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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen
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**Pilgrimage from the Alps to the
Tiber Or The Influence of
Romanism on Trade, Justice, and
Knowledge**

James Aitken Wylie

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PILGRIMAGE
FROM
THE ALPS TO THE TIBER.

PILGRIMAGE
FROM
THE ALPS TO THE TIBER.
OR
THE INFLUENCE OF ROMANISM
ON
TRADE, JUSTICE, AND KNOWLEDGE.

BY
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MDCCCLV.

I.

THE INTRODUCTION.

I did not go to Rome to seek for condemnatory matter against the Pope's government. Had this been my only object, I should not have deemed it necessary to undertake so long a journey. I could have found materials on which to construct a charge in but too great abundance nearer home. The cry of the Papal States had waxed great, and there was no need to go down into those unhappy regions to satisfy one's self that the oppression was "altogether according to the cry of it." I had other objects to serve by my journey.

There is one other country which has still more deeply influenced the condition of the race, and towards which one is even more powerfully drawn, namely, Judea. But Italy is entitled to the next place, as respects the desire which one must naturally feel to visit it, and the instruction one may [Pg 2] expect to reap from so doing. Some of the greatest minds which the pagan world has produced have appeared in Italy. In that land those events were accomplished which have given to modern history its form and colour; and those ideas elaborated, the impress of which may still be traced upon the opinions, the institutions, and the creeds of Europe. In Italy, too, empire has left her ineffaceable traces, and art her glorious footsteps. There is, all will admit, a peculiar and exquisite pleasure in visiting such spots: nor is there pleasure only, but profit also. One's taste may be corrected, and his judgment strengthened, by seeing the masterpieces of ancient genius. New trains of thought may be suggested, and new sources of information opened, by the sight of men and of manners wholly new. But more than this,—I believed that there were lessons to be learned there, which it was emphatically worth one's while going there to learn, touching the working of that politico-religious system of which Italy has so long been the seat and centre. I had previously been at some little pains to make myself acquainted with this system in its principles, and wished to have an opportunity of studying it in its effects upon the government of the country, and the condition of the people, as respects their trade, industry, knowledge, liberty, religion, and general hap-

piness. All I shall say in the following pages will have a bearing, more or less direct, upon this main point.

It is impossible to disjoin the present of these countries from the past; nor can the solemn and painful enigma which they exhibit be unriddled but by a reference to the past, and that not the immediate, but the remote past. There is truth, no doubt, in the saying of the old moralist, that nations lose in moments what they had acquired in years; but the remark is applicable rather to the accelerated speed with which the last [Pg 3] stages of a nation's ruin are accomplished, than to the slow and imperceptible progress which usually marks its commencement. Unless when cut off by the sudden stroke of war, it requires five centuries at least to consummate the fall of a great people. One must pass, therefore, over those hideous abuses which are the immediate harbingers of national disaster, and which exclusively engross the attention of ordinary inquirers, and go back to those remote ages, and those minute and apparently insignificant causes, amid which national declension, unsuspected often by the nation itself, takes its rise. The destiny of modern Europe was sealed so long ago as A.D. 606, when the Bishop of Rome was made head of the universal Church by the edict of a man stained with the double guilt of usurpation and murder. Religion is the parent of liberty. The rise of tyrants can be prevented in no other way but by maintaining the supremacy of God and conscience; and in the early corruptions of the gospel, the seeds were sown of those frightful despotisms which have since arisen, and of those tremendous convulsions which are now rending society. The evil principle implanted in the European commonwealth in the seventh century appeared to lie dormant for ages; but all the while it was busily at work beneath those imposing imperial structures which arose in the middle ages. It had not been cast out of the body politic; it was still there, operating with noiseless but resistless energy and terrible strength; and while monarchs were busily engaged founding empires and consolidating their rule, it was preparing to signalize, at a future day, the superiority of its own power by the sudden and irretrievable overthrow of theirs. Thus society had come to resemble the lofty mountain, whose crown of white snows and robe of fresh verdure but conceal those hidden fires which are smouldering within its bowels. Under the appearance of robust health, a [Pg 4] moral

cancer was all the while preying upon the vitals of society, eating out by slow degrees the faith, the virtue, the obedience of the world. The ground at last gave way, and thrones and hierarchies came tumbling down. Look at the Europe of our day. What is the Papacy, but an enormous cancer, of most deadly virulency, which has now run its course, and done its work upon the nations of the Continent. The European community, from head to foot, is one festering sore. Soundness in it there is none. The Papal world is a wriggling mass of corruption and suffering. It is a compound of tyrannies and perjuries,—of lies and blood-red murders,—of crimes abominable and unnatural,—of priestly maledictions, socialist ravings, and atheistic blasphemies. The whine of mendicants, the curses, groans, and shrieks of victims, and the demoniac laughter of tyrants, commingle in one hoarse roar. Faugh! the spectacle is too horrible to be looked at; its effluvia is too fetid to be endured. What is to be done with the carcase? We cannot dwell in its neighbourhood. It would be impossible long to inhabit the same globe with it: its stench were enough to pollute and poison the atmosphere of our planet. It must be buried or burned. It cannot be allowed to remain on the surface of the earth: it would breed a plague, which would infect, not a world only, but a universe. It is in this direction that we are to seek for instruction; and here, if we are able to receive it, thirty generations are willing to impart to us their dear-bought experience. Lessons which have cost the world so much are surely worth learning.

But I do not mean to treat my readers to lectures on history, instead of chapters on travel. It is not an abstract disquisition on the influence of religion and government, such as one might compose without stirring from his own fire-side, which I intend to write. It is a real journey we are about to undertake. [Pg 5] You shall have facts as well as reflections,—incidents as well as disquisitions. I shall be grave,—as who would not at the sight of fallen nations?—but "when time shall serve there shall be smiles." You shall climb the Alps; and when their tops begin to burn at sunrise, you shall join heart and song with the music of the shepherd's horn, and the thunder of a thousand torrents, as they rush headlong down amid crags and pine-forests from the icy summits. You shall enter, with pilgrim feet, the gates of proud capitals, where puissant kings once reigned, but have passed away, and have left no memorial on earth,

save a handful of dust in a stone-coffin, or a half-legible name on some mouldering arch. The solemn and stirring voice of Monte Viso, speaking from the midst of the Cottian Alps, will call you from afar to the martyr-land of Europe. You shall worship with the Waldenses beneath their own Castelluzzo, which covers with its mighty shadow the ashes of their martyred forefathers, and the humble sanctuary of their living descendants. You shall count the towns and campaniles on the broad Lombardy. You shall pass glorious days on the top of renowned cathedrals, and sit and muse in the face of the eternal Alps, as the clouds now veil, now reveal, their never-trodden snows. You shall cross the Lagunes, and see the winged lion of St Mark soaring serenely amid the bright domes and the ever calm seas of Venice, where you may list

"The song and oar of Adria's gondolier,
Mellowed by distance, o'er the waters sweep."

You shall travel long sleepless nights in the *diligence*, and be ferried at day-break over "ancient rivers." You shall tread the grass-grown streets of Ferrara, and the deserted halls of Bologna, where the wisdom-loving youth of Europe erst assembled, but whose solitude now is undisturbed, save by the [Pg 6] clank of the Croat's sabre, or the wine-flagon of the friar. You shall visit cells dim and dank, around which genius has thrown a halo which draws thither the pilgrim, who would rather muse in the twilight of the naked vault, than wander amid the marble glories of the palace that rises proudly in its neighbourhood. You shall go with me, at the hour of vespers, to aisled cathedrals, which were ages a-building, and the erection of which swallowed up the revenues of provinces,—beneath whose roof, ample enough to cover thousands and tens of thousands, you may see a solitary priest, singing a solemn dirge over a "Religion" fallen as a dominant belief, and existing only as a military organization; while statues, mute and solemn, of mailed warriors, grim saints, angels and winged cherubs, ranged along the walls, are the only companions of the surpliced man, if we except a few beggars pressing with naked knees the stony floor. You shall see Florence,—

"The brightest star of star-bright Italy."

You shall be stirred by the craggy grandeur of the Apennines, and soothed by the living green of the Tuscan vales, with their hoar castles, their olives, their dark cypresses, and their forests, —

"Where beside his leafy hold
The sullen boar hath heard the distant horn,
And whets his tusks against the gnarled thorn."

You shall taste the vine of Italy, and drink the waters of the Arno. You shall wander over ancient battle-fields, encounter the fierce Apennine blast, and be rocked on the Mediterranean wave, which the sirocco heaps up, huge and dark, and pours in a foaming cataract upon the strand of Italy. Finally, we shall tread together the sackcloth plain on which Rome sits, with the leaves of her torn laurel and the fragments of her shivered sceptre strewn around her, [Pg 7] waiting with discrowned and downcast head the bolt of doom. Entering the gates of the "seven-hilled city," we shall climb the Capitol, and survey a scene which has its equal nowhere on the earth. Mouldering arches, fallen columns, buried palaces, empty tombs, and slaves treading on the dust of the conquerors of the world, are all that now remain of Imperial Rome. What a scene of ruin and woe! When the twilight falls, and the moon begins to climb the eastern arch, mark how the Coliseum projects, as if in pity, its mighty shadow across the Forum, and covers with its kindly folds the mouldering trophies of the past, and draws its mantle around the nakedness of the Cæsars' palace, as if to screen it from the too curious eye of the visitor. Rome, what a history is thine! One other tragedy, terrible as befits the drama it closes, and the curtain will drop in solemn, and, it may be, eternal silence.

[Pg 8]

CHAPTER II.

THE PASSAGE OF THE ALPS.

The Rhone—Plains of Dauphiny—Mont Blanc and the "Reds"—Landscape by Night—Democratic Club in the *Diligence*—Approach the Alps—Festooned Vines—Begin the Ascent—Chamberry—Uses of War—An Alpine Valley—Sudden Alternations of Beauty and Grandeur—Travellers—Evening—Grandeur of Sunset—Supper at Lanslebourg—Cross the Summit at Midnight—Morning—Sunrise among the Alps—Descent—Italy.

It was wearing late on an evening of early October 1851 when I crossed the Rhone on my way to the Alps. It had rained heavily during the day, and sombre clouds still rested on the towers of Lyons behind me. The river was in flood, and the lamps on the bridge threw a troubled gleam upon the impetuous current as it rolled underneath. It was impossible not to recollect that this was the stream on the banks of which Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, himself the disciple of John, had, at almost the identical spot where I crossed it, laboured and prayed, and into the floods of which had been flung the ashes of the first martyrs of Gaul. These murky skies formed no very auspicious commencement of my journey; but I cherished the hope that to-morrow would bring fair weather, and with fair weather would come the green valleys and gleaming [Pg 9] tops of the Alps, and, the day after, the sunny plains of Italy. This fair vision beckoned me on through the deep road and the scudding shower.

We struck away into the plains of Dauphiny,—those great plains that stretch from the Rhone to the Alps, and which offer to the eye, as seen from the heights that overhang Lyons, a vast and varied expanse of wood and meadow, corn-field and vineyard, city and hamlet, with the snowy pile of Mont Blanc rising afar in the horizon. On the previous evening I had climbed these heights, so stately and beautiful, with convents hanging on their sides, and a chapel to Mary crowning their summit, to renew my acquaintance, after an interval of some years' absence, with the monarch of the Alps. I was greatly pleased to find, especially in these times, that my old friend had not grown "red." Since I saw him last, changes not a few had

passed upon Europe, and more than one monarch had fallen; but Mont Blanc sat firmly in his seat, and wore his icy crown as proudly as ever.

Since my former visit to Lyons the "Reds" had made great progress in all the countries at the foot of the Alps. Their party had been especially progressive in Lyons; so much so as to affect the nomenclature of the hills that overlook that city on the north. That hill, which is nearly wholly covered with the houses and workshops of the silk-weavers, is now known as the "red mountain," its inhabitants being mostly of that faction; while the hill on the west of it, that, namely, which I had ascended on the evening before, and which is chiefly devoted to ecclesiastical persons and uses, is called the "white mountain." But while men had been changing their faith, and hills their names, Mont Blanc stood firmly by his old creed and his old colours. There he was, dazzlingly, transcendently white, defying the fuller's art to whiten him, [Pg 10] and shading into dimness the snowy robe of the priest; looking with royal majesty over his wide realm; standing unchanged in the midst of a theatre of changes; abiding for ever, though kingdoms at his feet were passing away; pre-eminent in grace and glory amidst his princely peers; and looking the earthly type of that eternal and all-glorious One, who stands supreme and unapproachable amid the powers, dominions, and royalties of the universe.

The night wore on without any noticeable event, or any special interruption, save what was occasioned necessarily by our arrival at the several stages, and the changes consequent thereon of horses and postilions. There was a rag of a moon overhead,—at least so one might judge from the hazy light that struggled through the fog,—by the help of which I kept watching the landscape till past midnight. Then a spirit of drowsiness invaded me. It was not sleep, but sleep's image, or sleep's counterfeit,—an uneasy trance, in which a confused vision of tall trees, with their head in the clouds, and very long and very narrow fields, marked off by straight rows of very upright poplars, and large heavy-looking houses, with tall antique roofs, kept marching past, without variety and without end. I would wake up at times and look out. There was the same picture before me. I would fall back into my trance again, and, an hour or so after, I would again wake up; still the identical picture was there. I

could not persuade myself that the *diligence* had moved from the spot, despite the rumbling of its wheels and the jingling of the horses' bells. All night long the same changeless picture kept moving on and on, ever passing, yet never past.

I may be said to have crossed the Alps amid a torrent of curses. My place was in the *banquette*, the roomiest and loftiest part of the lofty *diligence*, and which, perched in front, [Pg 11] and looking down upon the inferior compartments of the *diligence*, much as the attics of a three-storey house look down upon the lower suits of apartments, commands a fine view of the country, when it is daylight and clear weather. There sat next me in the *banquette* a young Savoyard, who travelled with us as far as Chamberry, in the heart of the Alps; and on the other side of the Savoyard sat the *conducteur*. This last was a Piedmontese, a young, clever, obliging fellow, with a voluble tongue, and a keen dark eye in his head. Scarce had we extricated ourselves from the environs of Lyons, or had got beyond the reach of the guns that look so angrily down upon it from the heights, till these two broke into a conversation on politics. The conversation soon warmed into an energetic and vehement discussion, or philippic I should rather say. Their discourse was far too rapid, and I was too unfamiliar with the language in which it was uttered to do more than gather its scope and drift. But I could hear the names of France and Austria repeated every other sentence; and these names were sure to be followed by a volley of curses, fierce, scornful, and defiant. Austria was cursed,—France was cursed: they were cursed individually,—they were cursed conjunctly,—once, again, and a hundred times. What were the politics of the passengers in the other compartments of the diligence I know not; but little did they wot that they had a democratic club overhead, and that more treason was spouted that night in their company than might have got us all into trouble, had there been any evesdropper in any corner of the vehicle. When I chanced to awake, they were still at it. The harsh grating sound of the anathemas haunted me during my sleep even. It was like a rattling hail-shower, or like the continuous corruscations of lightning,—the lightning of the Alps. Had it been possible for the authorities to know [Pg 12] but a tithe of what was spoken that night by my two neighbours, their journey would have

been short: they would have been shot at the next station, to a certainty.

With the night, the dream-like landscape, and the maledictory harangues which had haunted me during the darkness, passed away, and the morning found us nearing the mountains. The Alps open upon you by little. One who has never climbed these hills imagines himself standing at their feet, and looking up the long unbroken vista of fields, vineyards, forests, and naked rocks, to the eternal snows of their summit. Not so. They do not come marching thus upon you in all their grandeur to overwhelm you. To see them thus, you must stand afar off,—at least fifty miles away. There you can take in the whole at a glance, from the beauteous fringe of stream, and hamlet, and woodland, that skirts their base, to the white serrated line that cuts so sharply the blue of the firmament. Nearer them,—unless, indeed, in the great central valleys, where you can see the icy fields hanging in the firmament at an awful distance above you,—their snow-clad summits are invisible, being hidden by an intervening sea of ridges, that are strewn over with rocks, or wave darkly with pines.

As we approached the mountains, they offered to the eye a beauteous chain of verdant hills, with the morning mists hanging on their sides. The torrents were in flood from the recent rains; the woods had the rich tints of autumn upon them; but the charm of the scene lay in the beautiful festoonings of the vine. The uplands before me were barred by what I at first took to be long horizontal layers of fleecy cloud. On a nearer approach, these turned out to be the long branchy arms of the vine. The vine-stock is made to lean against the cut trunk of a chestnut or poplar tree, and its [Pg 13] branches are bent horizontally, and extended till they meet those of the neighbouring vine-stock, which have been similarly dealt with. In this way, continuous lines of luxuriant foliage, with pendulous blood-red clusters in their season, may be made to run for miles together along the hill-side. There might be from thirty to forty parallel lines in those I now saw. Tinted with the morning sun, and relieved against the deep verdure of the mountain, they appeared like stripes of amber, or floating lines of cloud fringed with gold.

It was the Mont Cenis route I was traversing, — the least rugged of all the passes of the Alps, and the same by which Hannibal, as some suppose, passed into Italy. The day cleared up into one of unusual brilliancy. We began to ascend by a path cut in the rock of the mountain, having on our left an escarpment of limestone several hundred feet high, and on our right a deep gorge, with a white foaming torrent at its bottom. The frontier chain passed, we descended into a rich valley, with a fine stream flowing through it, and the poor town of Les Echelles hiding from view in one of its angles. These noble valleys are sadly blotted by filth and disease. The contrast offered betwixt the noble features of nature and the degraded form of man is painful and humiliating. Bowed down by toil, stolid with ignorance, disfigured with the goitre, struck with cretinism, the miserable beings around you do more to sadden you than all that the bright air and glorious hills can do to exhilarate you.

The valley where we now were was a complete *cul de sac*. It was walled in all round by limestone hills of great height, and the eye sought in vain for visible outlet. At length one could see a white line running half-way up the mountain's face, and ending in an opening no bigger than a pigeon-hole. We slowly climbed this road, — for road it was; and when we came to [Pg 14] the diminutive opening we had seen from the valley below, it expanded into a tunnel, — one of the great works of Napoleon, — which ran right through the mountain, and brought us out on the other side. We now traversed a narrow and rocky ravine, which at length expanded into a magnificent valley, rich in vines and fruit-trees of all kinds, and overhung by lofty mountains. On this plain, surrounded by the living grandeur of nature, and the faded renown of its monastic and archiepiscopal glory, and half-buried amid foliage and ruins, sits Chamberry, the capital of Savoy.

At Chamberry our route underwent a change. Beauty now gave place to grandeur; but still a grandeur blended with scenes of exquisite loveliness. These I cannot stay to describe at length. The whole day was passed in winding and climbing among the hills. We toiled slowly to rise above the plains we had left, and to approach the region where winter spreads out her boundless sea of ice and snow. We followed the magnificent road which we owe to the geni-

us of Napoleon. The fruits of Marengo are gone. Austerlitz is but a name. But the passes of the Alps remain. "When will it be ready for the transport of the cannon?" enquired Napoleon respecting the Simplon road. War is a rough pioneer; but without such a pioneer to clear the way the world would stand still. Look back. What do you see throughout the successive ages? War, with his red eye, his iron feet, and his gleaming brand, marching in the van; and commerce, and arts, and Christianity, following in the wake of this blood-besmeared Anakim. Such has ever been the order of procession. Mankind in the mass are a sluggish race, and will march only when the word of command is sounded from iron-throated, hoarse-voiced war. Look at the Alps. What do you see? A gigantic form, busy amid the blinding tempests and the eternal ice of [Pg 15] their summits. With herculean might he rends the rocks and levels the mountains. Who is he, and what does he there? That is war, in the person of Napoleon, hewing a path through rocks and glaciers, for the passage of the Bible and the missionary. Under the reign of the Mediator the promise to Christianity is, All is yours. War is yours, and Peace is yours.

As we passed on, innumerable nooks of beauty opened to the eye, and romantic peaks ever and anon shot up before us. Now the path led along a meadow, with its large bright flowers; and now along the brink of an Alpine river, with its worn bed and tumultuous floods. Now it rounded the shoulder of a hill; and now it lost itself in some frightful gorge, where the overhanging mountain, with its drapery of pine forests, made it dark as midnight almost. You emerge into daylight again, and begin the same succession of green meadow, pine-clad hill, foaming torrent, and black gorge. Thus you go onward and upward. At length white Alps begin to look down upon you, and give you warning that you are nearing those central regions where eternal winter holds his seat amid pinnacles of ice and wastes of snow.

Let us take an individual picture. The road has made a sudden turn; and a valley, hitherto concealed by the mountains, opens unexpectedly. It is some three or four miles long; and the road traverses it straight as the arrow's flight, till it loses itself amid the rocks and foliage at the bottom of the mountain which you see lying across the valley. On this hand is a stream of water, clear as crystal;

on that is the ridgy, wavy, lofty mass of a purple Alp. The bright air and light incorporate, as it were, with the substance of the mountain, and spiritualize it, so that it looks of mould intermediate betwixt the earth and the firmament. The path is bordered with the most delicious verdure, fresh and soft as a carpet, and [Pg 16] freckled with the dancing shadows of the trees. On this hand is a chalet, with a vine climbing its wall and mantling its doorway; on that is a verdant knoll, planted a-top with chestnut trees; and from amidst their rich, massy foliage, the little spire of the church, with its glittering vane, looks forth. Near it is the curé's house, buried amidst flower-blossoms, the foliage of vines, and the shadows of the sycamore and chestnut. There is not a spot in the little valley which beauty has not clothed and decked with the most painstaking care; while grandeur has built up a wall all round, as if to keep out the storms that sometimes rage here. It looks so quiet and tranquil, and is so shut in from the great world outside, that one thinks of it as a spot which happy beings from another sphere might come to visit, and where he might list the melody of their voices, as they walk at even-tide amid the bowers of this earthly Eden.

The road makes another turn, and the scene is changed in a moment,—in the twinkling of an eye. The happy valley is gone,—it has vanished like a dream; and a scene of stern, savage, overpowering sublimity rises before you. Alp is piled upon Alp, chasms yawn, torrents growl, jutting rocks threaten; and far over head is the dark pine forest, amid which you can descry, perhaps, the frozen billows of the glacier, or have glimpses of those still higher and drearier regions where winter sits on her eternal throne, and holds undivided sway. Your farther progress is completely barred. So it looks. A cyclopean wall rises from earth to heaven. The gate of rock by which you entered seems to have closed its ponderous jaws behind you, and shut you in,—there to remain till some supernatural power rend the mountains and give you egress. The mood of mind changes with the scene. The beauty soothed and softened you; now you grow impulsive and stern. The awful forms [Pg 17] around you blend with the soul, as it were, and impart something of their own vastness to it. You feel yourself carried into the very presence of that Power which sank the foundations of the mountains in the depths of the earth, and built up their giant masses above the clouds; which

hung the avalanche on their brow, clove their unfathomable abysses, poured the river at their feet, and taught the forked lightning to play around their awful icy steeps. You seem to hear the sound of the Almighty's footsteps still echoing amid these hills. There passes before you the shadow of Omnipotence; and a great voice seems to proclaim the Godhead of Him "who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance."

The road was comparatively solitary. We passed at times a waggoner, who was conveying the produce of the plains to some village among the mountains; and then a couple of pedestrians, with the air of tradesmen, on their way perhaps to a Swiss town to seek employment; and next a cowherd, driving home his herds from the glades of the forest; and now an occasional gendarme would present himself, and force you to remember, what you would willingly have forgotten amid such scenes, that there were such things as armies in the world; and sometimes the long, dark figure of the curé, reading his breviary to economize time, might be seen gliding along before you, representative of the murky superstition that still fills these valleys, and which, indeed, you can read in the stolid face of the Savoyard, as he sits listlessly under the broad easings of his cottage roof.

Anon the evening came, walking noiselessly upon the mountains, and shedding on the spirit a not unpleasant melancholy. The Alps seemed to grow taller. Deep masses of shade were [Pg 18] projected from summit to summit. Pine forest, and green vale, and dashing torrent, and quiet hamlet, all retired from view, as if they wished to go to sleep beneath the friendly shadows. A deep and reverent silence stole over the Alps, as if the stillness of the firmament had descended upon them. Over all nature was shed this spirit of quiet and profound tranquillity. Every tree was motionless. The murmur of the brook, the wing of the bird, the creak of our diligence, the voices of the postilion and *conducteur*, all felt the softening influence of the hour.

But mark! what glory is this which begins to burn upon the crest of the snowy Alps? First there comes a flood of rosy light, and then

a deep bright crimson, like the ruby's flash or the sapphire's blaze, and then a cirlet of flaming peaks studs the horizon. It looks as if a great conflagration were about to begin. But suddenly the light fades, and piles of cold, pale white rise above you. You can scarce believe them to be the same mountains. But, quick as the lightning, the flash comes again. A flood of glory rolls once more along their summits. It is a last and mighty blaze. You feel as if it were a struggle for life,—as if it were a war waged by the spirits of darkness against these celestial forms. The struggle is over: the darkness has prevailed. These mighty mountain torches are extinguished one after one; and cold, ghastly piles, of sepulchral hue, which you shiver to look up at, and which remind you of the dead, rise still and calm in the firmament above you. You feel relieved when darkness interposes its veil betwixt you and them. The night sets in deep, and calm, and beautiful, with troops of stars overhead. The voice of streams, all night long, fills the silent hills with melodious echoes.

We now threaded the black gorge of the Arc, passing, unperceived [Pg 19] in the darkness, Fort Lesseillon, which, erecting its tiers of batteries above this tremendous natural fosse, looks like a mailed warrior guarding the entrance to Italy. It was eleven o'clock, and we were toiling up the mountain. We had left all human habitations far below, as we thought, when suddenly we were startled by a peal of village bells. Never had bells sounded sweeter in my fancy than those I now heard in these dreary regions. These were the convent bells of the little village of Lanslebourg, which lies at the foot of the summit of the Mont Cenis. Here we were to sup. It was a sort of Arbour in the midst of the hill Difficulty, where we Pilgrims might refresh ourselves before beginning our last and steepest ascent. It was a most substantial repast, as all suppers in that part of the world are; and we had the pleasure of thinking that we were perhaps the highest supper party in Europe. It was our last meal before crossing the mountain, and passing from the modern to the ancient world; for the ridge of the Alps is the limit that divides the two. On this side are modern times; on that are the dark ages. You retrograde five full centuries when you step across the line. We ate our supper, as did the Israelites their last meal in Egypt, with our loins girded,—scarce even our greatcoats put off, and our staff in our hand.