

1 first to climb the side of a high mountain (on the east side of the valley) which forms a sort of
2 promontory between Chamonix and the “Sea of Ice.” We ascended by zig-zags some 2000 feet,
3 then around the point of the promontory to Montenvert [now called Montenvers], a big name
4 for a town containing but one house and a stable. Here we have a grand view of this moving
5 mass of frigidity. In front, 500 feet below where we stand, is the billowy frozen immensity. Off
6 to the right as far as you can see, this river of ice extends, and is lost to view in the snowy tops
7 of the mountains. But we were not so much interested in the far off parts of this matter as in
8 that which lay directly in front of us, and we slowly and carefully descended the crooked path
9 down the moraine to the edge of the glacier. This moraine is a deposit of boulders, rocks, &
10 stones which the glacier has on former occasions brought down from the tops and sides of the
11 mountains and left here in a worn and promiscuous condition. A mule could not climb or
12 descend this path, and the feat is only accomplished by goats, and tourists. Mrs. Van and the
13 girls supplied themselves with coarse woolen socks which a peddler kindly furnished them for a
14 consideration. I for some reason or other neglected the precaution and very shortly afterward
15 discovered that polished sole leather was not the “best thing on ice.” The guide took me by the
16 hand as I slid around considerably and was very fond of leading me up to the big cracks so that I
17 might see the profundity of their depths and admire the azure hue of the gaping walls. But he
18 was as French as the old-boy, and I could not make him understand that I had no taste for such
19 things without socks over my boots. But as in many other cases, the best was kept for the last.
20 The path now led over a ridge of ice some 40 or 50 feet with a wide, beautiful chasm on each
21 side, the ridge half a yard in width. Now it made me mad to see any body walk carelessly along
22 this ridge, but at its terminus I found a spiral stairs cut in the wall of ice with narrow tread and
23 disproportioned risers by which we were to descend some 30 feet where we would find better
24 walking. Newton never pondered over the centre of gravity with more intensity than I did
25 while going down that stairway. All crossed without accident, or rather, accidentally crossed
26 safely. Now came the scramble up the moraine which completely tired Mrs. Van out, and she
27 was obliged to sit down under the shadow of a large boulder and cool off & rest. On the crest
28 of the moraine we found a tolerable path which in the course of a mile terminated against the
29 face of an almost perpendicular precipice. The guide stepped off on a little projection of the
30 rock and pointed to an iron rod for me to take hold of. I understood that well enough to be the
31 rail, but where are the steps. There was neither steps or path, only some slight inequalities in
32 the face of the cliff was to serve for both. The rod was about 600 feet long. I passed across and
33 around a projecting point safely and sat down to await my family or to see how many I had left
34 of them. They came round, one after another all safe, and in high spirits that they had
35 performed this daring feat and cheated the undertaker. Half a mile further we reached the
36 Chaplen, a small hotel where we rested and had dinner. We had now to go down a steep path
37 half a mile where we found our mules had been brot around for us. All mounted and
38 proceeding a short distance, found the path so very steep and dangerous, that I and the girls
39 dismounted and walked to the foot of the mountains, but Mrs. Van was determined that her
40 mule should earn his wages and rode safely down. Our road was level from this point some 3
41 miles to our hotel, and the girls started off on a trot for a bit of a lark and were stopped by a