

*losus* of Wallerius, spec. 137,—a stone which the people of the country make great use of for the construction of stoves, both for themselves and for exportation. It is of a dark green tint, but turns black by the effect of fire; and is so far found preferable to any other for that use, that it does not become red from heat, let that heat be ever so excessive; neither is it liable to fly or break as earthen, or even iron stoves, besides being accounted more wholesome for that purpose.

At the basis of a mountain near Lides, called La Tour, is a rich mine of copperas pyrites, intermixed with a kind of azure blue and *verd-de-montagne*, or *creta viridis*, two colours much used in painting *al fresco*, and of which the inhabitants send great quantities to Piedmont. Three miles from hence stands St. Pierre, or St. Petersbourg, the last Vallaisan village of any extent previous to entering the king of Sardinia's states. This village is defended, on the Piedmontese side, by a wall *à creneau*, or kind of battlement, as well as by a ditch, formed, as it were, by the torrent Valsorey, and is so extremely elevated, as to be five thousand four hundred and thirty-four feet above the level of the sea, and three thousand eight hundred and forty-eight higher than Martignie; so that the winters not only are intensely cold, but may be said to last nine months out of the twelve. Its inhabitants therefore, as well as those of Orsière, are obliged, on that account, to dry their vegetables on a species of *étendoirs*, or wooden frames, placed horizontally, and supported by pieces of timber, cut for the purpose, of ten or twelve feet high. They have also a singular mode of cultivating or propagating their beans (an article of great consumption), which is, that as soon as the plant is about a foot high, it is laid in the ground like the stem of a vine, when in a short time sprout out from the eyes or joints of its stem a number of branches, which soon acquire sufficient strength to resist the severity of the atmosphere, that reigns nearly the whole year throughout the Upper Alps. They pretend that this process both accelerates their maturity, and adds to their strength so considerably, that they are thus always certain of procuring a plentiful harvest of their favourite vegetable.

From St. Petersbourg I crossed the Drance of Valsorey, so named to distinguish it from the Drance of Mont St. Bernard, the former taking its source at the foot of an extensive glacier of the same name, though nevertheless a branch of the great *Mer de Glace*, or *Frozen Sea*, called *Tzermotana* or *Hautema* by the Vallaisans, of which I shall speak more particularly in its proper place. This torrent I therefore crossed, and continued ascending for nine long miles, previous to reaching the top of this tremendous

pass, and by a road so terrific, steep, and irregular, that no conveyance except mules can be used by travelers; and, what is worse, it never can be ameliorated, the snow being in many parts, at all times of the year, permanent. As I by degrees arrived nearer the top of this Colossean mountain, how wild and arid did every object appear! with the exception of a small forest of larch and fir, which I passed through at about two miles from St. Pierre, as if to bid adieu to this last remnant of vegetation; for, besides these, nothing but a few shrubs, birch, and stunted pines, thinly scattered on the dreary wild, presented themselves around; and they but too forcibly announced, by their languor and wretched appearance, that the region or temperature in which they grew was no longer fit for them. To these succeeded the *rhododendrum hirsutum*, and then a short close grass, conspicuous only in that part of the valley where the snow was melted, while moss and lichens were here and there seen in small quantities on the blocks of rock which surround the road. At last, as I approached the summit, I came to a spot apparently abandoned by Nature. The kind of chaos in which I was, the profound silence that reigned around, interrupted only by the melancholy rumbling of the Drance, which rolls its impetuous waters among tremendous precipices, served to convey sensations of gloom and terror not to be described,—yet at the same time infused such sentiments of wonder and surprise, at the magnitude of the objects, and the singularity of the dreary and terrific scene which spreads itself around for so great a distance, that I became riveted to a spot, which cannot be viewed without emotion or astonishment. Having however reached the top of the Prou (a kind of dale or pasturage, nine hundred and seventy-three toises, or six thousand two hundred and twenty-one English feet three-quarters above the level of the sea, very nearly filled with fragments of the lateral mountains, where the inhabitants of Orsières and Lides send their sheep to graze during the months of July and August), I perceived, on my left, the spiry summit of Mont Velan, where the snow is perpetual, and of which the height, according to Père Murrith (canon of St. Bernard, the hospice or convent of friars on the top of the mount, a person well known by his literary knowledge, as well as by his extreme tenderness and humanity towards the distressed traveler of the Alps), is one thousand seven hundred and thirty toises, or eleven thousand six hundred and two feet and a quarter above the level of the sea. That mountain, which is one of the highest that forms, and indeed overhangs, the summit of St. Bernard, serves as a support to the before-mentioned glacier, which communicates to that of Valsorey, and, to credit the

reports of some chamois-hunters accustomed to pursue that animal among the most stupendous peaks of the primitive chain, extends upwards of twenty miles north-north-east. N° XXI gives a representation of that glacier, or rather that part which lies between the one of La Valsorey and that of La Valteline, a spot which I have chosen, in order to subjoin an anecdote which happened to me there the first time of my crossing the Great St. Bernard, some years ago, and which may likewise tend to show the hospitable disposition, the urbanity, and simplicity, of the Vallaisans in general.

Being under the necessity of passing this mount in my way to Switzerland from Turin, I furnished myself with a guide and mule at the city of Aösta; but, from the extreme brutality of the former, I was forced to send him back, with his beast, as soon as I had reached the summit,—a circumstance which, from not knowing what I was to encounter, and the weather being fair, gave me not one moment's uneasiness; for I supposed I should be able, without much inconvenience, to walk to the village of St. Pierre, where it was probable I might meet with some kind of conveyance. But, alas! he had not left me long, ere I grievously repented of having discarded him, the descent being, beyond any thing I could conceive, steep, irregular, and almost trackless; when, at once, the surrounding objects became suddenly intercepted by dark clouds, which were accumulating most tremendously, while in an instant they expanded, and I became, as it were, enveloped in them—the wind, during this time, forcing itself in violent and frightful gusts over the mountain, chilled my mind with horror. The clouds were so thick, that for the moment they obscured the light, and prevented my finding my way, while they wetted me so thoroughly, that, had I been soused in a river, I could not have been in a more deplorable situation. Yet were these only the prelude or forerunners of a still more dreadful storm; for while the wind, at every gust, increased and became terrific, so as to carry away or overturn whatever might lie in its direction (a circumstance which often happens on the top of the Alps), the thunder rolled and lightning flashed beneath my feet, and, wonderful as it may appear, hail, intermixed with large flakes of snow, fell thick upon me, and seemed to blow from every part. Thus chilled and comfortless, I stood unavailingly lamenting my want of precaution, and was on the point of throwing myself on the earth, and resigning myself to fate, having never before or since encountered such a storm. Not a tree could I discover that might afford the least shelter; nothing but huge and barren rocks, heaped one on the other to an extreme height, displayed themselves around, and very nearly