

it is intermittent ; it alternately empties and fills its basin in the course of a few years. The glacier of Aletsch, on its western shore, fences it in with a vertical barrier of ice, about 33 feet high. At intervals huge blocks are detached, which float (as already stated) on the surface of the lake, and present the characteristic form of a mushroom, like that of the icebergs of Bell Sound, in Spitzbergen. When the pressure of the water prevails over the resistance offered by the icy cliffs, the lake suddenly empties itself and finds a passage underneath the glacier, producing a disastrous inundation in the Valley of the Rhone, whose effects are particularly felt

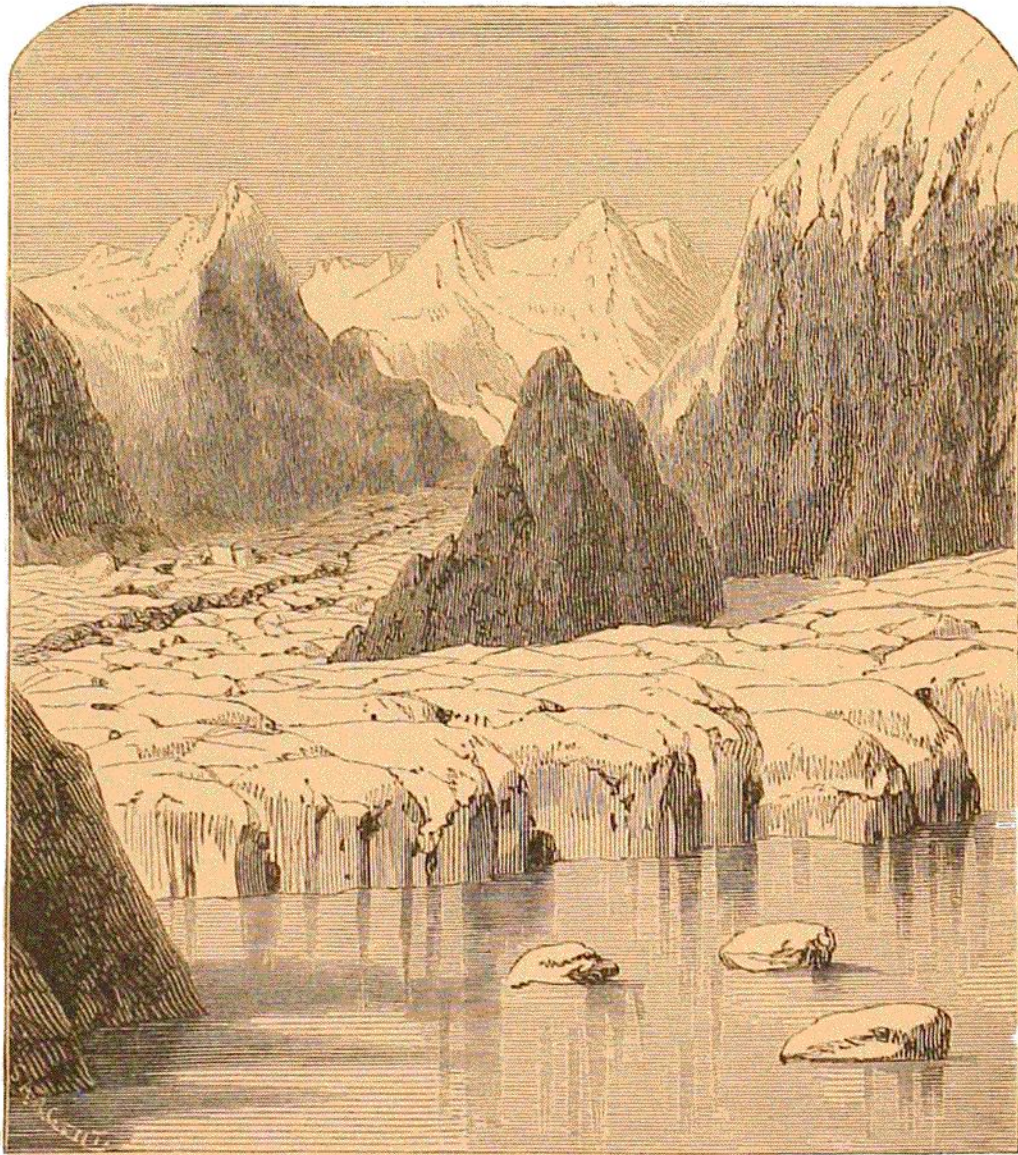


FIG. 111.—THE MARJELEN SEA, BELOW THE GLACIER OF ALETSCHE (SWITZERLAND).

in the neighbourhood of Vierge. Three millions, and upwards, of cubic yards suddenly added to the waters of the Rhone, render its vicinity peculiarly dangerous. When I visited this lake, on the 28th of August 1848, it was covered with floating icebergs ; on the 18th of August in the year following, it had just run dry ; the blocks of ice stranded on the banks were not yet completely melted."

The *Gouille de Vassu*, another ice lake, formed between two branches of the Valsorei glacier, empties itself yearly, according to Saussure. We may also refer to