

bottom, and afterwards to remount the opposite wall by steps hewn with a hatchet in the living ice. But nowhere do you ever see the rock; the bottom is always ice, or snow; and there are moments when, after having descended into these abysses surrounded by nearly perpendicular walls of ice, you cannot conceive in what manner you shall escape from them (Fig. 57). While progressing on the living ice, however narrow may be the ridges, however steep the declivities, our intrepid mountaineers, whose head and feet are equally sure, seem neither terrified nor disquieted; they gossip, laugh, jest at one another; but in passing along these frail vaults suspended above profound abysses, one sees them march in the profoundest silence, the first three bound together by cords at the distance of five or six feet from each other, the remainder supporting themselves two by two by their staves, their eyes fixed on their feet, each person endeavouring to plant himself firmly and lightly in the track of his predecessor. When, after crossing one of these suspicious snow-tracts, my caravan found themselves on a rock of living ice, an expression of joy and serenity brightened every physiognomy; the babble and the jokes recommenced; then they consulted what route it were best to follow, and reassured by past successes, exposed themselves with the greater confidence to new dangers. Thus we spent nearly three hours in traversing this formidable glacier, although it was scarcely a quarter of a league in breadth. Thenceforth, our progress was wholly on the snows, fre-

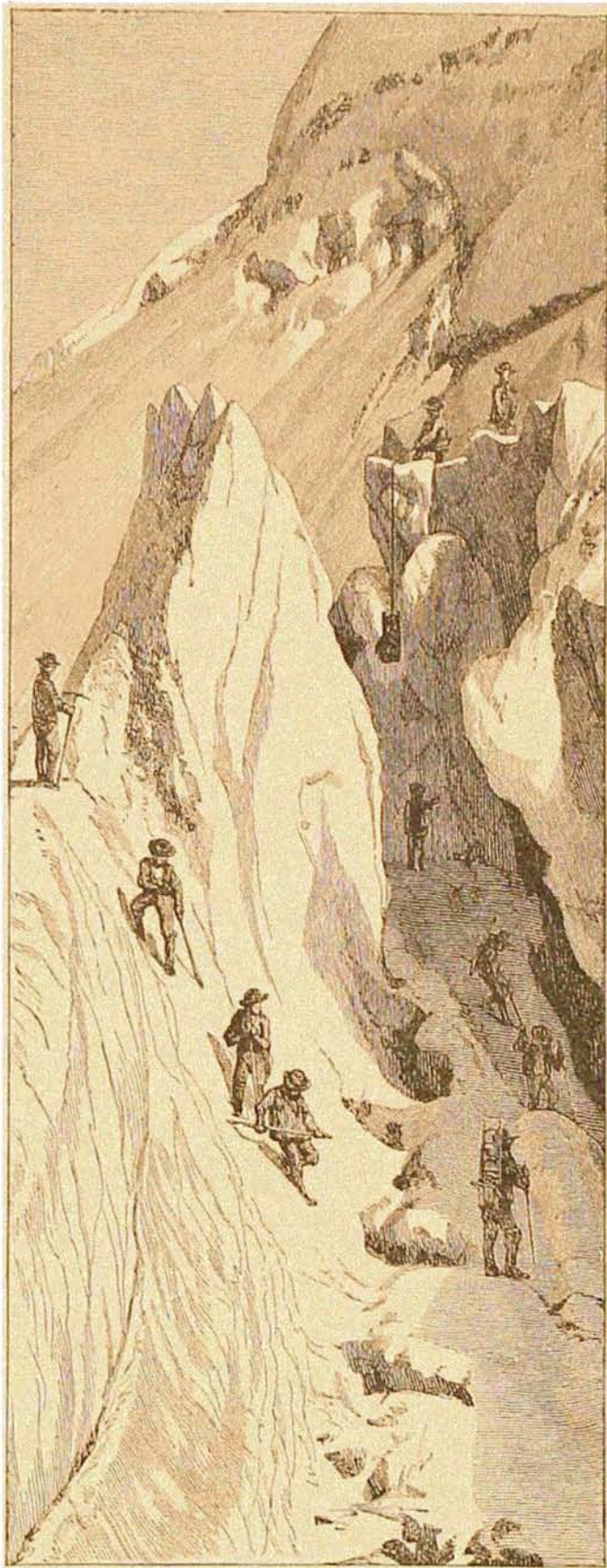


FIG. 57.—GREAT CREVASSE AT THE FOOT OF MONT BLANC.  
(From a photograph by Bisson.)

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