



La source de l'Arctique.

We were aroused at 4. A. M. by the tinkling bells of a herd of cattle as they passed through the village. Rising, we were glad to find that the rain was over, & still more encouraged when the local authorities prognosticated a fine day for our expedition to Inartigmy, by the pass of Tete Noire. — The guides were all astir, talking of a Mr. Kennedy, president of a Society, principally composed of London men, — that has assumed the

name of the Alpine Club, & that without
reference to kindred Institutions, that flourish
principally in the hardier North of England,
with one distinguished member from the
neighbourhood of King Arthur's Court at ancient
Camelot. Our party numbered 9 persons,
& hired 4 mules to allow of walking, & riding al-
ternately. At 5 o'clock our cavalcade started,
under the care of yesterday's guide, Pierre Balmat.
As we threaded thro' the valley we really felt
no small degree of sorrow in thus turning our backs
on the Monarch Mt, especially as the clouds were
rapidly chasing down from his summit, & ma-
king the ascent of La Kegore such a desirability,
- which alas! we had been compelled to forego. -
When the labour of reaching this celebrated valley
is taken into account, it is much better to
devote a longer time to its wonders. Indeed,
to gain the fullest, & most permanent satisfac-
tion ^{from} of the magnificence of natural scenery, time
is an essential element in order that every im-
-pression may be deepened, & rendered a permanent

possession for life. He often halted to look behind on Mont Blanc's snowy crown, which like a wedge of pure frosted silver, glistened in the sun, under a canopy of softest blue, surely appearing as it rose majestically in the heavens like unto 'the great white throne'. - Owing to the heavy rain of the previous night, & the hot sun of the morning, every road-side object, - each chalet roof, or log of felled timber was enriched in tone & brightened in its light. - Even the little pools on the road added their quota of color as they reflected the sapphire hues of the sky.

A walk of two hours brought us to the village of Argentiere into which seemed to stream the glacier of the same name. Soon we entered the Val d'Ornie - a village that more than once has been swept away by avalanches. The chalets were raised on piles to allow of the snow draining away into the valley. Every 4, or 5 miles we passed a crucifix, or paltry shrine, decked out with paltry artificial flowers, bearing inscriptions announcing 20 or 40 days indulgence to such as w^d bow down to the patron

saint of the district. As may be expected, -
ignorance, poverty, & equal are the characteris-
tics of the homes in this valley. Approaching
the Sun of the Barbarine, such as were on smelter
were conveyed by these trusty animals not past
it - but direct into the stable, among other cat-
tle, where this polite reminder of luncheon for
man & beast, decided us upon halting for the
same. While the real cutlets were being fried
we turned to examine the visitor's Book, one
of the most inquisitorial of its kind we ever
met with. One, - not merely satisfied with
knowing your presents whereabouts, but demand-
ing on government authority - the past, present, &
future of your history. The information we
left behind us w^d considerably enlighten those
authorities: - ? Within sight of this Sun was
a very fine Waterfall - 'The Barbarine' - of far
larger pretensions than any of our English cas-
cades, - we c^d not spare the half hour required for a
closer inspection, so had to leave it behind, & press
on thro' the narrow gorge, which we discern thro'

The closing Mountains. On the borders of the path, the vegetation was profuse, & varied. Tufts of Dianthus, - delicate ferns, harebells, & wild strawberries & mosses too under trickling rills garnished this verdant-cluttered bank. More than one saw-mill, - the only sign of machinery by the way - was worked by the active stream that flowed from the Cascade, & wh. as we advance dashes over precipices, & giant boulders that have been hurled from the Mt. heights above. - The margin of the path edges over a ravine, & passes under a rock-hewn tunnel, overhanging a dark-gorge many hundreds of feet below. On the other side huge mountain masses rise perpendicularly above us, whose summits are cushioned with the greenest verdure, & sprinkled with stray chalets, - the summer houses of the solitary cowherd. Truly thought we such grandeur as this cannot be surpassed, - but we turn the shoulder of another mountain, when P'te Givre itself, capped with sable pines frowns on us from a still more formidable elevation. Thro' this dark mountain forest we penetrated for the next half hour, hardly able to catch a glimpse of the sky. -



La Roche Percée.
Côte Noire Pass.

And now we find ourselves bankrupt
in our stock of adjectives, & interjections, -
English & French, & so wind thro' this
stony labyrinth in silence, feeling very
much as if the earth had been shivered to
its centre, & we lowered into its cleft chasm.
Cleared from the forest, we next enter the grim

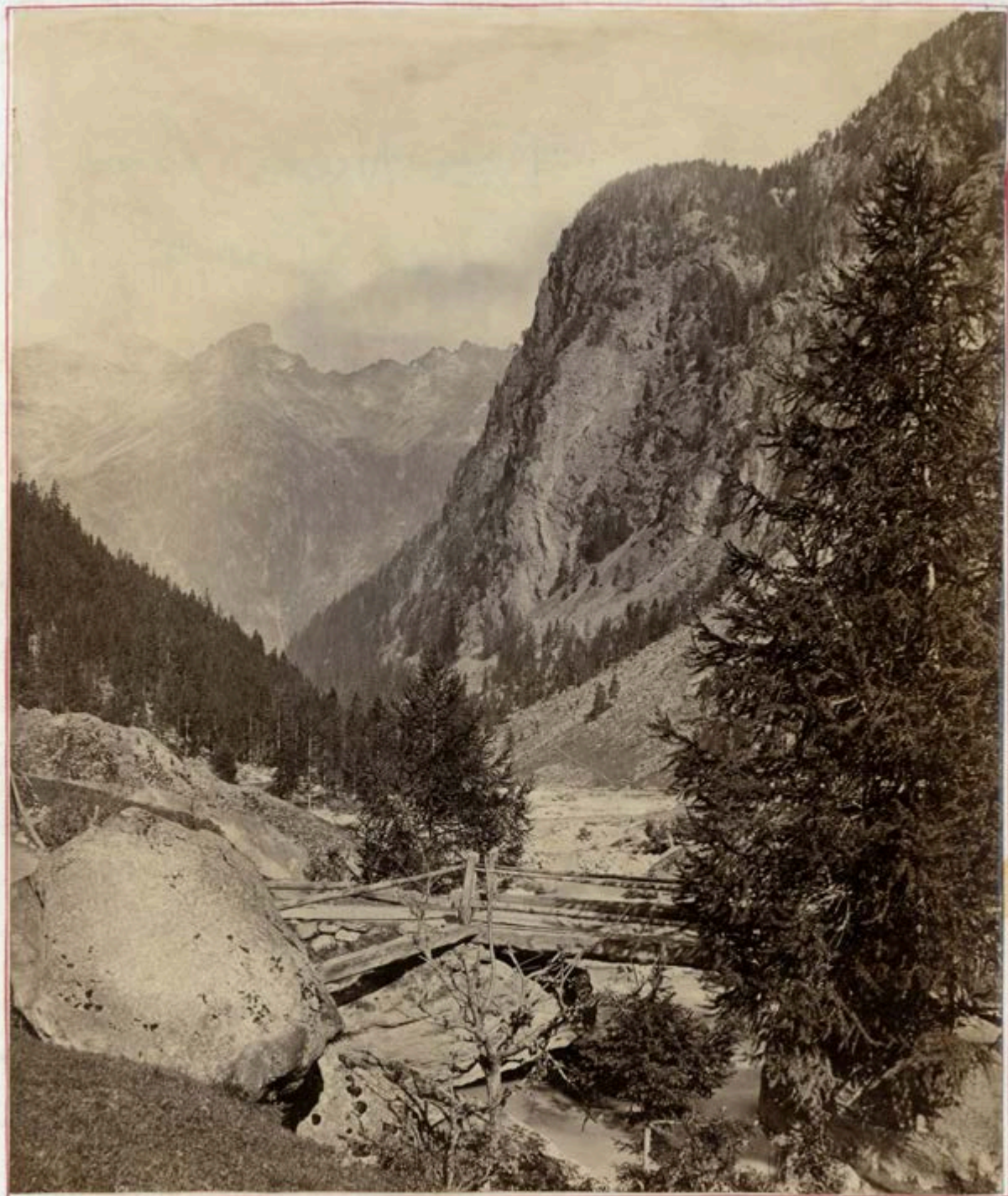
meadowed valley of the Trients. It bears on
its sides the traces of avalanche desolation.
The wonder is how those cottagers escape
the fury of the torrents that must rush
down on either side with accumulated
force, or that the chalets can stand against
the swollen glacier streams that course its bed.

With the noon-day sun beating upon our
shoulders, as we toiled up this steepest of froths
the supposition of freezing cold seems most
remote to our imagination, till lifting our
eyes still higher, they fall on a plateau of
unmelted snow on the Col de Balme, 4,700 ft
above the level of the sea. Strange too felt the
wintry chill that blew from the snowy regions
of Savoy, after our sunny ascent of the Forclaz.
At last the mountain ridge is reached. Oh!
thanks for that shade, - rest, - wild strawberries
& milk under that kindly shed at the summit
of the Forclaz! These refreshments laid out

in tempting array at every little Châlet.
we pass form quite a considerable item
in Swiss expenses. Our horse riders we
find halting at the best aubergne situ-
ated on the boundary of Savoy & Switzerland,
where we enter this famous land, & the Canton
Valais.

Rested in the arbour, we take
heart, - feet, & alpenstocks again, & cross
the Col de Forclaz, which has nothing at-
tractive in it. But on making a turn
in the road - we are - shall I say petrified -
or paralysed? - Neither, but thrown into
an arrested state of mental temperament
wh. those extreme suppressions physically
denote - as, unexpectedly, the valley
of the Rhone, - one of the views of the Alps
is like a mirage, unrolled before us.

Oh! would gentle reader, (Zy. Why are
readers always supposed to be gentle?)
- that your retina could be enamelled like



Tête Noire Pass near Trient.

with the grandeur of that matchless landscape, - then, I wd not mar it by a garbled description. Picture 20 miles of the river Rhone, winding thro' that expansive valley, & parallel with it the high road to Italy, - also the railway, - partly constructed. The furrowed mountain ridges are draped with pines, & mantled with craggy stones, while in the background crested with snow, against a sky of azure blue, rise the Diablerets, the Triebel, & the naked Jemmi, presenting a scene of vast & solitary grandeur.

Ruskin speaks of the route we have just traversed as one possessing "a pure, & uninterrupted fulness of mountain character of the highest order. One which appears to have been less disturbed by foreign agencies, than that which borders the course of the Trient, between Valorcine, & Martigny. The paths wh. lead to it out of the valley of the Rhone rising at first in steep circles among the walnut trees, like winding stairs among the pillars of a Gothic Tower, retire over the shoulders of the hills into a valley al-

- most unknown, but thickly inhabited by an
industrious, & patient population." But follow-
ing our course in an opposite direction to
St. Rustin, we are attracted by our nearer
prospects where rice bunches of emerald pas-
sorage nursing a haulet of nut. brown chalets,
while at the extremity of the 4 mile slope, see-
ding from our feet lies Martigny - our goal,
which, owing to the clear atmosphere looks so
near that we comfort our "poor feet," by tele-
graphing assurances that we shall soon run
down there. - But, delusive conclusion! -
each short turn but reveals a path of multiplied
lengths, instead of a direct incline, - wh. path
is rugged with loose stones, which threaten to mangle
since meat of our shoe soles. Even the mules
are again discarded, for the fatigue of a descent
on a mule exceeds the same taken on foot. In fact,
one mule discarded his rider, tho. to give the animal
his due, there was some display of oriental grace,
in the camel - like - Reel with which he fore-
luded his nonchalant roll across the path, & we had a -

amusement enough out of the escapade, when we saw our Don spring to his feet unburied. —
Towards Martigny the road is bordered by walnut, pear, apple, & plum trees, — but we can assure you on our word — (not Reynard's) ^{they} were all sour. Under their shade we enter Martigny, but no, — this is but Bourg de Martigny — there is still another long mile to travel over these stones before we reach our destination. — As we proceed near the town, one of our mules being riderless, our guide must needs tether its bridle to the crupper of the mule upon wh. our Artist was now seated. On the high road they ambled amicably enough, but on crossing the Market-Place of the respectable town of Martigny, feelings of either pride, or rebellion swelled the bosom of our Rasinante at the ignominy of tugging a recreant brother thro' the Streets, & she therefore commenced an offensive warfare, — first Kicking in Minion trail, then in crochet, — which was a signal sufficient to suggest a descent — when the mule continued

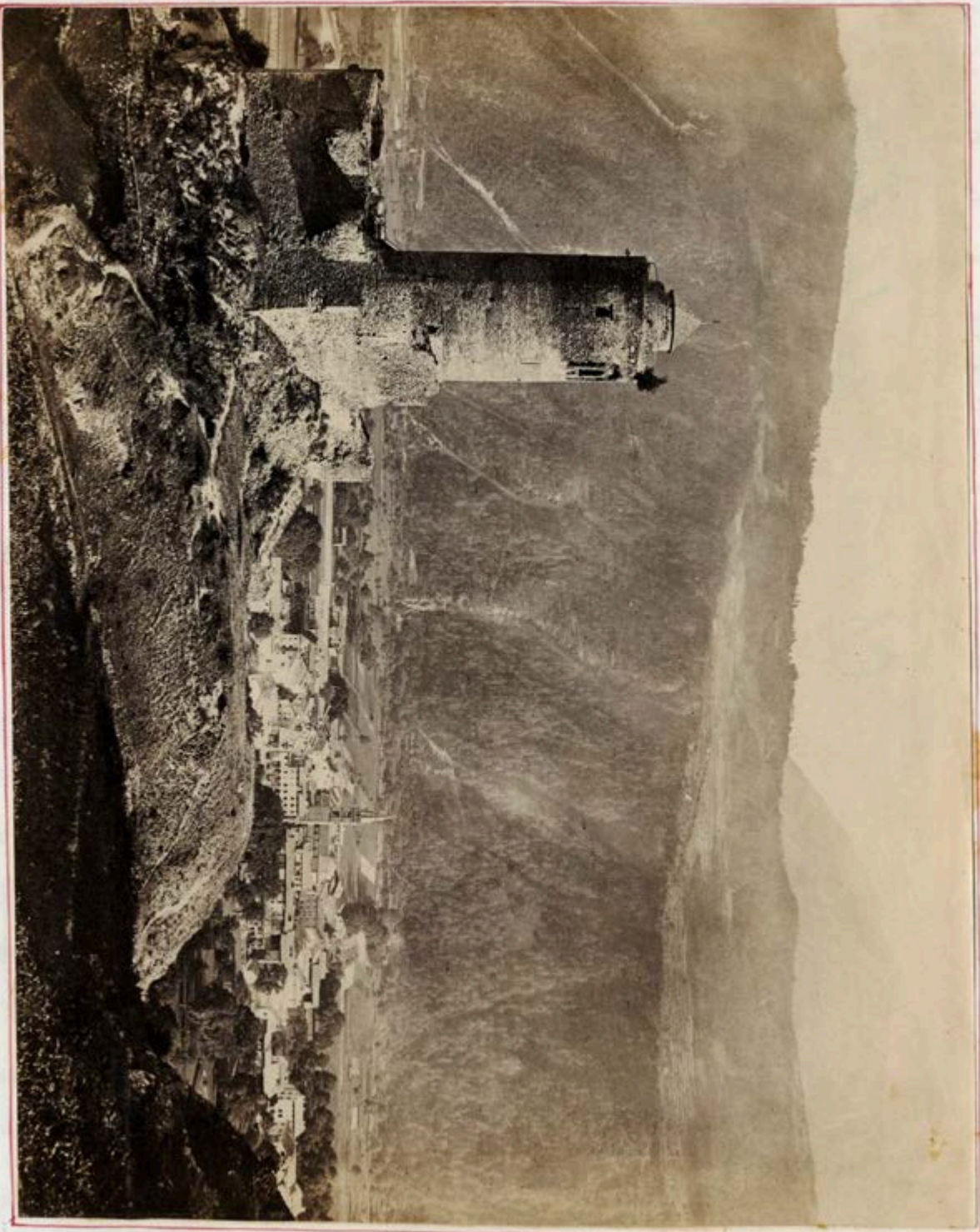
her voluntary in a demisemiquaver movement before the Hotel - "Le Clerc," & gathering by standards. -
To the great anxiety of the "natural protectors" it was now found that two of the party Mr. James & Miss Eliza were missing, it had not been seen for some time. Mr. H. G. J. being sent in search, fell in with the son of the Lord Chancellor of England, & the Hon^{ble} Miss Gresham. This Aristocrat thinking perhaps our lady member was one of his Father's wards, did his best to aid the search. It turned out that our missing ones, - after all this ado - were really in advance. -

The whole party met round the hospitable board of the Hotel Clerc, at Marsigny. Mr. H. G. J. was recompensed by a farewell parting with the guide, the touching politeness of which was a sight to be had. Seated in the "Talle à Franzer," our first day's long walk over, with our hunger, we felt our fatigue. Mr. James had walked the entire 25 miles, - the ladies on an average, 17 miles. He would have been glad to walk half an hour on that road to the ruined Castle of "La Batic," but tired feet made

content to view it at a distance, whilst our
Artist secured a hurried sketch. - Martigny
is not without interest being on the high-
road to the Simplon, & at the termination
of the road from Chamounix to St Bernard.
Indeed, these 'pious Mounts of St Bernard',
have their head quarters in a Convent here
to which they return at intervals for rest
& change. - In 1545, & 1810, two terrible
inundations from the waters of the Drance
& the Rhone which after accumulating for
years behind a wall of ice, & snow suddenly
swept thro' the Valley, destroying the entire
town, & population. - The spired Church
of quaint & simple build, whose rounded
stones bespeak its antiquity, withstood
however, the fury of the torrent of 1818.

But the two hours portioned for Martigny
soon expire, & we start again for a half mile.

CASTLE OF LA BATTIE, MARTIGNY.



walk to the Railway Station. — And such a walk it was! — one of those few walks taken in a lifetime that no after impressions, or obliterations of time can efface. In which every exalted sense is satisfied — the ear — the eye, & the scent all partaking of nature's banquet. Yes, — that was a walk to create & leave a life sensation. Behold in the West two opposing Promontories, one surmounted by La Batiolle's ruined fort, the other by a circlet of granite, their dark ridges cutting the sky in sloping lines that lock in the valley, & expose an arc of radiant amber.

The setting sun floats a reflected coloring of vermilion on this frame of mountains, & lines their fissures with lustrous crimson, while all along the valley soft & mellow lights suffuse the trees — the banks — the hedges & while in our progress we inhale the evening odours of the hayfields, & flowers, — the Bells from that quaint old spire strike out a peal of strains so charming in their vibrations, that one might think that

the bells, & the air are in concert to enchant you.

During the whole of our route, it was only to this Station that we were attended, by an English-man, & here we all felt the parting with the good-natured Mr. Cook, who now resigned the execution into the hands of the gentlemen of the Club, and turned, - sadly, we thought from Swiss glories, to the care of his "solitary companion," & to the arrangement of others at home. From the hay-field we stepped into the train for 18 miles of travelling on the line that is to be when completed the wonder of Northern Italy, & the triumph of modern engineering. Supposing ourselves not tired, we sang to the moon that glimmers over a towering rocky embankment, snatches of English songs, & glues till our mute phlegmatic fellowtravellers exhibit just a fraction of animation. - He solicited them to give us a national song which however they would not waste in the carriage, but give us at the Inn. Just when the terminus at Ticin is reached, & soon

we are seated in that sub-divided omnibus,
- two places are already occupied by German Students
who exhibit mighty entertainment at the com-
possibility of the English Ladies. - That rollicking
young fellow in grey suit, & blue spectacles
speaks in two languages on the subject. Luckily
he drops a word of English, which puts us on our
guard, before we had made a "faux pas" by ex-
pressing opinions on them in our own tongue.

On drawing up at Hotel du Lion d'or, a
grimyish-graunte, - prison-looking building,
demurrings arose as to our remaining, but
finding the second storey cleanly, we took quar-
ters there for the night. Being that we had
journeyed that day more than forty miles, nearly
half on foot, - we agreed not to start by Diligence
at 4 in the morning, remembering the good
maxim, so often on our Professor's lips, "When
fatigue begins, pleasure ends." It was then
10. P. M. & so temptingly cool that a stroll to see
one of Lion's Castles was an irresistible proposition.

That short stroll gave us a more faithful im-
pression than did the one in the blazing sun hot-
morning - of the warlike position & feudal character
of the old border capital. The elevated castle,
& old Convent with Church each crown the summit
of a rocky slope. Rustin speaks of the -
Episcopal Palace too, & how "thro' the arches of its
drellis work, the avenue of the great valley is seen
in descending distance, enlarged with time beyond
line of tufted foliage, languid, & rich, degenerating
at last into the leagues of grey Maremma, while
the thorn & the willow, on each side of it, sustaining
themselves in mighty slopes, & unbroken ridges
of colossal promontary, the great mountains secede
into supremacy thro' rosy depths of burning air, &
the crescents of snow gleam over their dim summits,
as - if there ~~be~~ snowing - as there was once
Icar in Heaven - a line of waning moons might
be set for moons lamps along the side of some se-
pulchral chamber in the Infinite." -

But castle, convent, church, & palace are but

Decayed remnants of their early splendour.
The town it is said has been besieged 30
times & also suffered from conflagrations.

We found our bare, wattle-floored
bedroom, cool & comfortable, although the
starting of the Diligence aroused us by 4. a.
m. & the sound of the everlasting masons
who prefer working in early morning,
kept us so. —

