

AMONG THE CLOUDS.

"What are you doing?" asked my friend Mrs. B—, as she suddenly pounced upon me, one warm summer afternoon, as I lay, book in hand, under the shadow of a wide-spreading oak.

"Reading," I laconically replied.

"Yes, I can see that, but what's the book?"

"Foolishness to you, a stumbling block to me."

"Why foolishness to me?"

"Oh! because you are much too good a churchwoman to waste time in reading this fin-de-siècle literature. Confess now, you think the second Mrs. Sangueray, Dodo, Heavenly Twins, Robert Elsmore, and such like, if not absolutely blasphemous, at least very naughty?"

"Agreed—and which of these naughty books are you now perusing? Ah! another quite as naughty I see—The Romance of Two Worlds. 'True, I may be what you call 'too good a churchwoman' to spend time in following the speculative flights of these sensational authors, but am not too good to make little essays of my own in that direction.'"

"You Edyth! You are the last person I should ever imagine guilty of writing on such a theme."

"And neither have I ever written—but it is not from want of experience, rather because I have neither theories nor explanation to offer, only stubborn facts—adding one or more of these that have come under my own observation, will neither elucidate those we have, nor convert the sceptical, who having Moses and the prophets, would not believe though one should rise from the dead. Ever since the hour the serpent talked with Mother Eve, the world has had evidence of the supernatural and miraculous, but where is the sesame to these phenomena?"

"And have you really and truly Edyth had intercourse with the supernatural?"

"What is your forte theosophy, mesmerism, hypnotism, or what, can you make the spirits talk? do you know I have never seen even a table turn (except when people pushed it) do sit down here and tell me all about it, just fancy my stealing off to read Marie Corelle, when my own dear familiar friend had a lot of romantic adventures hidden away in her life, what she had never told me, I am no end curious so do begin."

"Don't be silly Molly, if you really care to hear one, I will tell it to you with the greatest of pleasure, only remember I can give you but the facts; of the solution I know nothing more than you, perhaps indeed it may be you who will give me the key."

"Who knows? only begin."

"Do you remember two years ago when I was in Switzerland getting a letter from a port marked, 'Les Ormonts,' the adventure I am going to tell you of happened while I was there."

We were a little jolly party in our little pension hotel of Mon Sejour. About thirty in all; comprising English, French, German, Russian and Swiss. Time passed delightfully in long tramps by day; music, reading, games, etc., in the evening.

"The peak that dominated the mountain chain which enclosed our charming valley, had the reputation of being uncanny as its name 'Diablerie' (deviltry) will show. Baedeker describes it as a most difficult and dangerous mountain to ascend." But nevertheless it was my one ambition to make the attempt and Excelsior was my motto.

"When first I broached the subject at Mon Sejour, they assured me it would be utter madness to think of it, that only some half dozen women had made the ascent since Switzerland had become the playground of Europe, and those favoured few were old stagers in the art of climbing, in short, what they said was so convincing I might have yielded had I not been informed one morning upon coming down to breakfast, that the Countess Von Moltke and two young men of our pension were going to make the ascent that very day. With-out delay I sought the Countess and broadly hinted 'that two ladies would be much nicer than one, on a party of that kind.' She was proof against all hints and shortly after set off in high spirits, with the gentlemen and their guides."

"I stalked all the afternoon; and next morning when telescopes and field-glasses were directed to the mountain top, I would have refused to look through them, I did not want to make sure that one of the little black specks seen crawling across the glass, wore petticoats. She returned at night the heroine of the hour, and was feasted and fêted till I was green with envy and quite determined to climb 'Diablerie,' if I had to go alone with the guides. 'But fortune sometimes favours the brave.' The next day some American friends, (a lady and her daughters) that I had been expecting to join me at 'Les Ormonts' turned up. I confided my plan to them, when Lou the youngest who was longing to make an ascension enthusiastically declared she would go with me, laughingly adding that Gen. Von Moltke might get the better of the French, his niece would find Americans and English, made of different clay."

We lost no time in consulting the guides, their chief Gotreau, an amateur of the Alps (and Diablerie in particular), was delighted with the idea of initiating two enthusiastic

novices. "We were near the Autumnal equinox, and it was a little late for high climbing," he said, but he would watch the winds and clouds and come for us the first fine day if we would hold ourselves in readiness to start at a moment's notice."

"For the next two days it rained incessantly and 'Diablerie' was hidden by fog, but on the third the sun arose in all its glory and the mountain peak appeared once more dazzlingly white and dully near. It was hard work keeping our secret from the others, so excited were we, but in the end were well repaid, for our little coup-de-theatre was perfect."

"We were at déjeuner when a domestic electrified the household by announcing that the guides were at the door and wished her to say 'It Les Anglaises were agreeable they would make the ascension of Diablerie that day.' Les Anglaises being agreeable we hastened to don our mountain costumes, while Gotreau and his son packed the knap-sacks with as many pounds of food and wraps as a day and night on the heights required, and the law allowed us to impose on them. It was after one when we, alpinist in hand and feet well shod, turned our backs upon 'Mon Sejour.' The men of the house walked with us to the foot of the mountain, some three miles distant, there after many hand-shakes and wishes for a 'bon voyage,' we climbed a fence and turned into a field."

"Voilà our first adventure!—seems a laughable one at this distance, but it was no laughing matter at the time I can assure you, it being as I mentioned before, late in the season the bestiaux (or cattle) that had been all summer grazing on the heights were now collected at the foot, and it was through these we had to pass: as the men from whom we had just parted were watching us, it would never do to show the white feather, but what torture we suffered not a man can imagine. I wonder if there is in this world a town-bred woman who can calmly meet half a dozen cows on a country road, without running into a yard, or, up some steps, or climbing a fence, in short seeking the first refuge at hand? if there is, her price like Solomon's model is above rubies."

"Hardly was the field crossed and we out of danger from the cattle, than we met two German students and a guide, who stopped us to say 'it would be useless for us to go on, as it was impossible to reach the summit so much snow having fallen the past two days.' We consulted Gotreau, who told us there was not any danger, that he knew the paths, as the other guide evidently did not, or, he would not have got astray, and so have had to turn back. En passant—a word about the Swiss guides—they are proverbially honest, intelligent, and trustworthy. Once you have chosen your man, you must give yourself up to his guidance as implicitly as you would to your physician, or to the captain of the ship in which you are a passenger. Taking Gotreau's advice we again pursued our way, following for hours the narrow, steep and stony path up, up, up, past all vegetation into the clouds."

"It was seven, ere we reached the little mountain chalet or hut, where we were to spend the night. It had been deserted by the herdsmen when they descended with the bestiaux; but the door was on the latch and all within at the disposal of the Alpine panorama climber."

"How distinctly I remember the panorama presented to view as I stood spell-bound on the plateau on which the Chalet was built. Around us, nothing but stones with here and there a clump of heather, below us, the pine trees gradually merging in a mass of greenery, as distance mingled shrub and grass; behind us the eternal snows in the Alpine glow of a glorious sunset."

"The Chalet consisted of but one large room for the family, and a long shed with hay-loft, for the stabled cattle; the roof a low thatched one, seemed to be kept in place by stones, placed at the four corners and along the edge. The only windows were two holes in the wall by which light and air entered when the wooden shutters were open, and the hole in the roof served for a chimney. The smoke which we now observed pouring from it, recalled us to earth and the realities of life in the shape of supper. So in we went. How cosy and comfortable it looked! Gotreau and Gaston, had not been idle, while we were dreaming, a roaring fire of pine wood was crackling on the earthen floor and they were now deep in the mysteries of the cuisine."

"We immediately set to work too, closed the shutters (for it was intensely cold, the water being frozen in the trough near the door) drew the table (three boards) into the ruddy fire-light, laid the cloth, set a large jug of heather in the centre, then washed afresh, (much to the guides amusement.) All the dishes belonging to the hut (which by the way were wonderfully good for the place) cut and spread the bread and made chicken salad."

"When all was ready, illuminated with our one candle, drew up the wooden benches and seated ourselves at the table, and I can assure you we made ripaille for the night."

"How strange it seemed—for us to be up there—far out of human reach—alone with these two men, that we had never seen a week before."

"When supper was over, the dishes again washed, and everything prepared

for an early start next morning Lou and I threw ourselves down on a rug before the fire, while Gotreau entertained us with the folk-lore of the country or, his own hair-breadth escapes. So thrilling were these stories, we were unaware that a storm was raging with-out, until the time came to put up for the night. The choice of two bedrooms was ours; one a sort of manger for cattle, the other the hayloft, we chose the latter, chiefly I fancy because a wee mouse ran out of the former."

"A ladder led to the loft. This we climbed, spread our shawls on the sweet hay, and lay down side by side, our travelling rug for coverlet. The guides shortly after crawled into the hay at the other end of the loft."

"And now came the second trial of our womanly courage. If there is a female not afraid of a cow; where can one be found not afraid of a mouse?"

"We had not been ten minutes in our snug little nest, before we heard funny noises, and saw bright little flashes of light, that came not from the lightning but from the bright eyes of hundreds of little animals that were running about the hay in every direction."

"A great part of the night was spent in fighting them off our faces; once, when one ran under our rug, we had such a fit of laughter that Gotreau awoke and asked what the matter was? as neither of us replied immediately he answered his own question by saying 'I know' you are laughing at the situation, n'est-ce-pas?"

"The storm spent itself during the night, and when we ventured out of doors next morning, to break the ice in the water trough for our ablutions; the summit of Diablerie stood clear and cold against the sky, and seemingly so near, we felt sure that it would take but an hour to place us on the top."

"After a hasty breakfast we were again en route, comfortably clad, but looking like perfect guys: Cotton blouses, straw hats, watches &c were discarded, cloth caps were tied firmly on our heads with blue woolen veils, shawls crossed over our chests and knotted behind (thus leaving the arms free) thick woolen stockings and mittens heightened the effect of our serge dresses and hob-nailed shoes."

"Every incident of that day is indelibly engraven upon my memory."

"We had gone but a few yards when we came to a mountain stream, Gotreau followed by his son, stalked straight through it, Lou and I stood on the edge, looked first at it, and then at each other, were there no stepping stones? Gotreau laughed and said 'before the morning was over we would be thinking of something more important than wet feet' and he was right."

"But the summit was—further off than we thought, and many weary hours of climbing, and pushing and tugging and hauling were passed, and poor Excelsior was often dragged in the snow and ice, ere we reached our goal; and then the wind was so high that we could not by any contrivance stand 'tip-toe on the mountain top,' but had to crawl about on all fours to get a peep at 'Mon Sejour,' and give them an opportunity of seeing us,—But alas! it was raining in the valley and 'Lea Ormonts' was shrouded in clouds. But we were happy our goal was won and the slight inconvenience of coming down again in a blinding snow storm which changes to rain that wet us to the skin and chilled us to the bone—was laughable."

"About three p. m. we were again within a few yards of the chalet, but stopped to gather some beautiful edelweiss we had noticed in the morning. While on my knees before a magnificent specimen I was transfixed by a piercing shriek. A glance told me what it was—Lou had disappeared, gone over the precipice. I know not what I did in that wild moment of terror, Gotreau says 'I was going to throw myself after her, only he caught me'—very likely, I remember nothing till the joyful cry from Gaston 'Ce n'est rien, elle est vivante'—sent the blood rushing back to my heart. Lou fortunately had fallen but a short distance, and except for a sprained foot and a terrible shaking up was none the worse. The two men carried her to the hut where we soon had a blazing fire, then as we drank the last of our coffee and ate the remainder of our sandwiches a council of war was held, as to what was best to be done. There was no alternative, Gotreau and Gaston must descend the mountain. It was not a pleasant prospect the thought of being alone there on such a tip Van Winkle night. Lou could not walk a step, and was far too heavy to be carried—it was our dernier resort. 'It was after four when they left us with many promises to return ere long with food, raiment and a litter.'

"When they had gone I hurried myself in changing as many of our wet clothes as possible, then in drying them on one side of the fire, while Lou wrapped in the rug, lay on a bed of hay that we had placed for her on the other side, she was so quiet I thought her sleeping."

"It was wild and boisterous weather; as night set in the storm increased and the water came in through the hole in the roof and drowned the fire, as the thunder verberated from peak-to-peak Gotreau's lines 'On the heights there is repose,' kept ringing in my ears and seemed to mock our wretchedness."

"We were now in pitch darkness except for the lightning flashes. How I regretted the candle we had needlessly burned the night previous."

"It is not strange what thoughts come to us in 'extreme moments' it seems incredible now, but I perfectly remember that I consoled myself then in the intervals that I consoled myself then in the intervals of prayer, in imagining the kind of monument they would erect to our memory if we died there—and die we surely would if the guides were lost. I had just decided

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MISS STINCHEMBE.

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"I think it a duty to write you for the benefit of all who have delicate children, and to make known what Paine's Celery Compound has done for my child. She has been delicate all her life. I have tried many medicines, and have had her under allopathic and homeopathic treatment, with but little benefit. Almost in despair, and as a last resort, I tried Paine's Celery Compound, and after using three bottles she is perfectly well and strong. I have also used your medicine myself for complica-

tions arising from overwork and loss of rest, and am greatly benefited thereby. I would strongly urge all who are in any way afflicted to do as I have done, 'try Paine's Celery Compound,' and be convinced of its wonderful curing power."

It makes the heart sad and sorrowful to see the young suffer when they should be bright, strong and active, full of lively hope and pleasure, and enjoying the glorious springtime of life.

There are thousands of boys and girls in our fair Canada who are in such a condition that they cannot mingle happily with their school-fellows and playmates. They are pale, weak, nervous, listless and fretful; their blood is impure and stagnant, and they go about half dead from day to day. Such boys and girls require a nerve food and builder—a medicine that will act on the entire nervous system.

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EDYTH.

But I did not, though I strained my hearing to the uttermost it was long ere the welcome sound reached my dull ears. "As the day dawned revealing the wretchedness of our situation, friends and guides rose with the sun, and all went happy as a marriage bell. 'And did it all turn out just as your friend said?' " "Exactly."

"And how do you explain it?"

"I don't explain it at all."

"And have you no theories?"

"What a capital interviewer you would make Mollie, but I am not to be interviewed let me tell you."

"Just one word more was nobody engaged, or married to the men who received you? I know you were not, Edyth, but was not Lou?"

"You are incorrigible child, you must know that it is no longer the fashion to marry off the heroine at the end of your story, have you never heard of 'The revolt of the daughters?'—An revoir."

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