

We must now direct the reader's attention to a final phenomenon connected with the Glaciers.

When the water originated by the melting of the ice cannot flow off for want of an issue, it excavates for itself a bed upon the basin of the glacier, and gathers into a veritable lake. One of the largest lakes thus formed is that of the *Märjelen Sea*, situated on the left bank or border of the Aletsch glacier (Fig. 111).

[The Aletsch glacier is supposed, by some authorities, to be the largest—it is assuredly the most remarkable—ice-river in the Alps, or, perhaps, in the world. It has its source in the great basin of ice and snow enclosed by the white peaks of the Jungfrau, the Aletschhorn, the Mönch, the Trugberg, and the Walliser Viescherhörner. From the Mönch to the source of the Massa, at its base, it flows over a bed fully twenty miles in length, with an average breadth of from one to nearly four miles. It is separated from another, but less magnificent, glacier, the Vietsch, by a

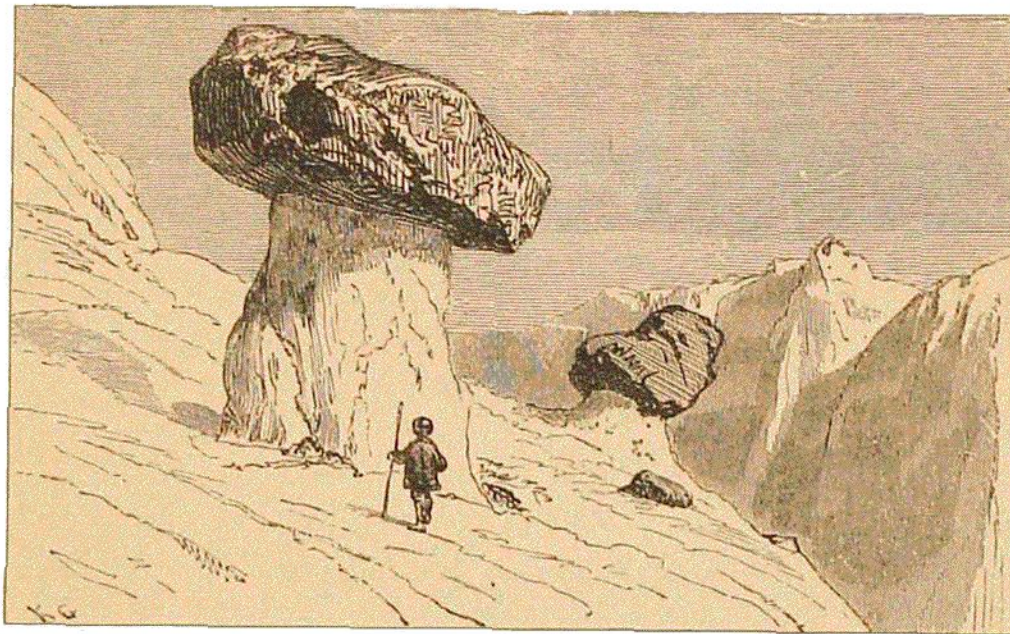


FIG. 110.—A GLACIER TABLE.

mountain-ridge, which, however, as it descends, is depressed into a flat table-land, two or three miles long and about half a mile wide, and bordered on one side by the radiant ice-cliffs of the Aletsch glacier. The waters are thus brimmed up into a small and singularly romantic lake, on whose surface float the blocks of ice that fall away from the cliffs, like icebergs; so that the scene represents on a miniature scale many of the phenomena of the Arctic Ocean. To prevent the lake from invading the adjacent pastures a channel has been dug, which carries the surplus in an opposite direction to swell the torrent from the Vietsch glacier. At times the never-ceasing progression of the Aletsch opens up some subterranean or rather sub-glacial channel, by which a great body of the lake-waters escapes beneath the ice, having stranded on the icy shores a small armada of icebergs.]

This lake is 1600 yards in length, 450 in width, and 8 to 10 yards in depth.

"It presents in its economy," says M. E. Collomb,* "a remarkable phenomenon ;

* Collomb, "Mémoire sur les Glaciers Actuels," Paris, 1857.