

sweep continually varies the apparent steepness of the crest, as already explained. I believe in ancient times the great Glacier des Bois itself used to fill this amphitheatre, and break right up against the base of the Bouchard.

6th. Curvatures worn by water over the back of the crest towards the valley, in the direction *g i*.

7th. A tendency (which I do not understand) to form horizontal masses at the levels *k* and *l*.*

§ 18. The reader may imagine what strange harmonies and changes of line must result throughout the mass of the mountain, from the varied prevalence of one or other of these secret inclinations of its rocks (modified, also, as they are by perpetual deceptions of perspective), and how completely the rigidity or parallelism of any one of them is conquered by the fitful urgencies of the rest,—a sevenfold action seeming to run through every atom of crag. For the sake of clearness, I have shown in this plate merely leading lines; the next (Plate 35 opposite) will give some idea of the complete aspect of two of the principal crests on the Mont Blanc flanks, known as the Montagne de la Côte, and Montagne de Taconay, *c* and *t* in Fig. 22, at page 204. In which note, first, that the eminences marked *a a*, *b b*, *c c*, in the reference figure (61), are in each of the mountains correspondent, and indicate certain changes in the conditions of their beds at those points. I have no doubt the two mountains were once one mass, and that they have been sawn asunder by the great glacier of Taconay, which descends between them; and similarly the Montagne de la Côte sawn from the Tapia by the Glacier des Bossons, *B B* in reference figure.

§ 19. Note, secondly, the general tendency in each mountain to throw itself into concave curves towards the Mont Blanc, and descend in rounded slopes to the valley; more

* De Saussure often refers to these as “*assaissements*.”¹ They occur, here and there, in the *aiguilles* themselves.

¹ [The actual word is “*affaissements*” (subsidences): see Vol. I. p. 200. For Saussure’s use of it, see, for example, §§ 642 and 960 in his *Voyages*.]

or less interrupted by the direct manifestation of the straight beds, which are indeed, in this view of Taconay, the principal features of it. They necessarily become, however, more prominent in the outline etching than in the scene itself, because in reality the delicate cleavages are lost in distance or in mist, and the effects of light bring out the rounded forms of the larger masses; and wherever the clouds fill the hollows between, as they are apt to do, (the glaciers causing a chillness in the ravines, while the wind, blowing *up* the larger valleys, clears the edges of the crests), the summits show themselves as in Plate 36,¹ dividing, with their dark frontlets, the perpetual sweep of the glaciers and the clouds.*

* The aqueous curves and roundings on the nearer crest (La Côte) are peculiarly tender, because the gneiss of which it is composed is softer in grain than that of the Bouchard, and remains so even to the very top

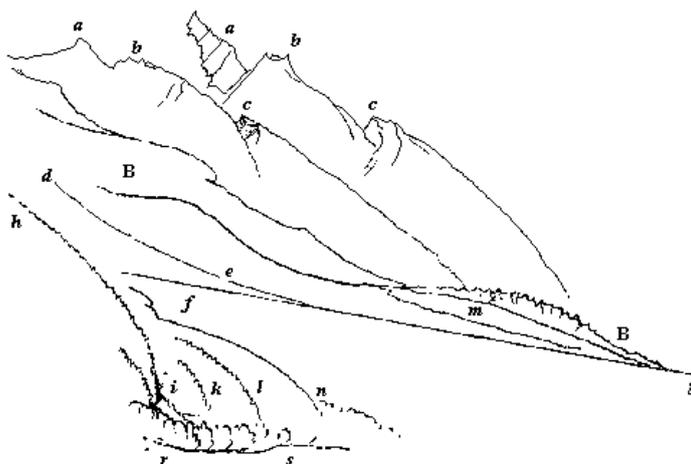


Fig. 61

of the peak, *a*, in Fig. 61, where I found it mixed with a yellowish and somewhat sandy quartz rock, and generally much less protogenic than is usual at such elevations on other parts of the chain.

¹ [It was by "the Crest of La Côte" (the Montagne de la Côte) that most of the early attempts to scale Mont Blanc were made, and that the summit was ultimately attained; see *The Annals of Mont Blanc*, by C. E. Mathews, p. 27, where this drawing is referred to. For some remarks on the clouds in this plate, see *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. vii. ch. iii. § 17.]