

AMID SEAS OF ICE.

SCENES AMONG THE GLACIERS OF THE UPPER ENGADINE.

Climbing Snow Clad Alpine Heights—Dust Avalanches—Formation of a Glacier—A Moraine—How "Glacier Corn" Is Formed—Glacier Tables—Mountains.

As far as my vision extended there was nothing in sight but ice and snow, and the snow was exceedingly white, I assure you. The driven snow you have in towns and plains is a decided brown compared with the dazzling snow we saw up there at the tops of Swiss mountains. Forever and forever this virgin gown lies on all the peaks, as it also covers the lower valleys in winter. It has the soft look of a dove's breast; it rests on rocks a thing of beauty, and often it is very dangerous. It falls in soft, pure flakes, clings to all the projections, covers rocks with charming traceries, and spreads itself like a sheet of white satin over the upper vales. But the touch of a passing eagle's wing, the light weight of a chamois, or the careful step of an expert climber will detach it from its crest and send it down. Then it goes sliding, rumbling along, breaking and reforming as it falls, ever increasing in volume and velocity, and pursuing its way, becomes a devastating, terrible avalanche that bends and breaks trees, gathers up earth and stones, and rolls into the Engadine with an awful sound, spreading destruction and dismay in its path. They call these sort of things staublawinen, or dust avalanches, because they consist at the start of cold, dry, powdery snow only, and they are often far more powerful than a raging hurricane. But the avalanches usually seen lying in high Alpine vales, covered with dust, earth and stones, and great trunks of trees, are known as grundlawinen or compact avalanches.

It was a grand sight on which we gazed. Glaciers filled every valley and ravine, and the ice stood up in tall ramparts wherever the space was too narrow to hold its rigid waves. Glacier ice is snow that has for a considerable time been subjected to enormous pressure. If you squeeze a snowball in your hand until it is very hard it becomes icy. So in the Alps, the continual fall of snow is the pressure and the sun's heat the warmth which produces those seas of ice that are called glaciers. There are over 600 of them in Switzerland, and some are coeval with the glacial period of this continent, while others are now in process of formation. Winter is their season of rest, but with the spring they resume their onward motion due to the combined action of heat and gravitation. For in spite of their apparent immobility all Alpine glaciers do move constantly, although with different degrees of speed, and, like liquid streams, they carry with them debris of all sorts, but principally the stones that fall on their surface from the mountains sides. The glacier starting in its purity from some white unsullied peak, loses before many years its spotless character. The wintry frosts gathering into iron bonds the streams that trickle down the mountain sides expand the water in freezing and shattered rocks with a force that the most solid cliffs cannot possibly resist. Thus broken fragments drop on to the once unpolluted bosom of the ice sea and swell its burden with advancing years. The debris thus brought down form what are called moraines. Each glacier has a moraine on either side of it; its end is a terminal moraine, and when two glaciers unite their lateral moraines join and form a medial moraine. One of the largest medial moraines hereabout I saw as we came down from this excursion. It is in the center of the Morteratsch Glacier and is about fifty feet or more broad and perhaps twenty feet high in its center.

We were struck by the infinite whiteness of everything, and I have since learned that it is owing to the presence of glacier corn. There is on glacier clad mountains a neve, or finely crystallized snow, which is never fully melted, and this is the pressure that forms the glacier ice. Now, glacier ice is quite different to that which results from freezing to water and is found to consist of crystals varying in size from that of a hen's egg to a pin's head; these particles are known as granules or glacier corn, and in minute holes air is imprisoned. Where the air bubbles are absent the glacier has a bluish tint, and is no longer that pure white which puzzles so many persons. With the oldest guide carefully leading the way we walked over the ice sea of Diaz-velas. Before we had gone far on its level surface I saw bowlers supported at some height on ice pedestals and I stopped to examine them. "Glacier tables," said the guide at the tall end of our procession, but his remark conveyed no useful information. I soon saw that they resulted from the presence of a block of stone. It had fallen on the sea, and had, so to speak, protected the ice directly beneath it from the heat of the sun. In consequence while the glacier all round has been dissolving and sinking, the ice under these bowlers has but slightly melted, and gradually a pillow is forming under each rock.

"But the bowler is not balanced evenly on the top," observed the Boston lady. It was explained to her that because the sun is able to reach these ice pedestals more freely on the south side than on the north the thing naturally inclines toward the south. As we walked along we noticed a line of sand covered mounds about four or five feet high and culminating in a sharp ridge. We scraped off a little of the sand and earth and found that a mound was composed of ice which looked quite black when it was uncovered. The reason for the existence of these cones was obvious. The ice protected by the sand had remained unmelted, and the wind had thinned the drifted heap into a pointed shape. Suddenly we heard a cracking sound which was accompanied by a noise like that of a distant explosion, and the guide said this announced the formation of another crevasse. Presently the sound of falling water, which grew louder and louder as we approached, was heard, and soon we reached a point where a stream dropped down a shaft in the ice and was lost to sight. The guide called this deep hole a moulin, and he gently remarked that a false step in its direction would take a fellow down beyond all human aid. Agassiz and Tyndall both tried to ascertain the thickness of glaciers by taking soundings down these moulins. The former found no bottom at 800 feet on one sea and on another he estimated the thickness at 1,500 feet.—Cor. New York Times.

Devotion in Artillery Fire.

When the great gun which has thrown a ball eleven miles happens to be aimed north, a lateral deviation of 200 feet must be taken into account for the difference in rotating speed between the spot where it is fired and the spot where the missile will strike. —New York Sun.

REPUBLICAN PLATFORM.

The representatives of the United States, assembled by their delegates in national convention, passed on the threshold of their proceedings to honor the memory of their first great leader and immortal champion of liberty and the rights of the people—Franklin, and, next to him, George Washington, the incomparable representative and prototype of the heroic names of our later leaders who have been more recently called away from our country—Grant, Garfield, Hayes, and Harrison. Commemorating with that hostiness be faithfully cherished. We also recall with our greetings and prayer for his recovery the name of one of our living heroes whose memory must be treasured in the history book of the public life of the Republic. The name is that of the noble soldier and favorite child of victory, Philip H. Sheridan.

In the spirit of these great leaders, and of our party to the last, we are willing, with that hostiness by no means of desecration and oppression which is the fundamental idea of the republican party, we send fraternal congratulations to our fellow Americans of both hemispheres, and a hearty congratulation which completed the abolition of slavery throughout the two American continents. We earnestly hope we may soon congratulate our fellow citizens of the world upon the peaceful recovery of home rule for Ireland.

WE AFFIRM OUR ANSWERING DEVOTION to the national constitution and to the indissoluble union of states, and with that hostiness of the states under the constitution, to the personal rights and liberties of citizens in all states and territories in the union and especially to the suppression of the right of every citizen, rich or poor, native or foreign, to vote, to hold office, to cast one free ballot in the public elections and to have that ballot duly counted. We hold a free and honest popular ballot and just and equal representation for all men to the foundation of our republican government and demand effective legislation to secure the integrity and purity of elections which are the foundation of all power and influence in the nation. We demand that the administration and the democratic majority in congress towards our fisheries as unfriendly and conspicuously unpatriotic and as tending to destroy a valuable national resource and a indispensable resource of all against religion, money.

The name of American applies alike to all citizens of the republic, and imposes upon men alike the same obligations of obedience to the laws of the land, and the maintenance of freedom and the panoply and safeguard of him who wears it, should shield and protect him whether high or low, rich or poor, in all his civil rights. It should and must afford him protection at home and follow and protect him abroad in whatever he may be on a lawful errand.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM.

The men who abandoned the republican party in 1861, and endeavored to subvert the constitution, to the end that they might be the founders of a separate and independent nation, and that the government of the United States might be destroyed, we protest against the destruction proposed by the present and party.

We support the interests of America. We accept the issue, and confidently appeal to the people for their judgment. The protective system must be maintained. Its abandonment would immediately result in the loss of the American system of protection. We protest against the destruction proposed by the present and party.

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