



## A quiet corner of the Alps

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swept plains of Northern Europe and Asia, amidst those hard conditions which give physical and mental and moral fibre.

The civilisation of the world, the garnered wisdom of ages, seems to be swept into a hopeless abyss; it is only that it may have a new and nobler birth. On the fierce Northern energy has now been engrafted the moral strength of Christianity; the capacity to win back and make use of the culture of Greece, the governing power of Rome. Then comes the Renaissance of national life on small, concentrated spheres of action—Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, Germany, Belgium, Britain. But while the geographical area of each European nation is circumscribed, the horizon of activity and effort expands. New worlds are discovered; new routes are found; instead of the inland sea, the mightiest oceans become the field of man's highest activities. Who is to take the lead in this new process of new World Growth? Who is to realise the idea of an Ocean Empire united in spite of distance? Long the decision hung in the balance; now it seems clear (and let us say it with all humility and sense of responsibility) that the Briton with his Teutonic basis of strength must take the leading place in this great sphere of world-activity. Two of the new continents, America and Australia, have fallen almost exclusively to our race. A third, Africa, seems, in its most habitable parts, well within our grasp by the compulsion of circumstances and almost without our conscious effort. Once more, again, as representing the civilisation of the West, we go back to the East: to Egypt, to India, to China. We go armed not merely with the intellectual gains of the Greek, the fighting and governing energy of the Roman, but with the moral energy of the Christian. We go again as masters; surely it is not again to become slaves.

Not if we know the greatness of our destiny and accept it. Not if we recognise that under this strange diversity and complexity of our national life there is the material for a wonderful unity of effort and organisation; that we have a marvellous opportunity to make our moral and political impact upon the world greater even than in the past, and greater for the highest and noblest aims.

### A QUIET CORNER OF THE ALPS.

By V. DINGELSTEDT.

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THE Swiss are on the whole a very progressive people; but among a number of communities making very valuable efforts for the diffusion of arts and science, there are some who are singularly averse to any change in the conception of life bequeathed to them by their forefathers, and remain obstinately conservative in their customs and manners. Such backward communities are to be found in the mountain districts of some of the Catholic cantons, among a pastoral population difficult of access, and leading during the long winter season an isolated existence.

In these communities the priesthood still maintains very considerable power. Their study presents particular interest, primarily, because they are slowly disappearing—railways and external influence constantly penetrating more into the farthest recesses of these beautiful districts; and, secondly, because such communities, notwithstanding their backward state of general culture, present a picture of contentment and peace which is truly gratifying amidst the turmoil and unrest which now agitates the civilised world at large. Besides making instructive observations on the simplicity and quaintness of manners and customs, visitors to these regions gain an unaccustomed serenity of mind. The effect is produced not only by the view of those imposing snow-clad mountains, which remain to all appearance unchanged through ages, but also by the apparent unchangeableness of the simple course of life which prevails amongst the robust population. Having had the good fortune to spend a whole summer in one of such backward and yet happy communities, situated at the foot of the well-known Dent du Midi, in the lateral valley of the Vièze, an affluent of the Rhone, in the canton of Valais, I am able to give in this paper some results of my personal observations on the life, customs, and usages of its inhabitants. I cherish the idea that these remarks, though of no particular value, may be not without some interest to those of the readers of this *Magazine* who have not yet had an opportunity of visiting this part of Switzerland.

As man is so much dependent upon his environment, I may first of all say some words about the physical features of the country, its fauna and flora. The Val d'Illiez, as the valley of the Vièze is called, is a transversal valley formed by the mountain torrent which follows its impetuous course between the Dent du Midi—considered as a prolongation of the Bernese Alps, cut off by the valley of the Rhone—and one of the spurs of the Pennine Alps, thrown out from the south-west. The valley is thus open to the north-east, where it enters into the Rhone valley, and closed on the south-west by some well-known ramparts rising around Champéry, such as the Dent du Midi, the Tour Sallières, the Dents Blanches, etc.

The Val d'Illiez divides first at Troistorrents, where branches off to the south-west the elevated vale of Morgins, watered by the Tine and remarkably beneficial to sufferers from anæmia. Higher up, about two miles above Champéry, the Val d'Illiez resolves itself into three high and very picturesque valleys, viz., the Sezanfe, Bormaz, and Creuses. The ridges that enclose the Val d'Illiez are highest on the eastern side, where the magnificent Dent du Midi (10,695 feet) uplifts its seven summits, constituting a point of attraction to a crowd of Alpinists every summer. On its western side the Val d'Illiez is bounded by l'Haut, a ridge with an average height of about 6500 feet, thickly covered with forest, which separates it from the vale of Morgins. Extending thus on the north-western slope of the Dent du Midi and on the south-eastern declivity of the Montagne de l'Haut, between the sources of the Vièze and its outlet into Rhone valley, the country we are speaking of may have an area of 35 square miles. The chalets are mostly on the mountain slopes at a distance from the easy route along the valley, where now runs a good new carriage-road from Monthey to Champéry. This

circumstance has certainly some connection with the conservative habits of the people. Three communities share the Val d'Illeiez between them : the village bearing the same name half-way up the valley, Champéry at its upper end, and Troistorrents lower down among the vines. The valley enjoys an abundant supply of water, for numerous tributaries enter the Vièze on both sides, many of them forming cascades, the roar of which can be heard everywhere. The principal torrents on the right side of the Vièze are the Sauflaz, Frèche, Crettex, and Tille, which are abundantly fed by the glaciers and snows of the Dent du Midi ; on the left side are the Chavalet, Charnay, Fayot, and Tine, which swell up suddenly after rain and never dry up, though they have no glaciers at their sources. Rain and snow are abundant, though I cannot give precise figures of the average precipitation. The geological character of the country, studied by A. Favre, is rather complicated. The Dent du Midi and the Dents Blanches belong to the Lower Cretaceous system, corresponding to the Wealden beds, and known here as Neocomian. But the principal summit of the Dent du Midi may be of older formation. The valley itself has been produced by repeated cataclysms. The predominating rock is a clay schist or slate, of a more or less dark colour. No fossils have been found in it. The country has an eminently Alpine and rural character. It possesses all the elements of scenic beauty in a high mountainous region—green pasturage, with herds of cattle, dark forests of pine and fir, rocks of varied forms and colours, murmuring streams, roaring torrents, foaming cascades, rugged summits boldly rising into the clouds, blue glaciers and blinding snow-fields, neat, picturesque huts, chalets and country houses. All these elements of the picturesque are grouped together in the most striking manner, and, through the endless changes due to weather and the effects of light and shade in different hours of the day, always preserve their peculiar charm. The predominance of green gives to the landscape on a sunny day a very smiling character; but the background of naked rocks and lofty summits, clad with eternal snow, without at all detracting from this bright impression, lends to the scene a grandeur which elevates the mind. There is an intimate connection between the physical features of the country and the disposition of its inhabitants : as there are simplicity and grandeur in the one case, so also simplicity and grandeur are to be found in the other. It is a land of grazing and elevated pasturages at an altitude of between three thousand and nine or ten thousand feet. The valley, being open on the north, enjoys the benefit of refreshing north-east winds, accompanied by dry, fine weather. Champéry is sheltered from the direct force of this wind by a promontory, and is consequently an agreeable place of sojourn, even in winter. The south-west wind is pretty frequent, bringing rain and stormy weather ; the south wind, accompanied by hot weather, occurs but seldom. The maximum heat averages 82° to 85° F., and the greatest cold in the village of Val d'Illeiez is about 4° F. The winter lasts about six months ; the early spring is particularly delightful. The Vièze is very seldom completely frozen, and rafts can float on it at all seasons. Rain is abundant in summer and snow in winter ; the autumn is usually dry, and the spring, beginning in April, is often interrupted by

cold blasts. A barometer and thermometer, as well as a clock, are seen in many cottages. The people have also a great number of sayings and omens foretelling the weather, many of which present very curious instances of popular wisdom. Many of these sayings are expressed in rhyme, as for instance :

“S'il pleut le jour de Saint Médard,  
Il pleut trente jours sans retard.”

Or :

“Quand l'ours retourne en sa caverne,  
On a encore vu hiver.”

Or, better, in local patois :

“Quand l'eûs teurne in sa caverne  
Onco oun hivè on a.”

*The Fauna.*—Trout live in the cold and pure waters of the Vièze, and heath-cock and hares abound in the mountains, but the chamois, formerly plentiful, has been exterminated. Shooting is not much indulged in, and, indeed, there is hardly any small game except foxes, blackbirds, and hazel-hen. Birds are scarce, as there is little corn. Besides the familiar kite, raven, daw, sparrows, bullfinches, tomtits, larks, swallows, and magpies, there are finches and wagtails to charm the ear in the day, and different kinds of owls and bats to frighten the rather superstitious peasant at night. Larks are to be found from May to October, but swallows appear only in October as birds of passage. Field-mice, moles, and snails are troublesome in the pastures and meadows. The field-mice live for three years, and it is during the last year that they do the most damage. There are no wolves, but the people complain much of badgers, of which, however, one kind is edible (*Meles vulgaris*). Among the insects, gadflies and wasps are numerous, but there are not many common flies. The peasants keep their windows and window-shutters jealously shut during the summer to keep out the flies, at the same time excluding the fresh air.

*The Flora* of the country is rich, and of considerable interest. Of arborescent forms, the pine predominates over all other trees, not only coniferous, but also nuciferous and bacciferous. Spruces, larches, and yews are comparatively few. Up to an altitude of 4000 feet the pines are intermingled with a number of deciduous trees, such as plane, ash, aspen, lime, birch, maple, elm, sorb, etc. A little higher up one may see, as the last representatives of deciduous trees, the willow and dwarf alder. Scattered over the meadows grow some fruit trees, such as the cherry, apple, pear, and hazel. Along the roads and on the edge of the forest grow raspberry, gooseberry, currant, juniper, etc. But extensive meadows and pasturages are left, the latter reaching up to the limits of eternal snow and to the foot of the naked precipitous rocks. They are thickly covered with an innumerable variety of herbaceous plants. The meadows in the lower part of the valley where the chalets are habitable in winter, up to 4500 feet of altitude, are mown once or twice a year, and are carefully manured. The pasture lands (*alpage*) lie between the meadows

and the limits of vegetation. Each zone of pasture lands has its particular character and vegetation, and is in different seasons of the year bedecked with beautiful flowers, of which the most choice are: ranunculus, gentian, veronica, myosotis, orchis, *soldanella*, rhododendron, saxifrage.

The people may be considered from three points of view, viz., physical appearance, morality, and intelligence. It is not quite easy to pronounce summarily upon the first point. Some of our Swiss writers, as Dr. Schiner,<sup>1</sup> A. de Claparède,<sup>2</sup> Wolf, and A. Cérésolle have pronounced a highly favourable opinion upon the external appearance of the inhabitants of Val d'Illiez. The last-named authors say, among other things: "So kräftige Männer, so bildschöne Frauen—der Wiederschein moralischer und physischer Gesundheit, ideale Urtype eines thätigen und geistig begabten Volksschlages—das sind die glücklichen Bewohner dieses schönen, von Gott gesegneten Thales" (*Wallis und Chamonix*, Zurich, Band 2, p. 802). Whilst appreciating the moral and intellectual qualities of the inhabitants of the Val d'Illiez, I am obliged to demur to this estimate of their beauty. There are certainly pretty women and very fine-looking men among them, but they form rather the exception than the rule, and the average natives of the valley can certainly not be called handsome. They cannot compare favourably with the Scottish or Caucasian Highlanders, with the Russian population on the shores of the Volga or Terek, or with the sturdy people of North Germany. Though, perhaps, as vigorous as their Caucasian brethren, the mountaineers of Val d'Illiez are far inferior in gracefulness and suppleness, in harmony of form, regularity of features, and energy and vivacity of expression. Nor is it to be wondered at when we remember the difference of life and habits between the warlike Caucasians and the peaceful inhabitants of a Swiss valley. The peasant of Val d'Illiez is strongly built, but he is rather plain in features, and has a sanctimonious and rather lymphatic expression. Without apparent haste he traverses with long strides the great distances which separate his cottage from the church and the village market, along steep and craggy tracks, but his gait is heavy and does not resemble in any way the light and elastic tread of a Scotch Highlander or Caucasian climbing his native hills. The contrast is heightened by the differences in dress; whilst the Caucasian has still preserved a very picturesque garb which shows off his form to advantage, our Swiss mountaineer has long ago assumed an ordinary townsman's coat, black trousers, and a round broad-brimmed hat, which are dreadfully prosaic. The women are comely but not beautiful; small in stature, rather heavy and awkward in their movements in consequence of the sedentary life they lead. Their blue eyes often sparkle with intelligence and quiet humour, but their faces have often a palish hue, sometimes almost cadaverous, and bear the marks of lassitude, care, and resignation. The forehead is fairly high and large, the nose straight and of moderate size, rather large at the base, the mouth not large, the cheeks rather hollow, and the cheek-bones prominent. The chest is broad, and the feet and hands are very large; the speech is

<sup>1</sup> *Description du Département du Simplon*, Sion, p. 538.

<sup>2</sup> *Champéry, le val d'Illiez et Morgins*, Genève, 1890, p. 22.

drawling and tuneful, and the gait, like that of the men, heavy. Most women, and even the girls, wear a chignon of artificial tresses. There are few bald men. White hair is to be met with only in very advanced age. The women's dress is black, of ordinary cut, and its prosaic character is relieved only by a bright scarlet handkerchief, which is coquettishly tied round the head in place of a hat. On the pastures, whilst tending the cattle, the women wear trousers, and dress like men but for the handkerchief. The children strike one by their precocious earnestness and almost ridiculous gravity of demeanour, when, accompanying their seniors to the church, they move along at a slow pace and with the greatest composure. They are dressed like adults, like them demurely carrying their breviary in the hand. But these are mere externals. We prefer to study the mental disposition of this truly excellent people. In this case, as in many others, a less superficial study will be profitable. The population is essentially pious, honest, peaceful, laborious, and docile. In our days, so full of anxiety and worry, it is scarcely possible not to admire this peaceful corner of God's world. Amidst advanced civilisation, simplicity of manners, peace, contentment, and resignation reign here supreme. Notwithstanding the fervour of their Catholic faith and the almost childish docility with which they follow the directions of their clergy, the people of the valley are hospitable to the strangers, mostly Protestant, that sojourn among them or pay them only a flying visit. In their bearing towards travellers the people are very polite and obliging; the children are very respectful, and, like their parents, always salute the strangers they meet. They behave with the dignity that well becomes the citizens of a free country, greeting strangers with respect, but with no shade of servility. They readily recognise the townspeople who come to visit them in the summer as their superiors in knowledge and ability, without, however, desiring to change their lot, or manifesting any false modesty. They are simple folks, ignorant of the great world, knowing only their business, profoundly attached to the creed, customs, and usages of their fathers, averse to change, laborious, honest and content. They do not seem to be disturbed in their amusements and social gatherings by the presence of a stranger, who may find a real pleasure in intercourse with them. These good people are certainly not exempt from imperfections, always inherent in human nature, but they have really good moral qualities which render them eminently sympathetic to those who approach them.

The total number of the inhabitants of the valley of the Vièze is estimated at 3166, divided between three communes, of which that of Troistorrents is the largest (1639), and that of Champéry the smallest (638). The young people marry among themselves, and the old men jealously preserve their country from the intrusion of strange settlers. The birth-rate is 28·7 per thousand, the rate of mortality 22·4 per thousand, and, consequently, the rate of increase of population is only 6·3 per thousand, which, considering the salubrity of the country, is rather small. This is sufficiently explained by the little desire for marriage. The mortality according to the different periods of life is as follows :—

On the average, out of 100 deaths,

31.29	per cent. take place at the age of	0— 2 years.	
11.86	"	"	2—12 "
2.37	"	"	12—22 "
8.07	"	"	22—50 "
22.23	"	"	50—70 "
24.18	"	"	70—91 "

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100.00

The great mortality among young children is caused by early baptism (a few days after birth) and the want of care on the part of young women during pregnancy. The public health is very satisfactory; there is no cretinism and scarcely any goitre. The prevalent diseases are rheumatism and pleurisy among adults and hooping-cough among children.

The people of the Vièze valley are almost as industrious as they are pious. Their principal occupations are the cultivation of the soil, breeding cattle, the exploitation of forests, the woollen industry, apiculture, and inn-keeping, so widely developed in Switzerland. A few words about each of these industries. There were formerly in the valley arable lands of considerable extent, but it was found more profitable to turn the greater part into meadows. Except in the vicinity of Troistorrents, where vines are grown, only small patches of tilled soil are found, close to the cottages, which are carefully worked as kitchen gardens. In these are raised with infinite pains the usual vegetables, and hemp and flax, so necessary for the household fabrics which a peasant family cannot afford to purchase. The greater part of the available land is laid out in meadows, which are carefully tended and manured. The hay is harvested twice a year, at the end of July and at the end of August and in September. The grassy patches above four thousand feet are not mown, but constitute what is called *alpage*. The latter differ in value, according to the richness of the soil, the exposure, and the altitude. Only some which are private property are manured. The *châlets*, serving as shelter for cattle, and built of large unhewn stones, under the protection of rocks, are occupied by herdsmen only in the grazing season and are abandoned in winter. The whole country is divided into grazing grounds, usually defined by some natural boundary or some ancient landmarks. Those grounds are called *montagnes*. A *montagne*, or a hill capable of supporting for the summer about forty cows, and measuring about a square kilomètre (250 acres), brings to its owner an annual rent of from £40 to £48. They are usually rented by some herdsman who feeds his own cattle and those confided to his care. The owner may either let his cattle out to the herdsman, or only intrust it to his care. A fixed rent (usually 50-60 francs with one hundredweight of good cheese) is given in the first case, but only good cows are accepted; in the other the owner gets at the end of the season the cheese which has been made from the milk of his cows, the milk of one day a week being reserved for the remuneration of the herdsman.



In either case the family who undertake this business are bound to return the cattle intrusted to their care in good condition. Disputes hardly ever arise, which speaks well for the honesty of the people. There are private and communal pasture grounds, the first being the better and fetching a higher rent. No festivities take place when the cattle go forth to the mountains or on their return, but sometimes it is deemed necessary to obtain the benediction of the *curé* on a particular mountain. On such occasions there are large gatherings; the milk obtained that day goes to the clergy. During the whole winter season, which lasts six to seven months, the cattle are kept closely confined in the cow-house, which is on the same level as their owner's room, and separated only by a thin partition. It is of course in summer that cows are most profitable, and consequently much speculation arises, graziers seeking to buy in the spring and sell in the autumn. There are two large cattle-markets a year. But even in winter a good cow is a source of considerable benefit. The hay she eats may be valued at £4, 15s. to £6, 10s., and may involve an expenditure of from 10s. to 16s. in cash, but the cow yields milk (10 to 15 quarts daily during six months), manure, and a calf, the whole worth about £10. Besides cattle, there are bred in this country a few sheep, goats, and pigs.

Sawmills are numerous, but the timber trade is on the decline owing to deforestation and the evident necessity for economy. There are no laws strictly regulating this important matter, and as yet no cadasters. A large supply of fuel is provided by the communities for their members, and there are some forests where wood is felled in winter. The timber is sawn into planks and exported, principally to Geneva. The bark is stripped for the tanner. The price of pine has risen considerably; some twenty years ago a big tree twenty inches in diameter was to be had for 16s. to £1, while now it costs more than double this price. The woollen industry occupies many women, but it has only local importance. Every woman can spin, and this work is the principal occupation of all old people; there is a wheel in every house, and almost all the woollen clothing for the family is spun at home. There are some small mills in which a good though rather coarse cloth is woven. Apiculture is no longer of much importance, the winters being, it is asserted, longer and the springs colder. The sole industry, after cattle-breeding, which is prospering and promises to increase, is hotel-keeping, for there is a marked increase of visitors, who come for a shorter or longer stay in the Val d'Illeiez, and especially at Champéry. This situation is certainly highly picturesque, is sheltered from the north wind, and is an excellent starting-point for delightful excursions and mountain climbing.

Now let us turn to the manners and customs of the people. Religious rites certainly occupy a prominent place in the daily life of this very pious and bigoted people. As the dark pine reigns in these mountains almost to the exclusion of every other tree, so the Catholic faith dominates in the heart of these highlanders almost to the exclusion of every other sentiment which elsewhere agitates so powerfully poor human souls. Crucifixes, chapels, and oratories are to be seen in all directions. The *curé* is by far the most important personage in every

village. He exercises full control over the whole conduct of the people, not only in religious, but also in private, family, and public affairs. The clergy alone are practically at liberty to exert their influence freely by means of daily sermons, exhortations, etc. There is no instruction of any other kind for adults, and secular instruction for the people would certainly not be welcomed. Indeed, their religion enters so largely into the daily life of the people, that it is quite impossible to form any adequate idea of their character and habits without some knowledge of its teaching and practices.

Every village is grouped round its church, with a turret or gable, from which three times every day, viz. at sunrise, at sunset, and at noon, the bell summons the faithful to prayer. Confirmations, funerals, baptisms, are also opportunities for drawing the people together and enforcing the dominion of the Church. Saints' days, which add considerably to the number of holidays, are kept as strictly as Sundays, all work being officially prohibited. They are also celebrated by great processions led by an old man bearing a bell in each hand. Crucifix and banners are carried behind him, and then follows the priest, the consecrated wafer in his hands, accompanied by a choir of boys and Capuchin monks. Next in order walk girls clad in white, belonging to the Sisterhood of the Rosary, and the flock of the faithful closes the procession, marching to the time of the bell. On seeing such processions and the gravity of the persons of every age who take part in them, one is no longer astonished to find these simple shepherds completely enthralled by religious mysticism. It would certainly be difficult to find even in Spain such a bigoted people as the inhabitants of the Vièze vale, living as they do in close vicinity to Protestant Switzerland, where the free investigation into religious questions has made such considerable progress in our time.

In speaking of the secular customs and usages, we must remember that this is an old conservative community, with the virtues and defects inherent to advanced age. It has lost the spontaneity, the elasticity, the illusions, and the faculty of accommodation to circumstances that constitute the appanage of youth, while it has cultivated and developed patience, contentment, and love of peace. A law has long been in force which prohibits children from being sent for education into Protestant towns. External regenerating influences have as yet been excluded, but it is clear that the struggle against new ideas cannot be maintained much longer. On the whole, however, respect for the customs of their ancestors still holds sway, and the people are as yet pretty unanimous in their hostility to change, and even in prosperous families there is not much difference in the simplicity of manners. Drinking is sometimes carried to excess, leading occasionally to quarrels, but crimes are almost unknown, and the office of magistrate is really a sinecure. The holidays, being numerous, might be occasions for mischief, but these, owing to their religious character, pass off quietly. The greater part of the day is spent in religious exercises, and is pretty far advanced when, after some official communications made by the mayor from the balcony of the town hall, the people disperse to take some rest and refreshments in the nearest tavern and wine-shop. In some villages the largest tavern is kept up by

the local authorities for the public benefit. Before long, however, the Angelus reminds the consumers of the propriety of starting in order to get home before darkness, always dangerous in mountains, sets in. There are not many amusements; card-playing is pretty often resorted to, and the young people take walks, but social gatherings are not regarded with favour by the older people, and always take place in some remote cabin, far from the church and the ear of the *curé*. But little interest is taken in what is going on in the world. Only a small religious paper is found in the hands of the peasants, and a few religious tracts decorate their bookshelves. An echo of the world rarely breaks the monotony of existence, which nothing disturbs but some avalanche, landslip, tempest, or an awful accident that befalls a daring Alpinist. Of family events, only weddings are divested of an exclusively religious character, civil marriage having been made obligatory. The intercourse between the sexes is exceedingly reserved, and strangely free from passion. Before entering into matrimony there is much negotiation and calculation. There is scarcely any difference in the prudence of the sexes. Men hold that if it is necessary to be prudent in buying a cow, it is a thousand times more necessary to be prudent in choosing a wife. The girls on their side do not seem to be less cautious and reserved; they are not blind to the imperfections of men, and know that marriage leads only too often to increase of work and care, and that there is more merit before the Church, which has canonised holy virgins, in celibacy, than in matrimony. Both sexes seem to agree that wealth only—in other words, a respectable number of cows and landed property—is capable of guaranteeing in some degree the happiness of a married couple and their family. The desire to obtain property by marriage is very common, but many do not succeed, and remain single. Some reject marriage from religious motives, and others that they may not desert their aged parents. Very different are the Russian rural communities, where everybody marries at an early age. The courtship is carried on with much discretion, and a long time is allowed to pass before any overtures are made. And even then the engagement between young people is for long kept a profound secret, sometimes for years, during which the engagement may be broken off without occasioning ill-feeling. The announcement from the pulpit is usually the first public intimation. The wedding passes off very quietly, the invitations being limited to the nearest relations of the contracting parties. Wedding-cake and wine are provided, but there is no dancing and no honeymoon. On the very morrow after the ceremony the young couple take possession of the new cabin prepared for them, and enter on their daily prosaic duties.

The reluctance to marry naturally diminishes the number of marriages, and statistics show, indeed, that in some large communities of about a thousand inhabitants, such as the Val d'Illiez, there are years during which not a single marriage has been announced. In the ten years, 1880-90, in the above-named community, only thirty-seven marriages were contracted. The age of marriage ranges for men from 25 to 45, and for women from 20 to 50, but the average age is 31 years for men, and 29 for women. It is remarkable that in the Val d'Illiez, in about

80 per cent. of the marriages, the wife is some years older than her husband. Husband and wife generally live happily together, though the wife is inclined to pose as a martyr, and perhaps she really works harder than her partner. The latter, when not too old, has always some outdoor occupation, and finds sufficient time to visit his friends, whereas the woman is much occupied at home, and has not only the care of her children and of the house, but also of the cattle, besides spinning and sewing for the household. It is true, however, that she has also time to frequent the church, but that is hardly a relaxation. There may be some truth in the complaint of the men, that their wives are rather whimsical, but it is scarcely an excuse for their pretty general indulgence in alcoholic drinks, a weakness probably attributable to the long cold winters and the monotonous life. Servants are seldom engaged, even in rich families, all the work being performed by its own members. There are few large families, children being considered a blessing only in small numbers. The household expenses, even of well-to-do families, are very small and average only 4 or 5 francs a week. The meals are exceedingly frugal; very weak coffee and milk, with bread, is taken in the early morning, and sometimes porridge of maize flour, which is considered more wholesome for children than coffee; at eleven o'clock, the principal repast of the day is served, consisting of milk porridge, potatoes, cheese, and occasionally salt meat. The last meal takes place between four and five o'clock, and consists of weak coffee and cheese. A short prayer is always pronounced before the family begins its repast. Only on great occasions do ham, poultry, and cakes appear on the table. Wine, liqueurs, and sweet cakes for the girls are obtained only in taverns on holidays. Very early hours are kept in every orderly household. Young children are sufficiently cared for, but instead of fairy-tales the mothers relate to them the lives of Catholic saints, and teach them prayers and the catechism, in order to impress them betimes with a religious sentiment.

Notwithstanding the prevailing pietism and general seriousness, a few social gatherings are held, where the men drink, smoke, and play cards, while women organise some games or even dance, which is formally prohibited by the priests. Many curious games have been handed down, transmitted from generation to generation, full of fun and usually serving to show off a man's skill and dexterity, and to mortify those who fail. I was often struck by the really childish pleasure with which the apparently gravest men took part in them. As to primary education, so successful in most parts of Switzerland, little provision is made for it in this valley; as might be expected, the Church has little sympathy with the legal obligation on parents to send their children to primary schools. Consequently there are at present no buildings specially designed for schools. The whole system of instruction is anything but satisfactory. The school session lasts only six months, and is frequently interrupted by holidays. The girls are also often released from school attendance after confirmation, at the age of 13 to 17. The clergy have great influence in the management, and schools for girls are actually directed by nuns. Some boys' schools are also practically under the direction of the *cure*.

There are, besides, scarcely any sources of public instruction, and the only books found in the hands of the people are religious works.

The official language is French, which is pretty familiar to the inhabitants of the valley, but the popular dialect is a *patois* differing considerably from the French. It is an Alpine *patois*, of which there are two varieties, both very different from the *patois* spoken on the plains and those spoken in the Jura. It is distinguished by the frequent use of liquid consonants, as also by the pronunciation of the letters *s* and *z*, which have the sound of *th* in the words *teeth* and *leather* respectively. The other peculiarity of pronunciation is the use of the sound *w*, as, for instance, in the word *ivwé*, water, in which it is pronounced like *w* in weapon. A great many words of this *patois* are only corrupted from the French. Many more interesting particulars might be given of the people of the Vièze valley, their popular sayings and folklore, their numerous superstitions, their omens and auguries, their ancient usages in selling and buying, their simple municipal administration, and so on, but these have no very direct connection with geography. I shall now conclude with the wish that many British tourists who come yearly to Switzerland would cast a glance at the calm and beautiful valley that extends along the foot of the Dent du Midi.

## DODONA, OLYMPOS, AND SAMOTHRACE.

### A NARRATIVE OF PERSONAL EXPLORATIONS.

By J. S. STUART-GLENNIE, M.A.

(*Abstract of a Paper read before the Society, March 1894.*)

DURING the eighteen months of my explorations in Albania and Epirus, Thessaly, Macedonia, and Thrace, these provinces were—as, with the exception of Thessaly, they still are—in a state of almost complete anarchy, overrun by brigands and the frequent scene of insurrectionary movements. It was confidently predicted, therefore, that my proposed explorations would be found altogether impossible. Dodona I should certainly be unable to reach; and I might think myself lucky if I got safely even to Ioannina by the direct highroad from its seaport, Prevesa. I accomplished the journey, however, and by the most interesting route—through the country of the Acherusian Plain, the groves of Persephone, the rivers Pyriphlegethon or Kokytos, and the Oracle of the Dead at the Gate of Hades. Still Dodona appeared as far off as ever. But, during my stay at Joannina, I made the acquaintance of an old Turk, Djemal ed-Din Agha, who was the chief landowner in the mountain-country round Dodona, and the Agha procured me an escort and assured me of hospitable entertainment in his castles and in the houses of his tenants.

Riding forth on a beautiful autumn morning, and leaving behind that rocky peninsula jutting out into the lake of Ioannina which Colonel Leake, British Consul here in the beginning of this century, regarded as