

glacier whose passage is attended with much danger. It is intersected with deep, irregular crevasses, often of great width, and which are only passable upon bridges of frozen snow suspended over the abyss.

We shall now leave De Saussure himself to relate the story of his famous ascent, and to acquaint us with its different incidents, both with respect to his scientific observations and the physical impressions which he received in an atmosphere more and more rarefied by the elevation.

“On the 2nd of August,” says De Saussure, “despite the great interest we all had in starting at an early hour, the guides raised so many difficulties in reference to the distribution and arrangement of their various burthens, that we were not in full

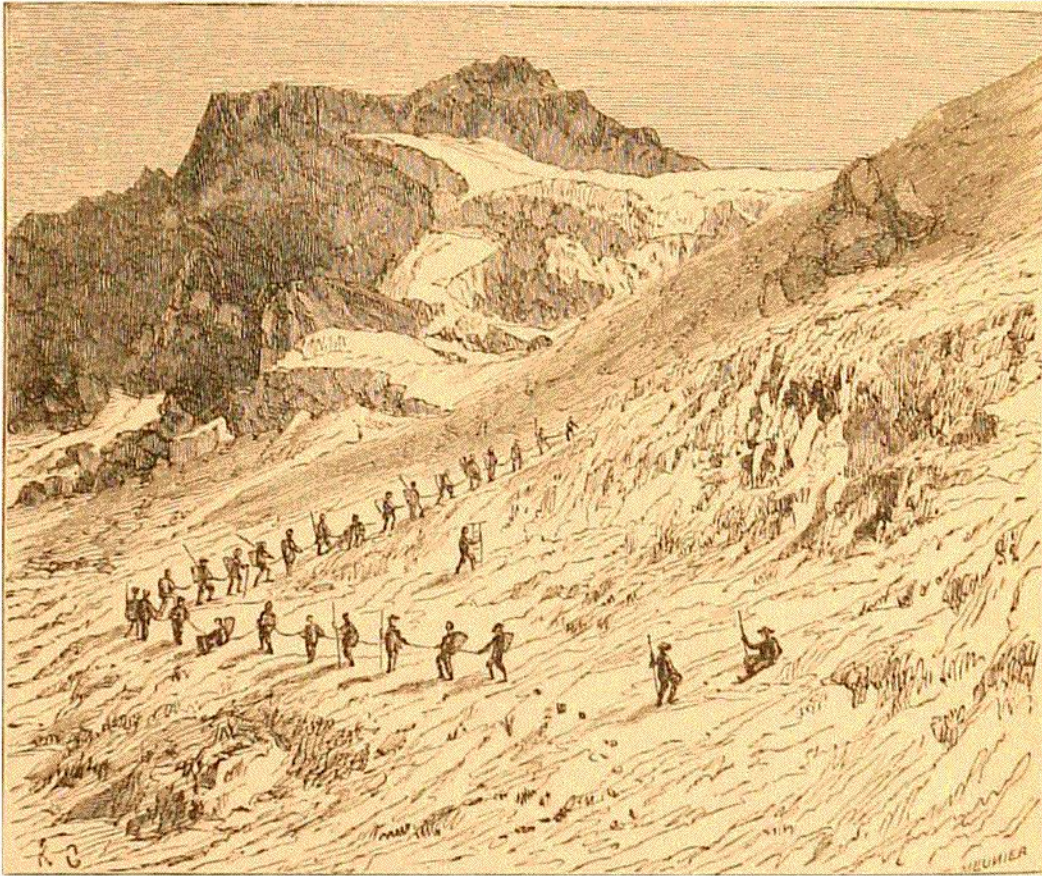


FIG. 56.—DE SAUSSURE'S CARAVAN ASCENDING THE DÔME DU GOÛTER.
(From a photograph by Tairraz.)

march until about half-past six. Each was afraid of overloading himself, less through dread of fatigue, than from an apprehension that he might sink in the snow under too heavy a weight, and so fall into a crevasse.

“We entered upon the glacier, face to face with the blocks of granite under whose shelter we had slept. The approach to it is easy, but travellers soon find themselves entangled in a labyrinth of ice-rocks, separated by crevasses, here entirely covered, there only partially concealed by the snows which frequently accumulate in fantastic arches, hollow beneath, and yet very often the sole means of traject; in other places, a sharp ridge of ice serves as a bridge for crossing them. Occasionally, where the crevasses are wholly unfilled, you are compelled to descend to the very