

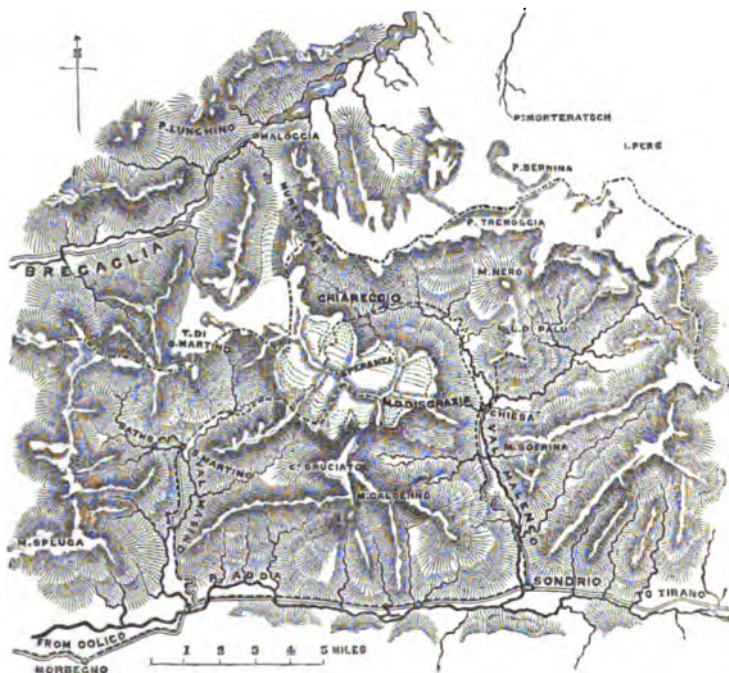
THE ASCENT OF MONTE DELLA DISGRAZIA, height 12,074 feet. Read February 3, 1863, before the Members of the Alpine Club. By EDWARD SHIRLEY KENNEDY, M.A., F.R.G.S., President of the Alpine Club.

AS the strokes of midnight were clanging from the Campanile at Sondrio, a carriage rolled heavily into the court-yard of the Hotel della Maddelena; and five belated travellers, who had left Lugano by the mid-day steamer, thus brought to a simultaneous conclusion their day's adventures on flood and fell, and their tedious drive along the nearly level lacustrine formation, that, watered by the stream of the Adda, extends from the present head of Lake Como as far as the town of Tirano. The party consisted of the Rev. Isaac Taylor, the Rev. Leslie Stephen, with his trusty Oberland guide Melchior Anderegg, myself, and Thomas Cox, an English servant. Our energies were partly devoted to the elucidation of matters of antiquarian and geological interest; but while ethnology and physical science claimed their due, another and a mightier attraction existed; we had an unascended peak in contemplation, and what mountaineer can resist the charms which such an object presents?

On the morning of Tuesday, August 19, 1862, we left the hotel, and strolling leisurely under an Italian sun up the Val Malenco, reached Chiesa about one o'clock. We chose this village as our starting point, because it appeared to be the nearest inhabited spot to the mountain, and because the account published by Mrs. Henry Freshfield, who had passed two or three days there, told us that decent accommodation nominally existed. Having rested a short time, and ordered dinner for six o'clock, we proceeded to make a preliminary survey. Three or four weeks' previous mountaineering had put us in good training, and after a few days' sojourn in the neighbourhood of the Italian lakes, the mountain air was more than usually bracing. As we rapidly climbed the hill-side, we gained new strength, and our chests expanded to welcome the freshening breeze. How free and exultant is the true mountaineer, when he exchanges the warmly-glowing atmosphere of the south for the cold and invigorating blasts of the mountain; when he leaves behind him the gentle beauty of the lakes, and glories in the savage grandeur of riven rock and contorted glacier. Taylor, whose time was limited, and who had other objects in view, did not share our elevated aspirations, and after accompanying us the greater part of the climb, he asseve-

rated, with some truth, that the accumulating clouds would make observation impossible, and thinking it, therefore, useless to proceed farther, contented himself with a sheltered nook under a finely moutonné'd rock.

And now, seated upon the slopes of Monte Nero, at a height of some 8,000 feet, we begin, with telescope in hand, to take a survey of our mountain. Hitherto little had been visible, but a series of needle-like peaks now appeared, rising abruptly from Chiesa in the south-east, and running thence in a north-westerly direction.



Melchior's eye is fixed to the telescope, and we have time to cast our glance carefully around. We are looking in a south-westerly direction. Yonder is the Disgrazia, her culminating point, a maiden citadel, defying attack, proudly piercing upwards above every lesser fortress in the chain, and, as if resenting our intrusive gaze, shrouding herself from time to time in rolling clouds. In advance of her, and at an elevation nearly level with our eye, is a formidable outwork of massive bulwarks and beetling rocks, that springs from the brow of frowning precipices. Round the bases of these

craggy battlements there winds the Val Malenco, forming, in its circular sweep, with the Disgrazia as a centre, the vast moat that encloses this grand natural fortress. Two modes of assault suggest themselves. To ascend rapidly directly from Chiesa, and then force our way onwards up steep ice-slopes and ridges, in nearly a straight line, and thus take the citadel by storm; or to follow the moat of the Val Malenco, in a westerly direction, and thus, while gradually rising, to keep nearly at the same distance from the summit, in the hope of eventually reaching, by less steeply-inclined glaciers, the foot of the final peak; and thus achieve a triumph by the slower but surer mode of gradual approaches.

‘Now, Melchior, you have been looking through that telescope quite long enough; what have you to say?’

‘Herr, I think the way straight up from Chiesa is the best.’

‘But, Melchior, suppose we get up those steep rocks, and find ourselves at the edge of the snow-fields, how are we to climb those hanging glaciers and cross those wide crevasses?’

‘*Es ist etwas schwer*, Herr, but I think we can succeed.’

‘Besides, Melchior, we shall get entangled in that maze of peaks and ice-falls, and shall not be able to distinguish which is the highest point, so that after all, perhaps, our labour will be thrown away upon the wrong one.’

‘That is true, Herr, but *was denken Sie selbst?*’

‘Why, Melchior, even from here we cannot be sure which is the highest, and when we get among the peaks it will be still more difficult.’

Examination was now entirely put a stop to, for the clouds rapidly descended. Thus shut out from further view of external matters, we were compelled to attend to inward feelings, and unworthy thoughts of dinner would intrude themselves. We quickly ran down to Chiesa, still undecided as to plans for the morrow. We found the place alive with excitement. So novel to the Italian mind was the idea of an ascent, and so great the effect produced by the bare suggestion of such an impossible absurdity, that that mysterious individual, so well known to every mountaineer, that ubiquitous chamois-hunter, who infallibly makes his appearance whenever a new ascent is contemplated, and who, though he is not like a bird, and cannot be in two places at once, is yet popularly believed to present himself in Switzerland, in the Tyrol, and in the Engadine, at any spot, and at any moment when he is particularly not wanted: that wonderful chamois-hunter, on the present occasion, put on a duality, and two chamois-hunters, each of whom knew all about every thing, were announced.

A council was held. Present, the five travellers, the two chamois-hunters, and the landlord of the hotel, who, joking aside, was a host in himself. In fact we never discovered who the landlord was. The establishment appeared to be conducted upon the principles of a London joint-stock hotel—numerous proprietary, limited liability; for those who made every passage and every room resonant with a Babel of tongues swarmed around in countless numbers; while those who were ready to attend to the wants of the guests were limited in the extreme. As this wondrous host of hosts kept deploying itself before our bewildered gaze, analogies of evolution, of multiplication, of continued, not to say vulgar, fractions suggested themselves to the mathematical minds of our party. Whether the landlord were a knot of men, or a parcel of women, or a crowd of children, or an Italian bag-man who took especial interest in the welfare of the house, or a combination of all these motley groups, is a question that must for ever remain undetermined. Although the course of reasoning adopted by this two-fold Briareus—by this hundred-headed monster—was self-contradictory, the result was identical. Impossible was pronounced by a hundred tongues and in a hundred tones. Such was the opinion of the multitudinous landlord; but what say the mysterious chamois-hunters? They can take us safely to the foot of the glacier. ‘Good.’ They can do more. They will even undertake to conduct us across the glacier, or, at least, very nearly so; they are, in fact, almost equal to Mathews’ guide at Monte Viso; they will take us within sight of *le pied des rochers*. But to reach the foot of these rocks is too difficult; the glacier is much crevassed and very dangerous; the rocks themselves are perpendicular and absolutely impossible; while the peak itself, which springs from their summit, is frightful to contemplate. It rises straight upwards to a vast height, and in form exactly resembles a man’s finger. About this time the council, after the fashion of other and less important councils, broke up promiscuously.

At three o’clock in the morning of Wednesday, the day after our consultation, we started for the Disgrazia. Melchior Anderegg, with knapsack and lantern, led the way; I followed next; then came Thomas Cox, with the second knapsack; then Stephen. Although the stars were shining brightly, the morning was dark, and we had some little difficulty in finding our way along the rough and stony path that, following the course of the stream, gradually led us up the valley, which winds round the rocky promontory that forms the north-eastern

buttress of the Disgrazia. As we wound along the tedious valley, and made but very little ascent, Melchior knew that we were wasting the precious hours of the early morn, and he felt also that the unusually heavy responsibility of taking charge of three travellers, to say nothing of the weight of the knapsack that he carried, rested upon his single pair of shoulders. True it is, that long association had taught him that Stephen was a man more ready to assist than to impede in any difficulty, but with Thomas Cox and myself he had never made an excursion. Knowing the importance of time, we advanced rapidly, pausing but once, as dawn was stealing on, to admire those effects of light and shade, continued familiarity with which appears not to impair, but rather to enhance, the power of appreciating their beauty.

At six o'clock we passed the half dozen huts which constitute the village of Chiaraggio, and where rough sleeping accommodation for three persons can be obtained. We were rounding the western shoulder of the outlying buttress upon our left, and the valley up which we were advancing, and into which the great glacier from the Disgrazia range descends, was opening out before us, when behold the peak appeared. It is a glorious peak, rising right in front, from the top of a rocky escarpment, with broken ridges running sharply down from each side of the summit. Melchior was down on one knee, gazing through his favourite telescope. Stephen uttered sounds of disapprobation. 'Why waste time, Melchior, when we shall have better opportunities presently?' Onwards again. We could see the entire slope descending from the right of the peak, and as we advanced the near rocks on our left allowed us to see more and more of the left hand slope. A little further in advance, and the peak has become more isolated; another step forward, and the left hand slope, instead of continuously breaking away in a downward direction, made a re-entering angle, and began to rise again. 'Look, Stephen, that new slope to the left is rising very much, it is almost as high as the peak itself.' We still advance, the valley opening up at every step. 'Almost as high,' Stephen said; 'why, it is quite as high!' And soon, indeed, we find it towering up, far, far above what we had at first supposed to be the highest peak. As the valley opens, the slope still keeps rising to the left. We are now on the tip-toe of expectation. When will the summit appear? 'Look, there it is!' And truly, now, the peak cut sharp and clear against the sky; we were obliged sensibly to lower the line of vision when we looked at our first peak, and were delighted to find that the line of ridge culminated in the

new summit, and rapidly descended towards the left. We agreed that it was one of the finest peaks that we had ever seen, and that few had looked more difficult. Melchior's eye is again at the telescope. Stephen's murmurs grow more audible, and his language a shade stronger; but at length Melchior's examination is concluded. And now, hurrah for the ascent!

We are suddenly brought to a stand-still. No one speaks. We all point to the ridge. It is again rising towards the left. We go on. How high will it rise? Will it equal the last grand peak? No! There is a slight depression. It begins to sink again towards the left. Will it fall gradually away? No! It rises again! It equals the last peak! And now a broken line of jagged teeth, intermixed with masses of dazzling snow, pierces upwards in the deep blue vault of heaven. I think our first feeling was one less of admiration than of intense surprise. We had never anticipated a summit of so apparently great an elevation. The first peak exceeded our expectation, the second one necessarily far more so; and now, with an intense enjoyment, we contemplate a summit bathed in the morning light, and peerlessly towering aloft. We gaze in silence, admiration begins to blend itself with surprise, and a feeling that approaches reverential awe succeeds. No human being has placed his foot upon that peak, all gloriously radiant in virgin beauty; and as we recall the object of our excursion, an object that, in the first presence of such grandeur, the mind had wholly forgotten to grasp, a subdued hope gradually falls upon us that we shall succeed in the attempt.

We are now at the foot of the glacier; it is seven o'clock, and by the side of a clear streamlet we rest for breakfast. But still the conversation runs upon the course to be taken. Melchior has soon selected his line. *Forwärts! meine Herren!* Easy running in a south-westerly direction up the lower part of the glacier. Reach an ice-fall, rapidly climb an old lateral moraine to the north-west, and, without delay, take to the névé above. Here roped together for the first time; glacier exceedingly crevassed; Melchior dodges the intricacies with wonderful skill; axe in constant requisition; obliged to descend and ascend several crevasses, skirt warily along the edges of others, and at length reach the *bergschrund* at the foot of the rock and snow precipice. From below we had seen this wall *en face*, and consequently could not judge of its inclination. And we now found that it rose at a very steep angle, the ice and rock being coated with snow to a depth of about nine inches. We slowly ascend, sometimes

cutting steps, sometimes taking advantage of a foot-hold of rock.

At last we gain the ridge; there is just standing-room, and we gaze down into the valleys to the south and west. It is one o'clock, and we are all somewhat down-hearted; for we know, that if upon no other ground, yet upon that of want of time success is impossible. Stephen and Melchior propose to climb the ridge a short distance towards the left, and take an observation. I determined not to accompany them, because I knew that, without me, their progress would be more rapid. They were soon lost in the fog that had succeeded the beauteous morn, while Thomas Cox and I found ourselves by no means too warm, especially as the wind rose to a little gale, beating against us with flakes of snow and sharp bits of ice, while we, for want of space, were limited to the unsatisfactory exercise of stamping our feet upon the snow. In two hours Stephen and Melchior returned. They had reached the second peak, and reported that it was possible to descend thence on to a glacier, which, starting from the notch between the second and the highest peaks, flowed in a south-westerly direction into a valley upon the side of the chain, exactly opposite to that whence we had ascended; and that the grand peak appeared to be accessible from the head of the glacier. They reported also that it would be by no means difficult to ascend the glacier from the valley into which it flowed. I listened with chattering teeth and trembling limbs to their interesting recital, and wished myself safe back at Chiesa. We two were closely approaching the congealed and uncomfortable state of human icicles; and we resorted to the very unusual necessity of swallowing a mouthful or two of cognac.

And now for the descent. It looked very steep. The snow was softer, and the footing so much the more treacherous. At first we descended by the rocks, but soon took to the snow. We were all roped together, with a length of about 20 feet between each man. Stephen went first, Thomas Cox came next, I was the third, and Melchior Anderegg brought up the rear. Had there been broken rocks, or precipices, or ground of a dangerous character below us, we should have adopted those well-known measures, that reduce the risk of injury to an almost infinitesimal quantity: we should have descended in the most careful manner, with face to the snow-wall, holding on to the snow above either with axe or pole, and cautiously placing the toe at every step in the carefully-cut foot-hold beneath. But we selected a line of descent in which there were no dangerous crevasses, and which avoided all

projecting fragments of rock; and we knew that, at the bottom of the ice-wall, there was a bed of soft snow, although it is true that this bed was a long way beneath us. We therefore dispensed with those expedients, which, although they almost entirely prevent the chance of a fall, are yet the cause of great delay; and, turning our backs to the wall, away we went, digging our heels forcibly into the snow, occasionally sliding a short distance, and then bringing either ourselves or our neighbour up short whenever the slide threatened to become too rapid. Presently, Stephen called out, 'Hold tight, I must make a little slip; have I got rope enough?' Cox and I came close so as to allow sufficient rope, and while we leaned backwards and held on to the snow with our heels and our elbows, away went Stephen. He stopped some twenty feet below and managed to secure tolerable foot-hold. Cox followed his example, but in consequence of the rope being a little shorter between him and me, he jerked me downwards. Melchior, who was behind, pulled me upwards, an operation that, combined with the tension from below, placed me in the position of a captured turtle, with the unpleasant addition of a liability to severance into two equal parts. My legs and arms were in the air, my back being the only portion in contact with *terra firma*, or I should rather say with slippery ice. At this critical juncture, Melchior called out to me, '*Halten Sie fest*,' and he descended a couple of steps to enable me to recover my equilibrium. He was not aware of the strong pull upon me from below, so that immediately his hold was relaxed I dashed down the smooth and slippery course that the two others had formed. Stephen and Cox averted their gaze as a fellow creature rushed wildly past, but, unable to check him in his headlong plunge, they were almost instantly carried off their legs and hurled into the depths below. Entangled with the rope, and twisted, and tossed, and rolled over in every conceivable way, we were carried,

like a swarm of fire-flies,
Tangled in a silver braid,

about 90 feet down the ice-slope, shooting in our course the *bergschrand*, across and over which we fell vertically some 20 feet through the air. A short distance below this *bergschrand* the human avalanche was arrested in the soft snow-bed that we had descried from above. Spectacles, and veils, and hats are scattered in every direction: cigars are destroyed, and pipes broken, and pockets, and shirts, and clothes, and ears, and noses, and mouths are filled with snow.

Regarded in a proper point of view, this little affair was a most fortunate occurrence, for it was the means of saving much valuable time, and was not destitute of enjoyment, inasmuch, as it afforded us a new sensation. Melchior came to our assistance, and then, picking up ourselves and our property, we went on our way rejoicing.

Rapidly over the glacier to the top of the moraine, where we unroped and enjoyed some food, then down the moraine, and with a short pause at our breakfasting place, onwards, past Chiaraggio. It soon became pitch dark, with heavy rain and thunder and lightning. We went blundering on, and frequently lost the path, but at such times Melchior's great skill displayed itself. He and Cox crawled over the rocks, until they discerned with their hands some symptoms of a track. True to his character, as Stephen's especial guide, Melchior continually stopped and shouted out to know if he were all right; and for a length of time, during which I could scarcely distinguish anything from nothing, Cox carefully led me over the broken ground. Finally, about midnight, and in miserable plight, we arrived at Chiesa; the seven o'clock dinner that we had ordered had been demolished by our hundred-throated host, who, convinced that we had all perished miserably, had retired to his beds in a contented frame of mind. Repeated knockings upon the door, with poles and axes, obtained admission. We swallowed some mulled wine, and dropped asleep.

In the morning the tops of the mountains were wrapped in clouds, heavy bodies of vapour clung sluggishly to the hill sides, and the streams, swollen with the rain which still fell continuously, sullenly chafed against their rocky banks. The out-door world was no inapt type of the frame of mind in which Stephen and I found ourselves. As to Melchior and Cox, they were still sleeping off the effects of yesterday's exertions. There we were, shut up in a wretched little inn, with no means of egress, save over some high pass, which the weather had rendered impassable, or else by the old route which we had followed two days previously, and which familiarity had rendered wearisome, while added to these causes for melancholy reflections, was the consciousness of yesterday's failure. However, after breakfast, we had to recount our adventures to a listening throng, and were obliged to comply with the request of the multi-form landlord, that we would condescend to inaugurate a travellers' book. It appeared that the inn had hitherto been deficient in this useful appendage, and accordingly we duly entered our names, embellished the title page with an illustration, sketched from memory, of the Disgrazia range, and

accompanied this work of high art with suitable literary matter. Having ascertained that the second peak, the peak which Stephen and Melchior had ascended, was without a name, we ventured to christen it *Picco della Speranza*.

Our party was now diminished by one, for Taylor had taken the Muretta Pass into the Engadine, in order to secure a day for prosecuting his ethnological inquiries,—inquiries that have produced results which will, I hope, soon be brought before the public.

The weather soon brightened a little, we strolled slowly down to Sondrio, and again took up our quarters at our old Hotel della Maddelena; with the ultimate intention of ascending the valley of the Adda to Triano, and of thence taking the Bernina Pass to Pontresina. Much doubt existed as to future proceedings: whether up or down the valley of the Adda; whether give up the mountain, and, going on to Tirano at once, enjoy and explore fresh scenes; or whether, seeking out the valley we had descried lying to the south-west of the peak, make thence one more attempt.

About nine o'clock on the following morning, I was pacing the balcony of the hotel. The sky was cloudless, and a white mountain in the east, dimly blending itself with the distant haze, pointed encouragingly upwards. Again did the outer world harmonise with the spirit within; but yesterday's shade had passed away in the mantle of night, and the genius of the new day was hopeful and buoyant.

I held a consultation with the head waiter while Stephen was sleeping off previous fatigue, and when he appeared I was prepared with a proposition.

'It is a very hot day, Stephen; would you not like a ride?'

'Yes, I should. I dislike these straight, hot, dusty, in every way detestable Italian roads. I suppose we can have a carriage up the valley, at any rate as far as the foot of the Bernina Pass?'

'I suppose we can, Stephen; also, we can have a carriage down the valley to Morbegno.'

'No! I have been there once; I won't go along that odious road again.'

'But, Stephen, think of the beautiful vineyards, and Indian-corn fields that we shall see.'

'I hate beautiful vineyards, and I hate Indian-corn fields.'

'Also, Stephen, there is another beautiful valley that comes down to Morbegno at right angles to the high road, and near the head of this beautiful valley I find there is a "Grand Ancient Italian Bathing Establishment," at which 140 people of distinc-

tion dine daily at a magnificent *table d'hôte*; and, Stephen, if we start directly after breakfast, we shall be just in time.'

'I don't care, Kennedy. I hate "Grand Ancient Italian Bathing Establishments," and I hate 140 people of distinction, and I hate magnificent *tables d'hôte*, and I hate being just in time.

'Also, Stephen, near the head of this beautiful valley, is the foot of the glacier that runs up to a notch, not far from the summit of a certain mountain that you know; also, the carriage can wait at the "Grand Ancient Italian Bathing Establishment" until to-morrow evening, and can then bring us back to Sondrio.'

Two hours later we sallied out from the courtyard in a couple of cars, amid the tramping of steeds, the cracking of whips, and the shouts of the hangers-on of the hotel. In the first carriage were Stephen and I, driven by the head waiter, who appeared in person, as the *fils aîné de la maison*, and whose mother turned out to be one of the 140 persons of distinction who were imbibing nitrogenous salts at the bathing establishment. In the second carriage were Melchior and Cox, driven by a boy in blue, who had been specially impressed for the occasion. The head waiter was pleased with the prospect of seeing his parent, the boy in blue was delighted with his holiday, and we four were in high spirits at the prospect of another chance of attacking the Disgrazia. Altogether, we were a very cheerful, not to say an uproarious, party. Shortly before reaching Mobergno, we turned off to the right from the high road, and began the steep ascent of the Val Masino. The horses necessarily went at a foot's pace; nevertheless, the ride was not without its dangers. The boy in blue was the better driver, but even with him Melchior preferred trusting to his own legs for a portion of the way; our man, however, was evidently so much better acquainted with the functions of a waiter than with those of a charioteer, that we unfastened the apron in front, and were in readiness for a spring. The road was very narrow, the descent upon our left precipitous, and our only protection an occasional stone at the edge. Against these stones the near wheels of our carriage had a remarkable tendency to come in contact, and whenever one of these collisions occurred, the whip was brought into use with the double object of screening the driver's blunder and of restoring locomotion to our vehicle; and as the horse swerved from side to side, it appeared, upon each of these interesting occasions, about an equal chance whether the wheel would pass upon the outer or the inner side of the stone. If on the outer, the fragments of the carriage that might afterwards be collected would probably

be of a size suitable for stuffing those comfortable mattresses that are to be found in mountain châteaux.

All travellers who find themselves at Morbegno should give a few hours to the Val Masino. A clear trout-stream brawls along the rocky bottom of the valley; traces of glacial action are plainly perceptible upon the rounded surfaces of the rocks; an existent moraine, occasionally 20 feet in height, can be distinguished for several miles; and from the rugged peaks and ridges that bound the valley on each side there have fallen fragments of granite, that, exceeding 100 feet in height, are scattered about in wild confusion. We were unanimously of opinion that no valley with which we are acquainted surpasses the Val Masino in grandeur and in variety of natural beauty.

About four hours up the valley we came upon the cluster of houses that forms the village of S. Martino. At this point a valley opening up upon our right, in a north-easterly direction, disclosed at its head Monte della Disgrazia; but the car-road making a bend to the north-west, carried us in about twenty minutes to the bathing establishment. Our welcome was cold as the stream of the glacier; we were obviously not invalids, and all other classes of visitors were deemed unworthy of even nitrogenous salt. Of the existence of our mountain, everyone was placidly unconscious, and mountaineers themselves are a race so entirely unknown, that we were regarded as a species of *lusus naturæ*. The people of the bathing establishment could not undertake to call us in the morning, they could not let us have coffee earlier than six o'clock, and they could not find us a man to carry a lantern, and point out a path in the dark. At length a man was promised who would furnish a lantern, and who, though he did not know the path himself, knew some one who did. We then had a discussion with our head charioteer, who agreed to wait for us with the cars at S. Martino until six o'clock in the afternoon. We wished him to make the hour a little later, but he urged, and not without reason, that we could not be benighted on the mountain road without danger. After a more than usual amount of discussion, all our arrangements were complete, and we were glad of a quiet stroll to admire the scenery, and generally to explore the premises. We had not been misled as to the great extent of the establishment, and the varied nature of the occupations carried on in its vicinity. Mining, charcoal-burning, carpentry in all its branches, flourish here. We were attracted by the sounds issuing from a species of carpenter's shed, and discovered that this was the coffin department of the establishment. A coffin was then on the point of completion, and its

future occupant was at that moment lying dead in one of the apartments. Though we deemed the mortuary arrangements eminently satisfactory, and were satisfied that any unhappy eventualities of the morrow would be decently and promptly provided for, we declined to give any definite commission, but, cheered by our inspection, we returned with lively steps to our quarters, packed up our food for the morning, saw that our lantern was properly trimmed, and carried off everything to our bed-rooms.

At ten minutes before one on the morning of Saturday we were fairly under weigh. The stars were shining, but not so brightly as could have been wished, while the lofty rocks around us limited the scope of vision. Midway between the bathing establishment and the village of S. Martino, we met a company of travellers in two carriages, with men on foot carrying lights to guide the drivers. It was a funeral procession coming to carry away the corpse.

At the village of S. Martino our lantern-bearer woke up an old man, and, without a word of explanation, disappeared with him in the obscurity. We waited, but no one made his appearance. Our patience was becoming exhausted, so that even the taciturn Melchior gave vent to his pent-up feelings, and exclaimed, '*Ach! wie dumm sind diese Leute.*' The delay gave time to examine the state of the sky. Alas! every star had disappeared; there is a flash—it lightens—the distant thunder comes rumbling up the valley, while sparse but heavy drops begin to fall. We saw nothing more of our lantern-bearer, nor of the old man, his friend; and reached the establishment at half-past two, just as the rain was beginning to fall in heavy sheets. With difficulty we obtained admission, and, after wandering through the gloomy passages, encountered a dirty chambermaid without shoes and stockings, who informed us that we had given up our bed-rooms, and could not possibly have them again; that, in point of fact, they were occupied by the burial party and the corpse. Another half-hour's delay, and we found ourselves in other apartments, that had been hastily prepared.

The same day we breakfasted about ten o'clock, and after strolling about in dubious, not to say irascible, frame of mind, sent off Melchior and Cox to explore the mountain-path for a few miles, so that we might have no difficulty; and we determined, if the weather improved, to make one more trial; but if it continued unfavourable, to start off by the carriage in the afternoon, and to give up all further attempt. After the customary particularly light supper of the establishment, we once more turned in for the night.

The same day we were up soon after eleven, and at twenty minutes before midnight were once more *en route* for the Disgrazia. I am inclined to think that the feat we thus accomplished is almost, perhaps entirely, without precedent. We had got up, dressed ourselves, and fairly entered upon the day's work, three times in less than twenty-four hours, and between one midnight and the succeeding one. The work of the first day was completed in three hours; the work of the second day was completed in ten hours; while the work of the third day occupied, as it turned out, twenty-four hours for its completion. Under such circumstances the flight of time becomes very eccentric in its character, and one's notions are much confused.

We passed through the village of S. Martino without a pause, and steadily followed the track that had been explored by Melchior and Cox on the previous day—no, it was on the same day. It was quite dark, and we could not see. Thus it happened that we wandered too far to the left, and became entangled among rocks and streams. Clambering onward over rugged stones, stumbling over decayed pine trunks, and plashing through pools of stagnant water, we reached, just as day was breaking, a high alp; and there, sitting down upon some rocks, had our first breakfast. Mounting by rather a steep track the rocky rampart that appears to close the valley at its upper or north-eastern extremity, we entered upon that wild region of scanty vegetation that always intervenes between the spots used by man for the purposes of pasturage and the realms of snow and glacier; a region that, even to the experienced mountaineer, occupies an extent far less in appearance than it does in reality; a region wholly hidden from the traveller in the valley, and one regarded by Mr. Ruskin as the stage designedly prepared for the purpose of receiving the masses of snow and huge fragments of rock that fall from the peaks above, and of thus intercepting these missives of destruction in their passage towards the inhabited valleys beneath.

Having traversed this desolate space, and crossed some patches of old snow, we clambered up steep masses of rock hurled confusedly together, turning occasionally to throw a hasty glance upon the scenes we were leaving beneath. The eye followed the long course of the valley up which we had just walked, and fell upon the point at its extremity, whence the branch to the right led up to the baths, and that to the left, down to the high road of the Adda. We were almost level with the summits of the grand masses that enclosed these valleys, and being on the western or shaded side of the mountain, we were exactly in a position to receive with full effect, and in a direct line, the

reflected rays of the sun, and these revealed with perfect distinctness and in all its details a scene that was not more than fifteen miles distant. The wild confusion of jagged peaks interspersed with craggy precipices, with hanging glaciers, and with towering pinnacles was fully displayed in all its wild and savage grandeur. In ten minutes we turned again; we had overtopped the frame-work of this rugged picture, and now beheld towering up in the sky far above it, and directly behind it, at a distance of some eighty miles, the Monte Rosa range. The contrast was marvellous. With tints of wonderful loveliness, soft and subdued to a bluish white, with unbroken patches of shade, of a tone but slightly darker than the illumined portions, with each magnificent breadth, whether in sunshine or in shadow, of unvaried hue, there they were, the noble Weiss-Horn and the lofty Mischabel, reposing in calm majesty, and seeming to be borne aloft by the softened haze that encircled their base, and to be projected with their upper outline clearly defined against the deepest blue of the whole hemisphere. They appeared like some creatures of the sky that had no connection with things of earth: below them, below us, and now apparently at our feet, while the great space between the near and distant ranges was wholly lost, were the rugged and contorted masses that might well constitute the remnants of a battle field whereon had striven, with monstrous implements of war, the gigantic children of the Titan race. Familiar as most of us are with the magic effects of light and shade amid the Swiss mountains, we had never, I think, witnessed any colouring that surpassed the fascinating beauty of that scene.

The passage of a comparatively level piece of glacier brought us near the extremity of a ridge that terminates in the face of the upper glacier, and that, gradually becoming narrower, forms the line of separation of two glaciers that roll, one on each side, at some depth below. In effecting the transit from this ridge to the glacier, there occurs the only real *mauvais pas* in the whole excursion. I was much inclined to turn back and leave Stephen and Melchior to go on together, but they both remonstrated so strongly and so kindly, that I, very greatly to my future satisfaction, could not do otherwise than advance. Melchior's resources came out conspicuously. We are on a narrow ledge of rock interspersed with patches of fresh snow; there is just space for one foot before the other, with precipitous rocks rising on our right hand, and falling towards the glacier beneath, on our left hand. An insurmountable buttress bars our path. Melchior fastens both ends of the rope round his waist. We three stand, each of us, in the firmest position we can select,

and allow the doubled rope to pass through our hands as Melchior descends the side of the buttress, and gradually, with scarcely hold for finger or for toe, contrives to wind round its face. He is now about level with us, but out of sight, and he fastens one end of the rope to a jutting fragment of rock. We haul upon this part of the rope so as to tighten it all round the buttress, and then secure it to a projecting piece upon our side. Melchior returns, regains his footing by us, and unfastening the rope from his own waist attaches it to mine. The three then pay out the rope through their hands, while I have the double security, in case of a slip, of the rope which passes round the buttress, and which I grasp in my right hand, and the rope attached to my waist, that is held by the three above. Landed on the ledge on the opposite side, I disengage the rope, and the others pass in succession. Melchior is last, but even he cannot carry the poles and axes, he is therefore obliged to mount the buttress to a spot whence he can throw down these necessary implements one by one for us to catch. Returning, he detaches the rope from the jutting piece, we haul in the slack until the rope is tightened round his body, and he then cautiously crawls round. As we three stand there pulling in the rope as we feel him gradually nearing us, it may be believed how thorough is the determination that we all share, to hold on with unflinching grasp should the foot of our trusty guide fail. But the fact is, I believe, that in all these ticklish passages a slip never does occur. The nerves are braced to the utmost, the limbs move slowly and cautiously, and the consciousness that there is sufficient power in others to afford the necessary support, in case of necessity, imparts a feeling of confidence that materially tends to diminish the risk of accident.

A few yards further along the ledge, and we are upon the glacier; and here, for the first time, we are all roped together. Melchior first, then I, Stephen, and Cox. We gradually wind up rather steep bits, but such as present no real difficulties, and at ten o'clock reach the notch in the chain, with Picco della Speranza on our left, and the highest peak of the Disgrazia on our right. Hence we look down upon the deep valley of Chiaraggio beneath us; beyond is the Monte Nero; higher up, and in the back-ground rises the Tremoggia, the whole surmounted by the grand range of the Bernina. Immediately at our feet, and a little to the left, is the crevassed glacier that we had traversed three or four days previously, and commanding, as we now do, its whole surface, we pause in astonishment to admire the skill which had enabled Melchior to lead us through its wonderful intricacies. Having rested at this spot some twenty

minutes to enjoy the grand view, and to make another breakfast, we began the real work of the day. This embraced the usual characters of a mountain ridge, a snow cornice on our left, steep couloirs of ice varied with ribs of rock on our right; our actual line of advance over some rocky tooth, up a steep slope of snow, an occasional descent, and finally, a general scramble that placed us at half-past eleven, on the final peak. And then, indeed, a shout of exultation burst from all.

What was our first thought? Was it, 'How shall we get down again?' or, 'How magnificent is the panoramal' or, 'Where is the top that I may pocket it;' or, 'Can we find any stones wherewithal we may build up a memorial?' or, 'What have we got to eat and to drink?' or, 'Who has the tobacco-pouch?' or, 'Where is the barometer and the boiling-water apparatus?' or was it—if it may be called a thought—the simple passive consciousness of success? This is, to many, itself the great reward. The descent is trying, and gladly would I avoid it. The view is sublime, and I enjoy it. The top is an object in every way worthy of attainment, and as an heir-loom to posterity would I transmit it. The memorial to succeeding generations raises a feeling gratifying to the pride of man, and I am a partaker in it. The crust of bread recruits exhausted strength, and I devour it; the wine is nectar itself, and I relish it: the pipe is universal, but I nauseate it. The scientific observation is of the utmost importance, and with most unfeigned satisfaction do I behold others trying to keep their hands warm while they are conducting it. But, to my mind, each and every one of these sources of gratification sink into insignificance when compared with the exhilarating consciousness of difficulty overcome, and of success attained by perseverance.

I venture then to assert that this effect and the results to which it gives rise form an answer more than sufficient to confute those who say that these excursions are without aim or purpose; that those who undertake them do so solely for the purpose of saying that they have been to the top of a high mountain. I believe that these mountain excursions produce not only a highly beneficial effect upon the physical character, that they strengthen the constitution, that they develop the limbs and muscles, and that they impart a hardihood to the frame that renders it almost impregnable to the attacks of disease; but I believe also that they produce an equally beneficial effect upon the mental character, that they excite a thoughtful foresight in preparation, that they impart a self-reliance in the moment of danger, and that they give a fertility in resource when diffi-

culties are impending. No other manly exercise thus brings out these two distinct effects, these effects of bodily and mental culture. I am therefore justified in claiming for Alpine climbing the first rank among athletic sports, as the nourisher of those varied elements that go to form all that is commendable in the constitution of the Anglo-Saxon character.

After remaining at the top three-quarters of an hour, we rapidly descended. Our ascent had occupied twelve hours all but ten minutes. A second ascent would doubtlessly require less time; however, we made a fair pace on the descent, for five hours and forty minutes saw us once more at S. Martino, thus bringing us there at five minutes before six, or five minutes before the time appointed for meeting the cars. They were, however, in readiness, and we were not long in jumping in. The head waiter took charge of Stephen and me in the first carriage, the boy in blue brought up the rear with Melchior and Cox. I will not stop to describe how we rattled merrily along; how, at a turn in the road, the blue boy's steed fell to the ground, luckily throwing the occupants of the car into the road, and not over the precipice; nor how we reached the most ticklish part of the road just as it was growing dusk; nor how the horses shied at a waterfall and nearly caused another overturn; nor how, upon gaining the high road, we tried to get up an Olympic chariot-race. Oh! the dangers that await those unhappy beings who travel in cars, how far do they surpass the perils attendant upon a real mountain excursion! We reached Sondrio at half-past ten: supper, champagne, and success put us at peace with all the world, and we found ourselves, somewhere about midnight once more in bed. We had thus made a day of twenty-four hours, but whether it was the same day, or the next day, or the day after that day, or the same week, or the next week, that that day ended, is one of those things that no fellow could tell.

A NARRATIVE OF AN ACCIDENT ON THE ALETSCHE GLACIER IN AUGUST 1862; with Remarks on the Necessity of making use of a Rope on Glacier Expeditions. By WILLIAM LONGMAN, F.G.S., Vice-President of the Alpine Club.

AN accident which happened to my son on the Aletsch glacier, in August last, having attracted general attention, and the published accounts of it being incorrect, it seems desir-