

of the season, the fissures would be found much widened ; and so it proved. To this an unusually hot summer also, had doubtless tended. These fissures gave a most zigzag direction to our course, compelled us to retrace painfully-taken steps, and sometimes to reascend walls, where ropes as well as hands and knees had been employed to enable us to scramble down.

It was the lower and larger of the mulet rocks, the Grand Mulet (61), that we were to try to gain, as our quarters for the night. But the most eligible point from which to climb up the rock, was absolutely unattainable ; a great fissure, and a mural precipice beyond it, intervening. We therefore retraced our steps down towards the base of the rock. But here, too, a wall of solid ice was interposed.

The guides threw down their provision-bags, and set earnestly to work. I took, as well as benumbed hands permitted, a sketch or two the while, from which the two small plates are taken.* The leading guide, secured with

* The plates present but a small portion of the rock *near its base*.

a rope, was lowered down to a projecting point, on which there was a footing for his toes. He then clambered up from point to point, also cutting steps, until at last, with labour exceeded only by the peril of his situation, he attained the rock ; other guides continuing all the while their hold of the rope with which he had been tied, as a false step would otherwise have cast him down into a chasm, the depth of which we could not ascertain. Another guide was now secured, and the rope thrown up to him already on the rock ; so that the former also gained it. These two then drew up the others of the party, as well as the provision-bags, by means of ropes.

The first guide who reached the rock, was our captain, Joseph Marie Couttet ; the second, Michal Balmat. Of these intrepid men I cannot say enough, to do justice either to them or to my own feelings. Without them, the undertaking must have failed, at the base of that rock, or elsewhere. The well-known Couttet had reached the summit of Mont Blanc eight times before. On one occasion, both his legs were fractured by falling rocks. On another,