were able in many places to let ourselves slide down. In a comparatively short time we arrived at the spot where we had left our 'impedimenta.' These we took up, and continued our journey. The sun was already sinking, so that we had no time to lose. Urged by the fear of having to pass the night on the mountain, we plunged after Stratton down slopes, across snow bridges, by walls of ice, as if pursued by a fiend. Vain were my remonstrances, fearful of an accident, but my companions hurried on in a manner that would have sent a Swiss guide into fits. Such a helter-skelter mad-brained party was never seen on either Mont Blanc or Mont Rosa. The sun set, twilight came on, when suddenly we could no longer discern our tracks of the morning. In the labyrinth of crevasses and séracs around we could not make out the route. Calling a halt, a consultation was held. We resolved to retrace our steps, and the tracks were again discovered. In the feeble twilight, the spot on the ridge we had left seemed ever to recede. Overcome by fatigue, I would fain have made my couch on the snow. But my companions pressed me on, and about nine o'clock we reached the ridge at the point where we had taken to the snow in the morning. Leaving there our packs for the Indians to pick up in the morning, we made for our last encampment. Stumbling over the angular rocks as well as we could in the dark, our progress was very slow. As we approached, we shouted out, when the Indians made a great blaze. At length, about eleven o'clock, we got in. The Indians were overjoyed. What with the injunctions of Umptlalum and their own superstitions, the honest fellows had felt considerable anxiety on our account. Tea was soon made, and over the flowing bowls we recounted our adventures to the Indians. We had no sooner turned in than the weather changed. The wind moaned and blew in fitful gusts, telling of the coming tempest. It was very cold, and, as we turned round in our blankets, we felt thankful that we were not on the mountain.

THE PASSAGE OF THE SESIA-JOCH FROM ZERMATT TO ALAGNA BY ENGLISH LADIES.

Mr. Ball, writing in 1863, referred to the first passage of the Sesia-Joch by Messrs. George and Moore, as 'amongst the most daring of Alpine exploits,' and expressed a doubt whether it was not a *tour de force* which would never be repeated. Mr. Moore, indeed, repeated his exploit with another companion, but he was for many years unsuccessful in inducing anyone else to follow in his footsteps, and both guides and mountaineers seem to have shared the doubts of Mr. Ball as to the route being one fit for ordinary use.

The members of the Alpine Club heard, therefore, with some astonishment that in the autumn of 1869 two ladies had not only crossed this most redoubtable of glacier passes, but crossed it from Zermatt to Alagna, thus descending the wall of rock, the ascent of which had until then been looked on as an extraordinary feat for first-rate climbers.

The details now in our possession leave no room to doubt that the

Misses Pigeon exactly reversed the steps of their predecessors. We can affirm from personal experience that the direct descent from the Lys-Joch to Alagna differs in almost every possible respect from the route here described. The former is, with the exception of two short rock couloirs, an easy walk over gently-inclined snow-fields and pasturages, and the whole distance from the pass to the inn at Alagna may be traversed in about four hours. It may be suggested that an intermediate route was taken, and that the ridge was crossed at some point between the Parrot-Spitze and Ludwig's-höhe. But Mr. Moore vouches for the remarkable agreement of the details given with the nature of the ground he has twice traversed. The impossibility of a direct descent from the actual col and the finding of the bottle at a certain height above it, towards the Parrot-Spitze, are facts, in the face of which it seems to us impossible to doubt that the Misses Pigeon crossed the true Sesia-Joch. The following extract from a local Italian paper,* aided by the notes kindly communicated to us by the Misses Pigeon, fully explains how this accidental but brilliant feat of mountaineering was happily brought to a successful conclusion.

'On August 11, 1869, Miss Anna and Miss Ellen Pigeon, of London, were at the Riffel Hotel, above Zermatt, with the intention of making the passage of the Lys-Joch on the next day, in order to reach Gressonay. Starting at 3.0 A.M. on the 12th, accompanied by Jean Martin, of Annivier, guide at Sierre, and by a porter, they arrived at 4.0 A.M. at the Gorner Glacier, which they crossed rapidly to the great plateau enclosed between the Zumstein-Spitze, Signal-Kuppe, Parrot-Spitze, and Lyskamm, where they arrived at 10 A.M. At this point, instead of bearing to the right, which is the way to the Lys-Joch, they turned too much towards the left, so that they found themselves on a spot at the extremity of the plateau, from which they saw beneath their feet a vast and profound precipice, terminating at a great depth upon a glacier. The guide had only once, about four years before, crossed the Lys-Joch, and in these desert and extraordinary places, where no permanent vestiges remain of previous passages, he had not remembered the right direction, nor preserved a very clear idea of the localities. At the sight of the tremendous precipice he began to doubt whether he might not have mistaken the way, and, to form a better judgment, he left the ladies on the col, half stiffened with cold from the violence of the north wind, ascended to the Parrot-Spitze, and advanced towards the Ludwigs-höhe, in order to examine whether along this precipice, which lay inexorably in front, there might be a place where a passage could be effected. But wherever he turned his eyes he saw nothing but broken rocks and couloirs yet more precipitous.

'In returning towards the col after his fruitless exploration, almost certain that he had lost his way, he saw, among some *débris* of rock, an empty bottle (which had been placed there by Messrs. George and Moore in 1862.) This discovery persuaded him that here must be the pass, since some one in passing by the place had there deposited this

* 'Monte Rosa Gazetta della Val Sesia,' Anno viii. No. 407. Varallo, September 4, 1869.

bottle. He then applied himself to examining with greater attention the rocks below, and thought he saw a possibility of descending by them. He proposed this to the ladies, and they immediately commenced operations. All being tied together at proper intervals with a strong rope, they began the perilous descent, sometimes over the naked rock, sometimes over more or less extensive slopes of ice, covered with a light stratum of snow, in which steps had to be cut. It was often necessary to stop, in order to descend one after the other by means of the rope to a point where it might be possible to rest without being held up. The tremendous precipice was all this time under their eyes, seeming only to increase as they descended. This arduous and perilous exertion had continued for more than seven hours, when towards 6 P.M. the party arrived at a point beyond which all egress seemed closed. Slippery and almost perpendicular rocks beneath, right and left, and everywhere; near and around not a space sufficient to stretch oneself upon, the sun about to set, night at hand! What a position for the courageous travellers, and for the poor guide on whom devolved the responsibility of the fatal consequences which appeared inevitable!

'Nevertheless, Jean Martin did not lose his courage. Having caused the ladies to rest on the rocks, he ran right and left, climbing as well as he could in search of a passage. For about half-an-hour he looked and felt for a way, but in vain. At length it appeared to him that it would be possible to risk a long descent by some rough projections which occurred here and there in the rocks. With indescribable labour and at imminent peril of rolling as shapeless corpses into the crevasses of the glacier below, the travellers at length set foot upon the ice. It was 8 P.M.; they had commenced the descent at 11 A.M.; they crossed the Sesia Glacier at a running pace; on account of the increasing darkness of the night, which scarcely allowed them to distinguish the crevasses. After half-an-hour they set foot on terra firma at the moraine above the Alp of Vigne, whence they perceived, at no great distance, a light, towards which they quickly directed their steps. The shepherd, named Dazza Dionigi, received them kindly and lodged them for the night. Until they arrived at the Alp, both the ladies and the guide believed that they had made the pass of the Lys-Joch, and that they were now upon an Alp of Gressonay. It was, therefore, not without astonishment that they learnt from the shepherd that, instead of this, they were at the head of the Val Sesia, and that they had accomplished the descent of the formidable pass of the Sesia-Joch.

'On the morrow they went down to Alagna, where the two intrepid *touristes* were obliged to remain some days on account of the frost-bitten foot of one of them, the only inconvenience from this arduous and almost incredible journey, the absence of fatal consequences from which was due to their courage, their habitude to Alpine travel, and especially to the masculine education, too little imitated by Italians, which the English give their children.'

The article concludes with an eulogium on Jean Martin.

As an accompaniment to the foregoing highly-coloured narrative, the following modest notes, sent us by the Misses Pigeon, will be read with interest. They seem to suggest that there is no reason why the Sesia-

Joch should not cease to be considered a *tour de force*, rarely to be attempted, and take its place among the recognised routes into or out of Zermatt:

'All mountaineers are aware how much the difficulty of a pass is lessened or increased by the state of the weather. In this we were greatly favoured. For some days it had been very cold and wet at the Riffel; and when we crossed the Sesia-Joch, we found sufficient snow in descending the ice-slope to give foothold, which decreased the labour of cutting steps—the axe was only brought into requisition whenever we traversed to the right or left. Had the weather been very hot, we should have been troubled with rolling stones. It was one of those clear, bright mornings so favourable for mountain excursions. Our guide had only once before crossed the Lys-Joch four years previously, and on a very misty day. We were therefore careful to engage a porter who professed to know the way. The latter proved of no use whatever except to carry a knapsack.

'We take the blame to ourselves of missing the Lys-Joch; for, on making the discovery of the porter's ignorance, we turned to "Ball's Guide Book," and repeatedly translated to Martin a passage we found there, warning travellers to avoid keeping too much to the right near the Lyskamm. The result of our interference was, that Martin kept too much to the left, and missed the Lys-Joch altogether.

'When we perceived the abrupt termination of the actual col, we all ascended, with the aid of step-cutting, along the slope of the Parrot-Spitze, until we came to a place where a descent seemed feasible. Martin searched for a better passage, but, after all, we took to the ice-slope, at first for a little way keeping on the rocks. Finding the slope so very rapid, we doubted whether we could be right in descending it; for we remembered that the descent of the Lys-Joch is described by Mr. Ball as *easy*. We therefore retraced our steps up the slope to our former halting-place, thus losing considerable time, for it was now 12 o'clock. Then it was that Martin explored the Parrot-Spitze still further, and returned in three-quarters of an hour fully persuaded that there was no other way. We re-descended the ice-slope, and lower down crossed a couloir, and then more snow-slopes and rocks brought us to a lower series of rocks, where our passage seemed stopped at 5 o'clock. Here the mists, which had risen since the morning, much impeded our progress, and we halted, hoping they would disperse. Martin again went off on an exploring expedition, whilst the porter was sent in another direction. As both returned from a fruitless search, and sunset was approaching, the uncomfortable suggestion was made that the next search would be for the best sleeping quarters. However, Martin himself investigated the rocks pronounced impracticable by the porter, and by these we descended to the Sesia Glacier without unusual difficulty. When once fairly on the glacier, we crossed it at a running pace, for it was getting dark, and we feared to be benighted on the glacier. It was dark as we scrambled along the moraine on the other side, and over rocks and grassy knolls till the shepherd's light at Vigne gave us a happy indication that a shelter was not far off. The shouts of our guide brought the shepherd with his oil-lamp to meet us, and it

was a quarter to 9 o'clock P.M. when we entered his hut. After partaking of a frugal meal of bread and milk, we were glad to accept his offer of a hay-bed, together with the unexpected luxury of sheets. When relating the story of our arrival to the Abbé Farinetti on the following Sunday at Alagna, the shepherd said that so great was his astonishment at the sudden apparition of travellers from that direction, that he thought it must be a visit of angels.

'We consider the Italian account incorrect as to the time we occupied in the descent. We could not have left our halting-place near the summit for the second time before a quarter to 1 o'clock, and in eight hours we were in this shepherd's hut.

'The Italian account exaggerates the difficulty we experienced. The rope was never used to "hold up the travellers and let them down one by one." On the contrary, one lady went *last*, preferring to see the awkward porter in front of her rather than behind. At one spot we came to an abrupt wall of rock, and there we gladly availed ourselves of our guide's hand. The sensational sentence about "rolling as shapeless corpses into the crevasses" is absurd, as we were at that juncture rejoicing in the prospect of a happy termination of our dilemma, and of crossing the glacier in full enjoyment of our senses.'

It is impossible to pass over without some further remark the behaviour of the guide and porter who shared in this adventure. Jean Martin, if he led his party into a scrape, certainly showed no small skill and perseverance in carrying them safely out of it, and on this account fully merited the praises of the Italian writer. But his conduct, as a whole, seems to us a good illustration of the fallacy of the belief held by some climbers who, taking one or two first-rate guides as fair types of the class, attribute to guides in general the instinct or faculty of path-finding. According to our own experience, the bump of locality is pretty evenly bestowed on guides and amateurs, and in many instances the powers of a mind sharpened by daily use in other matters will, we believe, be found to more than counterbalance the special knowledge of a Swiss peasant. In the present case, it is almost incredible that any man who had once in his life crossed the Lys-Joch, should on a 'bright, clear morning,' imagine for a moment that the rocky precipices and ice-couloirs of the Sesia-Joch represented the smooth snow-slopes he had previously descended. The quotation from the 'Alpine Guide' may be some excuse for Martin's striking the crest at the wrong point, it is none at all for his subsequent stupidity in not at once recognising his mistake.

Porters have as a class, and with some honourable exceptions, long afforded a proof that Swiss peasants are not necessarily born climbers. Their difficulties and blunders have, indeed, served as one of the standing jokes of Alpine literature. But we doubt if any porter has ever exhibited himself in so ignoble a position as the man who, having begun by obtaining an engagement under false pretences, ended by allowing one of his employers, a lady, to descend the Italian side of the Sesia-Joch last on the rope.

That such a poor creature should have been sent out with travellers, and, above all, with ladies, on a glacier expedition, is a disgrace to

Zermatt, and more particularly to the Riffel Hotel. Unless innkeepers are speedily awoke to a higher sense of their responsibility in this matter, we shall have some day to tell an Alpine story in which the porter will play a tragic instead of a comic part.

ALPINE ACCIDENTS IN 1871.

ALTHOUGH three fatal accidents took place last year in the Alps, two of them occurred far from the peaks and glaciers of the central chain, and were due to botanical rather than to mountaineering zeal. Of one of these, by which we have to deplore the loss of a valuable member of our Club, the following letter from Mr. Moggridge, a member of the Italian Alpine Club, gives exact particulars:—

'The Rev. Robert Crosse, accompanied by a friend, Mr. Collingsplat, left Mentone on December 4, for the gorge of Pont St. Louis, about two miles distant from his hotel. His object was to get the rare fern *Asplenium petrarchæ*. They passed up the eastern side, over a small aqueduct that spans the bottom of the gorge, and ascended the broken rocky ground on the western slope, which presents no difficulties to an ordinary climber—certainly none to my poor friend, who was especially good upon the rocks. Searching about for the plant, his progress was slower than that of his companion who, when about halfway up the slope, sat down to wait. Some twelve feet below Mr. Collingsplat was a rock—probably heretofore arrested on its descending course. Below this Crosse passed, stopped, and commenced hammering—we suppose to get out the fern which grew there. In doing so, it would appear that he removed the stones which supported the rock; a fearful crash was heard; the huge mass rolled over him and bounded down to the bottom of the gorge. Death, or at any rate the loss of all sensation, must have been instantaneous. Hoping against hope, Mr. Collingsplat sought medical assistance, and then came to me. Taking ropes to let down the body, I was soon upon the spot, and found my poor friend literally crushed. I need not now go at any length into further details; how the body was taken by the Italian authorities, left for more than a day exposed by the roadside; how I offered to pay any sum they might demand—to buy the body at their own price. No! "formalities must be gone through," partly at Ventimiglia, partly at St. Remo, partly at Rome—all of course implying money. We to-day laid him in his last resting-place, in the same grave which some years back received his daughter.'

The second of the accidents above referred to happened on the Stockhorn, near Thun. Two young Swiss set out with a guide to ascend the mountain. They strayed from the path in search of rare flowers. In grasping at a plant growing on a grassy shelf, one of them slipped, and in falling caught hold of his companion's leg. The two youths rolled downwards together, and soon fell over a cliff, at the bottom of which they were found lifeless.

The only fatal mishap in the High Alps was the death of a German