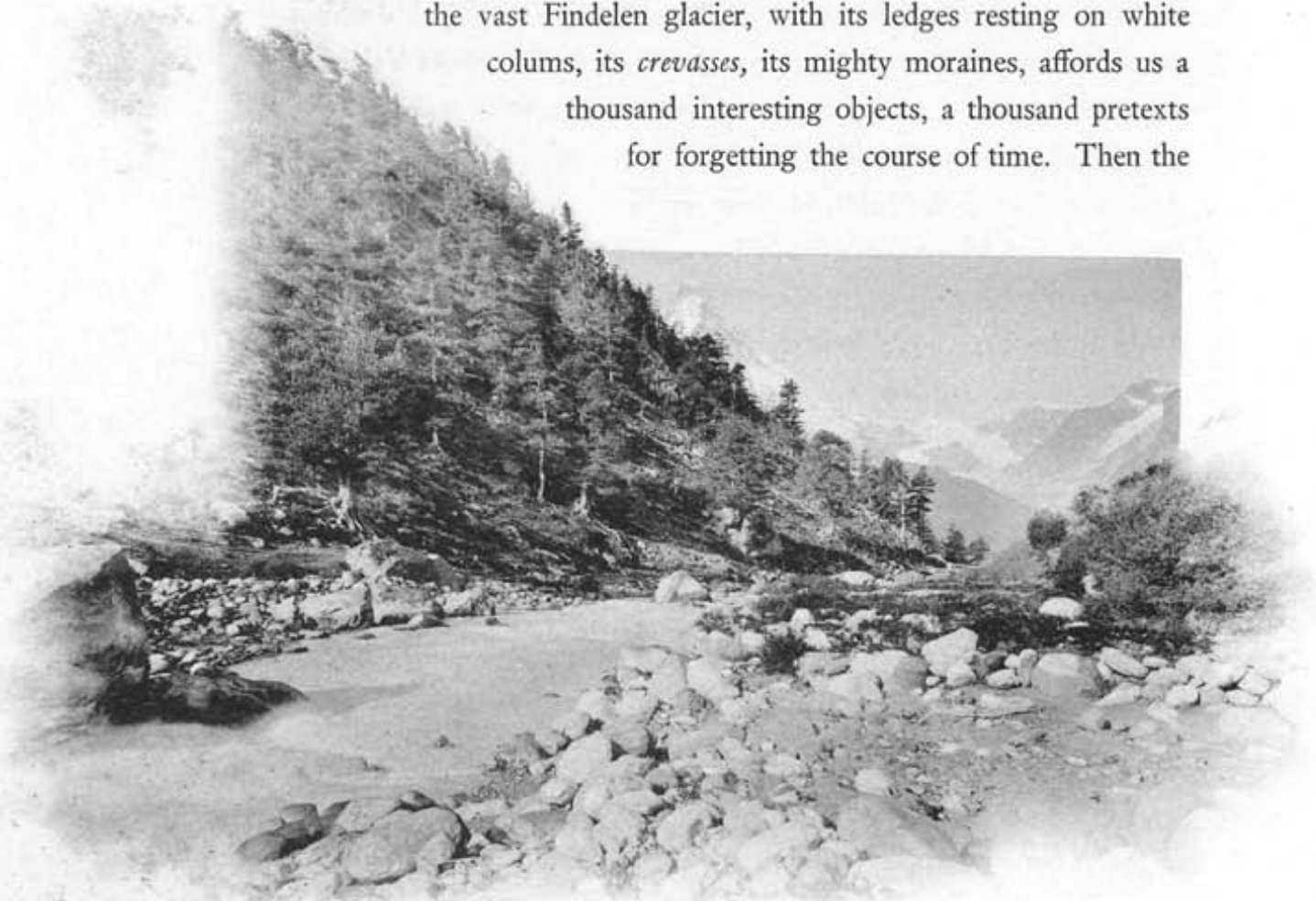
Unfortunately they are hunted with great, and inexcusable



Bridge over the Findelenbach.

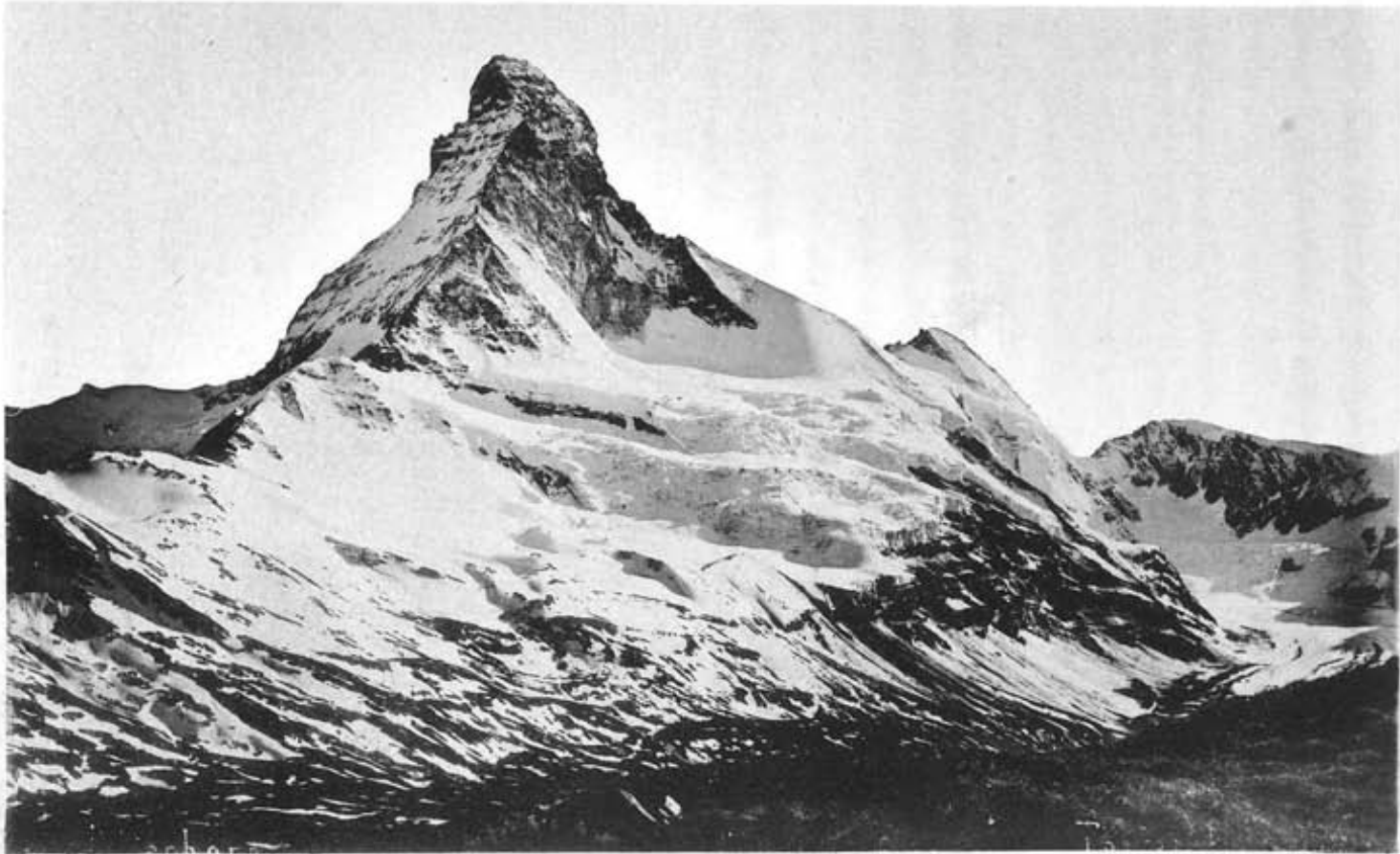
eagerness. Living in uncultivated parts of the Alpine region, they cause no considerable damage; and their presence forms a characteristic trait in the landscape. As soon as the first cold begins to be felt,—that is towards the end of September—the marmots lay in a store of hay with which they carpet their corridors; then, rolling themselves up with their front paws over their muzzles, and their heads hidden beneath their tails, their respiration grows slower, their temperature goes down, and they fall into a lethargic sleep which lasts six months, and even more.

We make numerous halts in order to prolong the pleasure of beholding the superb Cervin face to face, and of breathing the refreshing air from the glaciers. Wild flowers detain us by their graceful beauty; and under every stone we find a collection of insects. It is very lovely in the valley, and the vast Findelen glacier, with its ledges resting on white columns, its *crevasses*, its mighty moraines, affords us a thousand interesting objects, a thousand pretexts for forgetting the course of time. Then the



The Findelenbach.

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



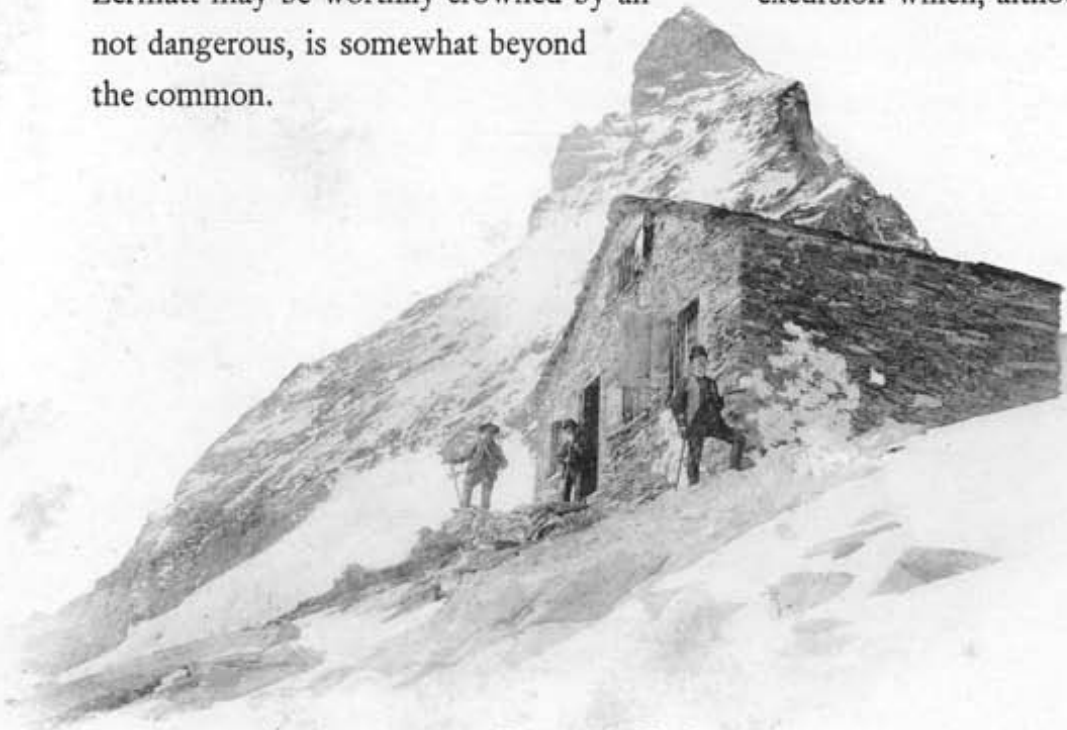
THE CERVIN.

General view.

day is well advanced when we finally arrive at the lake of Stelli (the *ultima Thule* of our excursion) where we await in the enjoyment of this deliciously pure air, the rosy illuminations of evening, in order to return to Zermatt with the last rays of sunset.

* * *

HAIL to the Cervin! We are going to sleep upon his rugged flank, and to pass a whole night in the famous cabin. The ascent to that point is not difficult. Ladies and children may be taken there, with certain precautions. And we mention it here in order that our too brief visit to Zermatt may be worthily crowned by an excursion which, although not dangerous, is somewhat beyond the common.



Cabin of the Cervin.

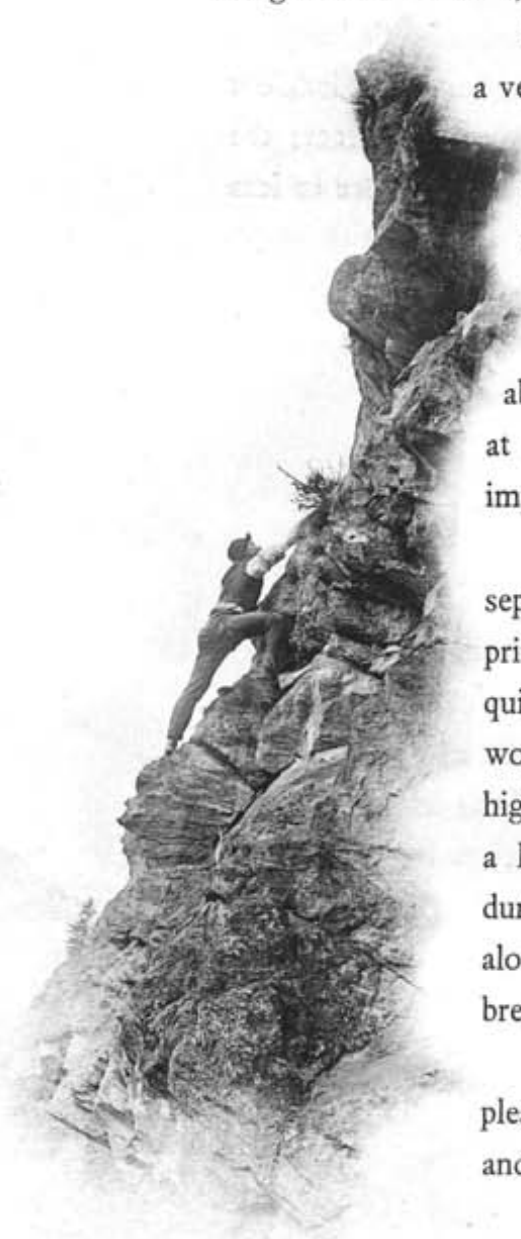
In a savage and desolate spot stands this simple stone hut, built at considerable expense under the auspices of the Alpine Club. It is a fairly comfortable little house. It is built on the solid rock, at the upper end of the first ridge of the Cervin; and is sufficiently protected here, from the avalanches which fall on either side, and with a noise like thunder, on to the glaciers of Z'Mutt, and Furggen.

Here is the account of a visit we paid it last year, on a very unsettled August day :

We arrived early in the afternoon. The weather was gray, with sudden squalls of wind, such as are frequent in the Alps. A fine and penetrating rain, driven by the ceaseless current blowing from the heights, beat against our faces as we climbed the abrupt rocks of the Cervin; and felt a certain emotion at coming in contact for the first time, with its vast, impassible form.

The ascent, however, as far as the pass which separates the crumbling block of the Hörnli from the principal mass, had been delightful. The sky was then quite clear, the sun warm and radiant, and the ice-fields wonderfully fine. The temperature, in fact, was so high, that we hesitated about taking, at the *Schwarz-See*, a load of fagots necessary for warming us up aloft during this summer night which we proposed spending alone, at a height of 3300 metres on the inhospitable breast of the savage mountain.

As far as the *Schwarz-See* (Black Lake) it is a pleasant walk along a safe road winding among pines and firs, and traversed during the whole summer by a



A difficult passage.



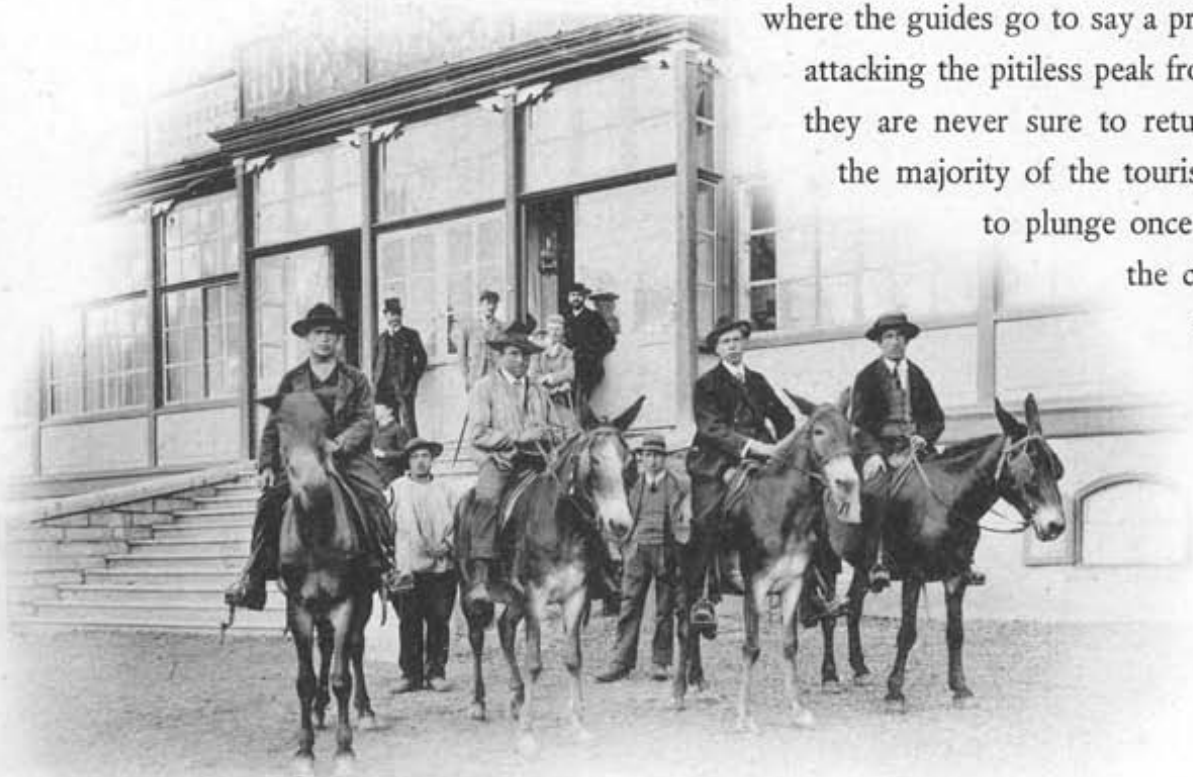
MATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.

perpetual caravan of tourists on mule-back or in *chaises à porteur*. Every day, from early morning, you meet here, as on the way to Gornergrat, a panting, noisy, cosmopolitan crowd, which makes the fortune, and also, it must be admitted, the nuisance, of Zermatt. Here we have the well-known sham mountaineers, the inevitable *bourgeois* carrying with them the exigencies of their indolent habits, and their commonplace sentiments; the young ladies sitting their mules with more or less

elegance, and the old ones stiff and angular. The majority of these travellers, blindly obeying their guides, stop at the newly constructed hotel. After luncheon they go into ecstasies before the splendid panorama of the neighbouring mountains, they pay due attention to the celebrated little lake with its melancholy waters, and make a pilgrimage to the chapel of Our Lady of the Snow,

where the guides go to say a prayer before attacking the pitiless peak from whence they are never sure to return. Then, the majority of the tourists descend to plunge once more into

the comforts of
M. Seiler's



ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



HOTEL OF THE LAC NOIR.

establishments, satisfied with having conscientiously accomplished the task advised by *Bædeker*, and never considering, poor things, that one more effort,—one movement of independence—would have brought them (by a more laborious way, it is true!) to the very gates of Paradise.

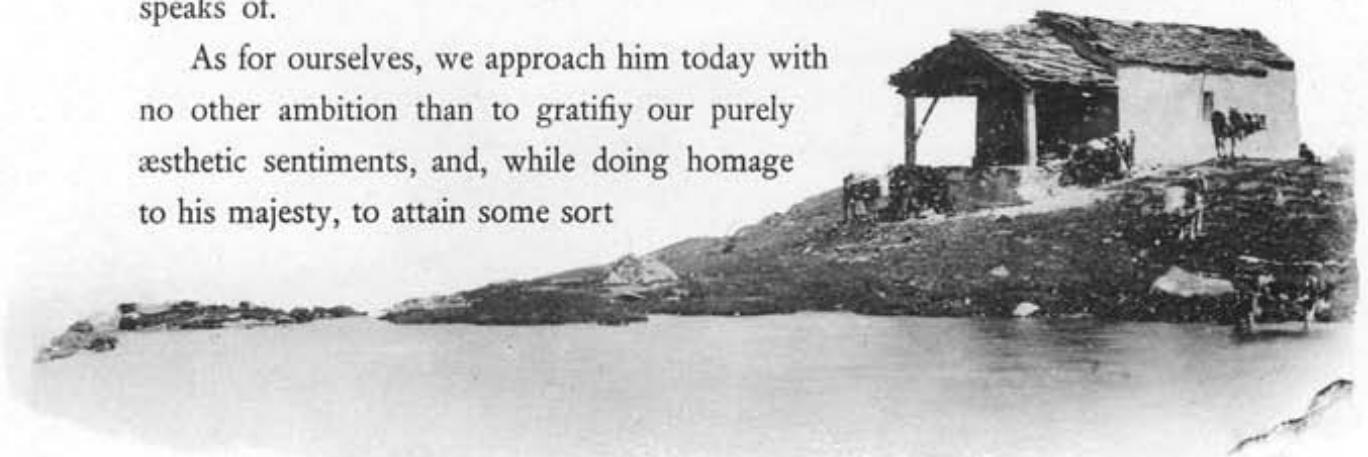


In fact one must climb several hundred metres higher, by a very rough path, to enter into familiar companionship with the colossus, and discover his wondrous glories.

How often it has been described, and how imposing it always is, from whichever side we contemplate it! The pyramidal form of the mountain, the steepness of its slopes, the terrible depth of the precipices that surround it, the proud defiance with which it seems to regard the tiny beings who

crawl at its base;—a thousand other traits, its isolation, its threats, its caprices, its angers, the awful revenge which it has too often taken on those who have had the audacity to disturb its solitude,—all this causes the mountain to exercise a sort of fascination over the intrepid lovers of Alpine ascents. Of all the summits of the Valaisian Alps, Mont Cervin is undoubtedly one of those whose ascent is most coveted by real Alpine climbers. It inflames them with that “indefinable longing” which Tyndall speaks of.

As for ourselves, we approach him today with no other ambition than to gratify our purely æsthetic sentiments, and, while doing homage to his majesty, to attain some sort



Chapel of the Lac Noir.

of sympathetic relations with the gloomy recluse. We remember that what chiefly struck us on seeing Mont Cervin for the first time, was its perfect beauty,—the incomparable grace with which it soars into the azure.



Lac Noir.

No peak aspires more joyously towards the celestial brightness. Less elevated in reality than its mighty neighbours the Lyskamm, and Monte Rosa, it suggests more vividly than they the thrill of heavenly things. It looks like the spire of an enormous Gothic cathedral, designed by the hand of the Almighty artist,—severely beautiful, with certain delicate harmonies to be found in no human architecture. Whilst the last rays of the sun clothe it in purple and gold, and all its outlines, all the admirable chiselling of its crest, seem to quiver in the light, it seems almost as though it were animated by some mysterious internal force that impels it passionately towards the ethereal regions. It seems about to float lightly upwards

towards that inaccessible country, carrying with it in this aspiring flight, the thoughts and benedictions of those who perceive in its exquisite form, a revelation of the Supreme Beauty.

We had arrived at the fragments of schist at the foot of the Hörnli, when all at once the sky became lowering. The curtain of cloud which had for some days past been floating above the pass of St. Theodule, no longer kept in check by the north wind; suddenly dropped down. Vast fragments became detached from it; and it was curious to watch their manifold metamorphoses, as they were driven in different directions by the contrary currents from the heights.

The thick vapours in the atmosphere condensed themselves into flaky plumes upon the neighbouring summits; and at the other end of the



St. Nicholas valley, a veil was stretched from the Mischabels to the Weisshorn. Then a little fine rain began to fall, drenching the arid rocks, and bringing out the green tints of the chlorite and the warm, rusty-red hues of the ferruginous schist. Every thing wore a new aspect;—a mournful expression, better suited to this great mountain, than the rosy smiling physiognomy it had shewn us in the morning as we were leaving Zermatt.

As we advanced higher, the sullen humour which the Cervin puts on in bad weather, grew more and more marked; and the rain became so dense, the grey cloud-draperies so thick, that the summit disappeared from our eyes. We could see nothing before us but a truncated mass,—the *torso* of a petrified giant, and could only dimly distinguish through the rifts in the mist, the gloomy looking objects around. After an hour's climb in this opaque grey vapour, along a slippery, narrow, and rugged path with a precipice on either side of it, we arrived safe and sound at the much-desired

little house. The hut of Mont Cervin comprises a kitchen, a sleeping chamber for the tourists, and another for the guides. Its furniture is, of course, very humble:—a table, a bench, three stools, and some sloping planks with a couple of mattresses and some straw to sleep on. Our first care is to melt some snow in the little kitchen stove, and a few moments later, we are seated at table before a great bowl of hot tea prepared by our guide, a capital fellow from Tæschi.

Our party consists of three; and we draw close together, the better to defend ourselves against the cold that begins to attack us. An icy wind whistles through the crevices of the wall. And, having no better way of amusing ourselves, we begin to turn over the books kept in zinc boxes, wherein the tourists record their impressions.

It is a somewhat monotonous kind of literature, but interesting nevertheless, in this spot where we feel ourselves so isolated from the rest of the world. We learn here, that on an average about four more hours are required from the place where we are, to reach the summit:—four terrible



Panoramic view taken from the summit of the Cervin.

hours during which one is almost constantly hanging over abysses that seem to draw one towards themselves, by the effect of vertigo, and one is



Interior of the hut on the Cervin.

menaced from above by the stones and pebbles falling every moment. In truth we are almost glad to know that this year the summit is rendered inaccessible by the slippery ice which continues uninterruptedly. Otherwise, the reader will understand that aided by our mountaineer's instincts, the temptation would have been too great to be resisted!

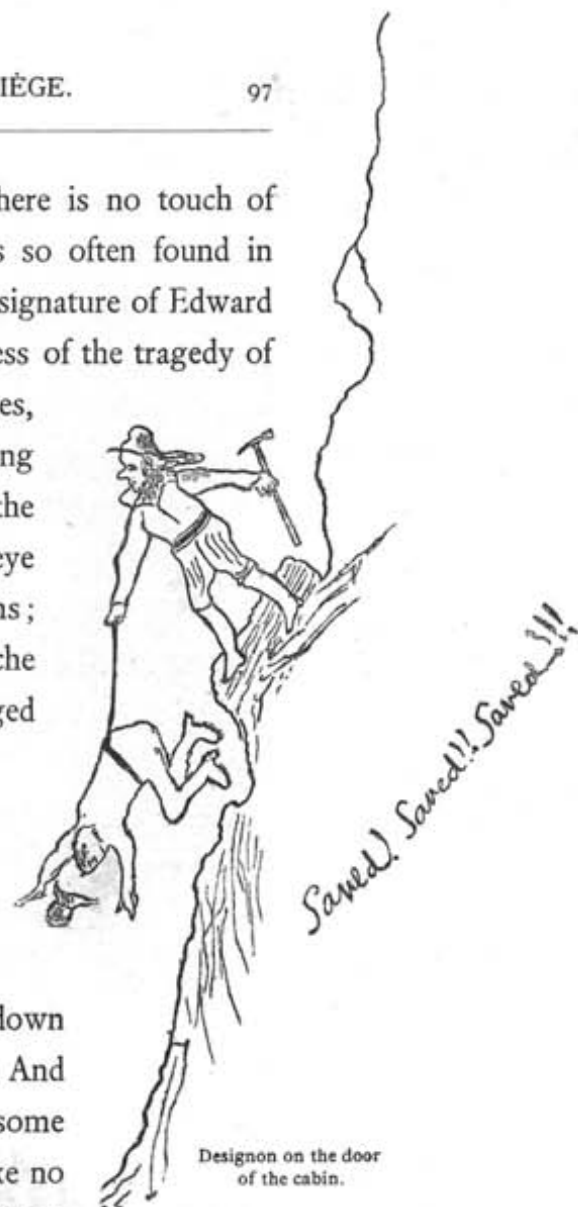
On these yellow leaves are inscribed the names of valiant Alpinists, and many enthusiastic or depressed observations, according to the temperament of the writer. They are generally traced by a hand that still trembles from

1874
Aug 20th 1874. Thompson Edward, of London ascended
Matterhorn on the 21st with the guides Jean Antoine Leuzel
& Jo. M. Lochmatter. Later Joseph Berra, J. B. Bie-

1890
August 18 James Finch of London with
Joseph Schaller and Friedrich Sumarmatter
guides got within an hour & three quarters
of top of the Matterhorn when a rock
fell on his leg and foot not damaging him
much but rendering a return advisable
Very fine day and very easy climbing.

fatigue and apprehensions already undergone. But there is no touch of coarseness, none of those ribald or irreverent words so often found in similar books in an hotel. Twice we meet with the signature of Edward Whymper, the conqueror of the Cervin, and the witness of the tragedy of the 14th July 1865. His name evokes lugubrious images, in harmony with those around us. In truth everything around the hut is dead and silent; not a flower, not the smallest blade of grass! Ice and stones as far as the eye can see; heaps of rocks torn from the summit by storms; terrific perpendicular walls down which the avalanche glides; deep crevices filled with snow; inert and ravaged objects. The Cervin is in a state of active demolition. Wind and water, like vultures battenning upon a corpse, tear at its bare flanks, and eat away its very skeleton, dispersing the dust of it upon the surrounding moraines. At this hour of the evening, the howling of the wind upon the gneiss, and the fall of rocks rolling down into the precipices, are the only sounds to be heard. And darkness rises slowly from the valley, driving before it some poor butterfly, which we see pass our door. We make no effort to save it, although we cannot help pitying its evident distress. In vain it struggles against the irresistible force which is carrying it towards the frozen desert, where, during the cruel night that is coming, it will surely meet its death.

Despite these scenes of desolation, the hours pass quickly in the cabin of Mont Cervin. Everything is so new and strange to a dweller on the plains, that his whole attention is captivated. The slightest change of light and shade, the modulations of the wind, the immense solitude,—even the innocent little butterfly which was so charming but now, and will be



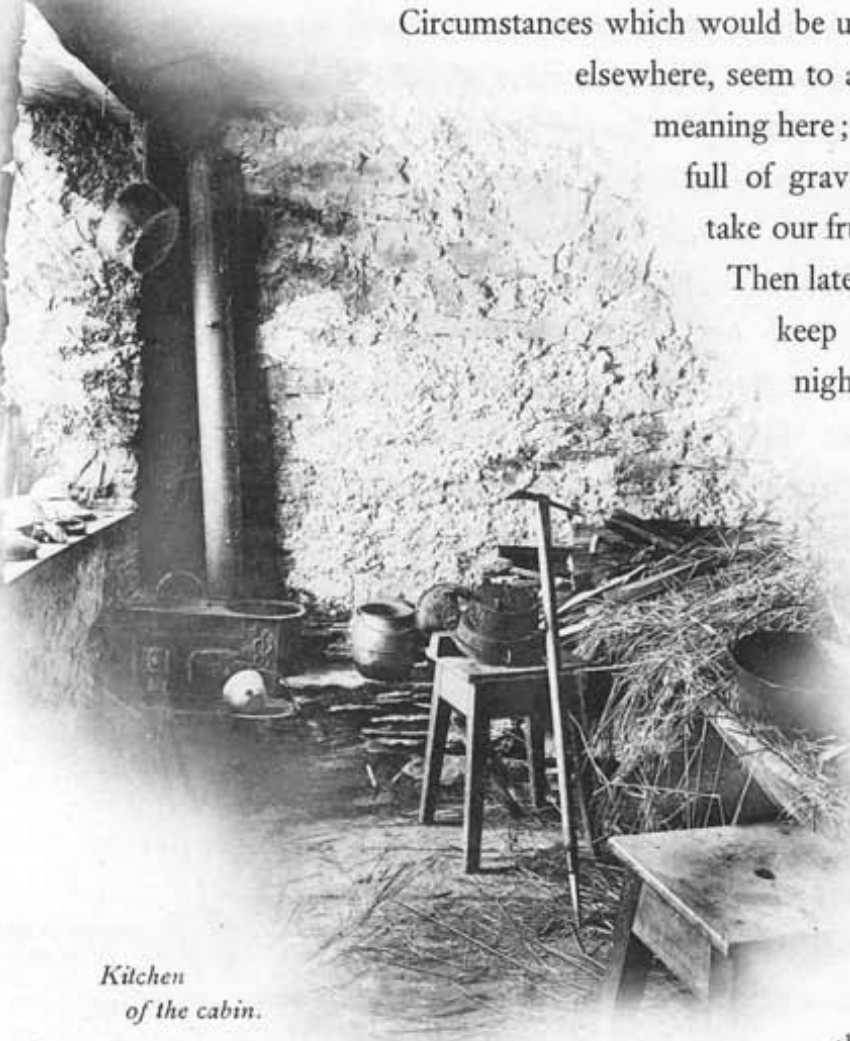
Design on the door
of the cabin.

tomorrow a mere atom of dust, offer texts for endless reflection.

Circumstances which would be utterly insignificant elsewhere, seem to acquire a profound meaning here; and our brains are full of grave thoughts as we take our frugal evening meal.

Then later, fantastic dreams keep us half awake all night long beneath our

woollen coverlets. We still press close to one another, for it is cold, —very cold; the rain is frozen, and it is now snowing. We can see the falling flakes through the window panes



*Kitchen
of the cabin.*

of our little chamber, and they seem to give a gleam of light amid the darkness.

'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody good! The cold which we anathematized, proved to be in reality a piece of good fortune. It so purified the atmosphere, that by four o'clock in the morning all Nature was absolutely transfigured. Why should we remain longer under our blankets,



Panoramic view from the cabin.

waiting for sleep that never came? We emerged from our refuge, and a cry of delight broke from our lips. What a contrast between this dazzling dawn, and the tearful twilight of yesterday! Never did poet's imagination conceive such an assemblage of rare splendours. Our language does not possess the divine words that alone could describe them.

Set in a black velvet sky, the moon in her last quarter shines in the zenith with a bluish metallic, extraordinary lustre, unknown to those who view her from the plain. Near her sparkles an enormous star; Sirius perhaps, but Sirius scarcely recognisable, so magnified is it by the perfect transparency of the air. Lower down, on the line of the horizon, a faint lilac stripe shows the outlines of the mountains. It is the first gleam of dawn. Lower still, a sea of mist rolls its great rounded waves white as the carpet of newfallen virgin snow upon the ground. Finally, almost with



Sea of mist, from the cabin.

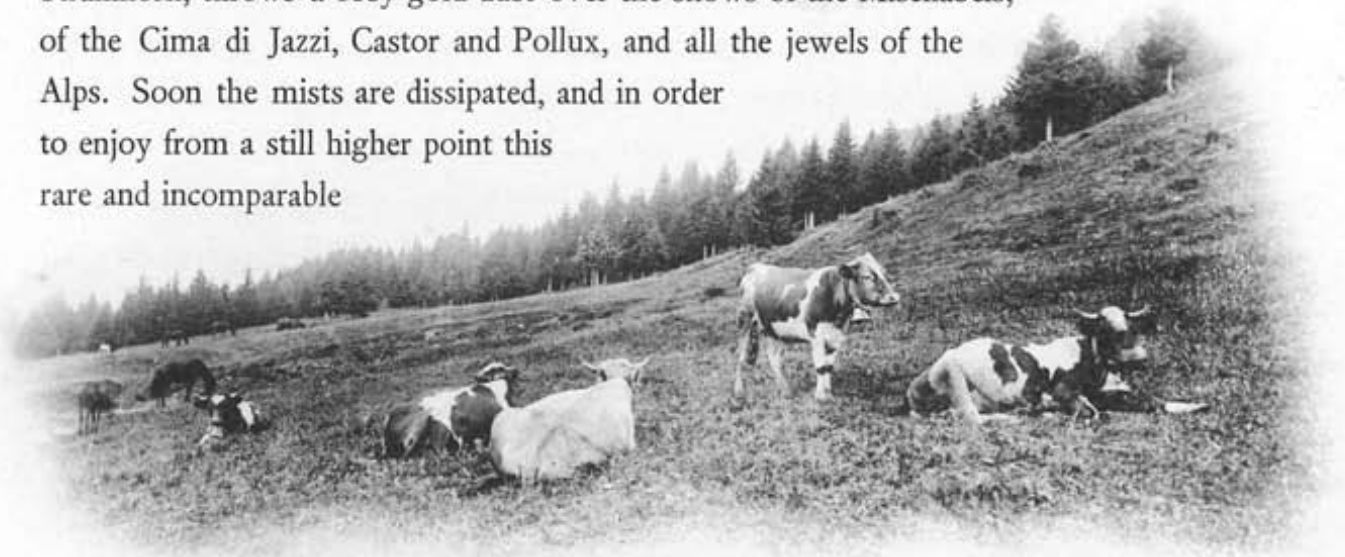
in reach of our hands, sublime in its simple nudity, rises the vast, cold, impassible form of Mont Cervin.

Heavens, how beautiful it is! With what a royal majesty he wears his ermine mantle! How expressive is his attitude of soaring aspiration! Mute

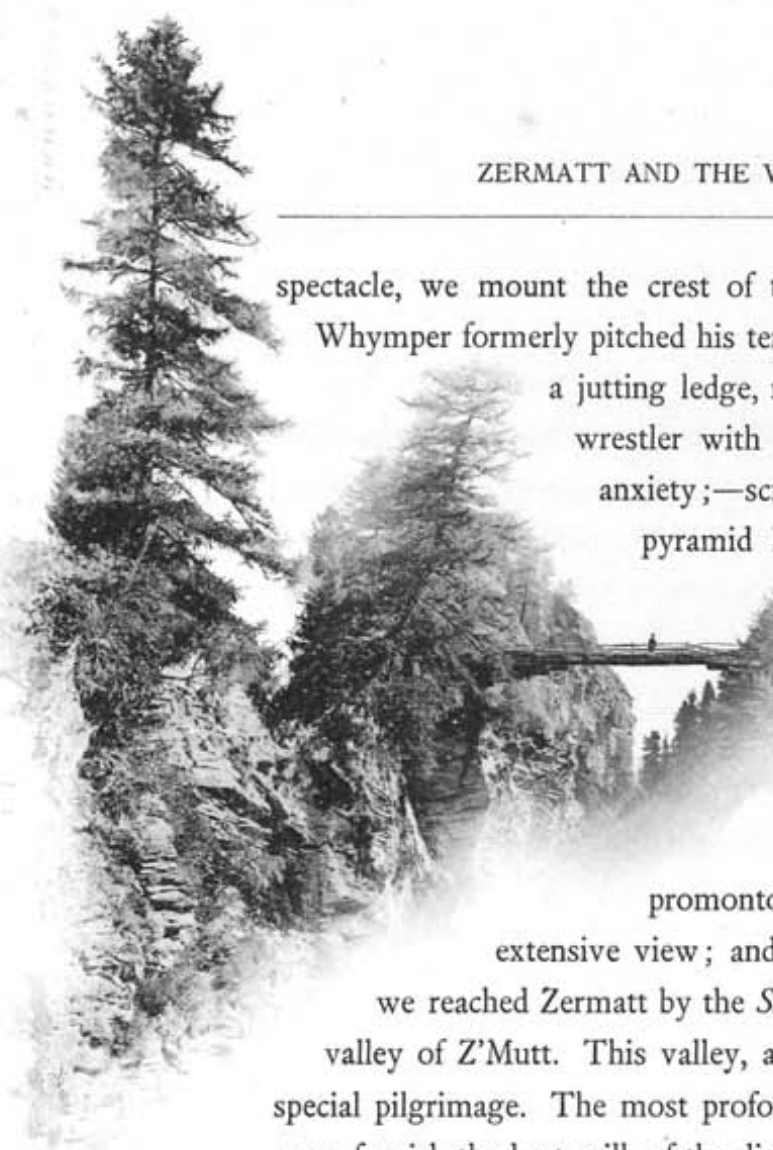


Village of Zum Muth.

though he be, he yet speaks eloquently in this hour of dawn, of the invisible purity towards which he seems to rise in all the grandeur of his majestic stature. The daylight grows. The lilac tints in the east, change insensibly into yellow, pale blue, indigo; and then the sun, appearing behind the Strahlhorn, throws a rosy gold-dust over the snows of the Mischabels, of the Cima di Jazzi, Castor and Pollux, and all the jewels of the Alps. Soon the mists are dissipated, and in order to enjoy from a still higher point this rare and incomparable



Staffelalp.



spectacle, we mount the crest of the Cervin, as far as the rock where Whymper formerly pitched his tent. A few blocks accumulated beneath a jutting ledge, mark the spot where this indefatigable wrestler with the mountain, passed long hours of anxiety;—scrutinizing the smallest details of the pyramid he was bent on conquering; seeking with his glass the supports to which he might fix his cords, and thus ensure victory.

On our return, we visited the *Hærnli* (2893 metres), a sombre promontory of the Cervin commanding a very extensive view; and after having saluted the Black Lake, we reached Zermatt by the *Staffelalp*, a rich pasture overlooking the valley of Z'Mutt. This valley, again, is a marvel; and would merit a special pilgrimage. The most profound peace breathes throughout it. Its cows furnish the best milk of the district. The woods on its right bank are thick, but a tender light plays through the underwood; its soil is densely covered with pine-needles, and its air full of their aroma.

Moreover it is the favourite haunt of those who dread steep paths and the burning sunshine, and the prattle of children alternates with the song of birds. The left bank is less happily endowed as regards shade, but is rich in new points of view. The Cervin shews himself in a different aspect from that beheld from Zermatt. The village of Z'Mutt, and the wooden bridge thrown at a considerable height above the torrent, are admirably picturesque.

AND here I lay down my pen, without having mentioned the high passes, the crossings of glaciers, and the ascents of the great peaks, which to many persons constitute the chief attractions of Zermatt. The preceding pages omit a quantity of excursions, which ought, however, by no means to be neglected. This little work makes no pretensions to furnish a complete account of Zermatt; but merely to inspire in those who may read it, the desire of supplementing it by personal investigation. The truth about so beautiful a region, can never be completely set down in a book. Each one must feel it for himself,—by his eyes, and through his heart.



Valley of Z'Mutt.

ZERMATT AND THE VALLEY OF THE VIÈGE.



CARAVAN ON THE SUMMIT OF THE BREITHORN.



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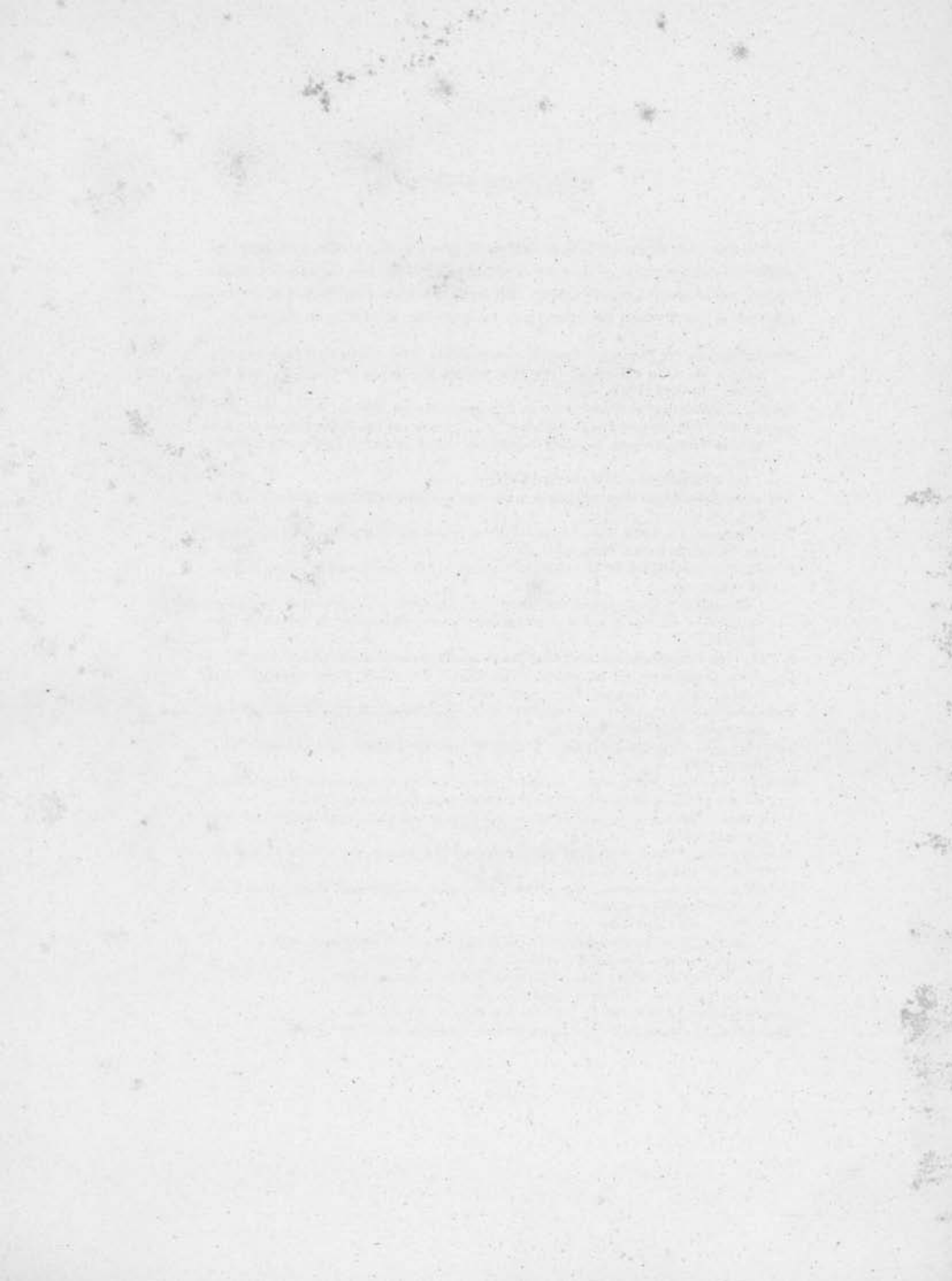


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